EVOLUTIONS IN COUNTER-TERRORISM

VOLUME I: REFLECTIONS FROM THE LAST DECADE

ICCT International Centre for
Counter-Terrorism - The Hague

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Volume I: Reflections from the Last Decade

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ICCT

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About ICCT

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) is an independent think and do tank providing multidisciplinary policy advice and practical, solution-oriented implementation support on prevention and the rule of law, two vital pillars of effective counter-terrorism.

ICCT's work focuses on themes at the intersection of countering violent extremism and criminal justice sector responses, as well as human rights-related aspects of counter-terrorism. The major project areas concern countering violent extremism, rule of law, foreign fighters, country and regional analysis, rehabilitation, civil society engagement and victims' voices.

Functioning as a nucleus within the international counter-terrorism network, ICCT connects experts, policymakers, civil society actors and practitioners from different fields by providing a platform for productive collaboration, practical analysis, and exchange of experiences and expertise, with the ultimate aim of identifying innovative and comprehensive approaches to preventing and countering terrorism.

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Foreword

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) was founded on the conviction that long-term security is best achieved through counter-terrorism policy and practice that adheres to the rule of law and human rights. Over the last ten years, we have worked to make that a reality, engaging with an incredible network of international experts to deliver agenda-setting research, policy advice and hands-on implementation in affected communities around the world.

Now, as we mark ICCT's 10th anniversary, it seems a fitting moment to ask a fundamental question: is the conviction that drives our work becoming more accepted globally?

If we reflect on the last two decades of the Global War on Terrorism, we can compile a long list of human rights violations and failures to uphold the rule of law. Yet, we should also recognise efforts to learn from these failures and address them.

Where we saw the horrific images of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, we now have the Nelson Mandela Rules that establish standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, including for violent extremist offenders (VEOs) and the management of the prisons that house them. While we let Camp Bucca function as a hotbed of radicalisation and the eventual birthplace of the Islamic State, we now have a sophisticated range of risk assessment tools for VEOs, as well as a rich understanding of good practices for the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs.

Where it was once considered easier to kill foreign terrorist fighters on the battlefield than to prosecute them for their crimes, we now have the Abuja Recommendations and other globally-agreed frameworks to help nations collect, use and share evidence for the purpose of criminal prosecution of terrorist suspects.

Where we once defaulted to heavily securitised responses to terror threats in our societies, we now have many examples of holistic national strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism. These rely on early detection of individuals at risk of radicalisation, as well as tailor-made intervention strategies that engage teachers, health practitioners, social services, local civil society organisations, religious leaders, and other stakeholders who coordinate with and work alongside police and intelligence services.

Where the internet was previously a breeding ground for extremist ideologies – both jihadi and right-wing – and a safe space for extremists to recruit and radicalise, we now have the Christchurch Call and other public-private partnerships. These showcase the impact that technology companies and national governments can have when they work together towards the goal of eliminating terrorist and violent extremist content online, while simultaneously upholding fundamental rights including freedom of expression and data privacy.

There is indeed much to celebrate.

Yet, despite this progress, we must also admit that the terrorist threat is in many respects worse than it was when ICCT was founded ten years ago.

Foreword

While the Islamic State's caliphate fell some time ago now, the group's brand and ideology has proliferated well beyond Iraq and Syria. Despite a concerted global effort to counter the Islamic State, the group remains highly effective at exploiting local grievances and co-opting local insurgencies to gain strategic advantage. As a result, the Islamic State now has deadly and well-organised affiliates in the Sinai, Yemen, the Greater Sahel, West Africa, Central Africa, Somalia, Central Asia, South Asia, and East Asia.

Similarly, al-Qaeda has proven its resilience. It has survived years of intense counter-terrorism pressure as well as an ideological and physical battle with the Islamic State over the future of jihadism. In recent years, it has re-emerged, leveraging affiliates and franchises to once again launch attacks across Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Additionally, the extremist ideology at the heart of Islamic State and al-Qaeda has inspired a "democratisation" of terrorism in the West, whereby radicalised individuals or small groups – often entirely disconnected from any formal terror network – have been inspired to launch sensational attacks across Europe using vehicles, knives and other readily-available weapons. Preventing and countering this type of threat continues to be challenging for law enforcement officials, while the psychological impact on European populations has been significant.

In part as a consequence, there has been a powerful backlash against Muslim communities in Europe and North America and a deepening of social divisions in our societies. This polarisation has triggered a rise in hate speech and sympathy for dangerous conspiracy theories that authorities struggle to contain. It has created political and social openings for organised right-wing groups espousing extremist ideology. Tragically, it has also manifest in right-wing terror attacks that have taken lives from Oslo to El Paso.

While our attention is held by these domestic threats, it is easy to forget that there are still tens of thousands of people being held in terrible and inhumane conditions at Al-Hol and other camps for those who formerly lived in territory held by the Islamic State. This includes thousands of European foreign terrorist fighters and their families, most of whom are being denied repatriation on national security grounds while simultaneously being subject to administrative measures such as stripping of nationality that in some cases violate international law and due process. Furthermore, for victims impacted by the Islamic State, achieving justice will remain elusive until the perpetrators face prosecution.

These are just some of the issues that underline the continued relevance of institutions like ICCT that seek to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism while upholding human rights and the rule of law. Much work remains, and we are committed to working together with our partners around the world in pursuit of this mission.

Alexander von Rosenbach
Interim Director, ICCT

A Note from the Editors

This Special Edition journal series is a celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT, The Hague). Volume I is a collection of key work of the last ten years in counter-terrorism research. The volume has been curated by the five directors that ICCT has had since its founding in 2010. In Volume II, our editorial team have curated five unique pieces that we believe encompass some of the main contemporary issues in counter-terrorism research.

Each former director was asked to choose a particularly impactful or otherwise memorable publication from their tenure. They were further asked to reflect on their choices, and consider why they stand out. Their choices are presented for you here in celebration of the work of ICCT's contributors from years past.

The articles in Volume I are their originals and no changes have been made since their publication, nor have the affiliations of the authors been updated to reflect changes to their positions since. They comprise a diversity of the formats published within ICCT, as well the breadth of themes we address in our publications. In the case of the second piece, "Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies" (2016), for the sake of length, we have only included the executive summary (you can find the full length report on our website).

Though these articles reflect past work, many of them remain as relevant as ever today. We hope you enjoy them.

The Editors
International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague (ICCT)

Why Communication and Performance are Key in Countering Terrorism

Beatrice de Graaf

Foreword by Peter Knoope (Director, 2010-2014)

"Terrorism is theatre" is a quote from one of the ICCT fellows at the time. The level of performativity determines the social and political effect of a terrorist attack. A terrorist activity that goes unnoticed has no impact. The same is true for counter-terrorism. Counter-terrorism measures send a message. They send a message to both the terrorists and to the general public.

There is value in reducing performativity by denying terrorists the attention they seek and by working on the reduction of the terrorism related threats under the radar. The high level of performativity of terrorist threats and counter-terrorism measures have contributed to public fear ofthe groups and communities to which the threat is attributed. The combination of terms "Islamic: and "terrorism" has done the rest. Islamophobia, fear of immigrants, fear of loss of identity etc. have polarised society. Performativity is key to this phenomenon. It is still underestimated as a risk factor in communication. Looking at both terrorism and counter-terrorism with a performativity lens is still relevant for ICCT.

Abstract

In this Research Paper, ICCT – The Hague Research Fellow Beatrice de Graaf emphasises the importance of effective communication and performance in the fight against terrorism and the fear it aims to induce. Essentially, terrorists and states are conducting 'influence warfare', a battle to convince and persuade the different target audiences to rally behind them. In this battle of perceptions, the different government agencies need to be aware of the often implicit and unwittingly produced 'stories' they tell to counter those narrated by the terrorists. It is crucial to take in consideration the fact that combating terrorism is a form of communication, as much as terrorism is itself.

Introduction

Counter-terrorism strategies, and in fact security policies in general, may be framed and communicated in a variety of ways. In my study *Theater van de angst*[1], I identified five central rhetorical and communicative aspects that increase the level of social mobilisation pertaining to incidents of terrorism. Questions that provide answers about the level of mobilisation are: Is the issue being politicised? Is it framed as a national security or even national identity issue? Is the threat extended to a broader circle of perpetrators and sympathisers? Is the threat linked to existing fears or historical experiences? Does the discourse contain inflammatory or securitising aspects? As will be elucidated in this paper, positive answers to these questions enhance the so-called 'performative power' of counter-terrorism strategies – the degree to which these strategies serve to mobilise and capture public and political attention – and thus provide for conditions that affect the state of national anxiety and fear about the issue.

Without doubt, communicating about terrorist threats and the ensuing measures is paramount for a government that wants to maintain the trust and confidence of its citizens. The 'need for closure' – the desire for conclusive knowledge as opposed to enduring confusion and ambiguity[2] – is especially prevalent in the case of terrorism incidents, as they invoke a high level of insecurity and fear amongst the population. When the authorities are not willing or able to communicate, citizens will fill in that space themselves, possibly with all kinds of conspiracy theories, thereby again contributing to a climate of fear or even polarisation. Hence, on the one hand, authorities have to quench the population's thirst for knowledge once an incident occurs, but have to keep the level of performative power of their counter-terrorism strategies and communication as low as possible so as not to aggravate anxiety and fear on the other hand.

Terrorism is communication; it aims to create fear and anxiety within a society. Communication is therefore also key in devising successful counter-terrorism strategies. In determining the right balance between the need for knowledge and the need to keep the 'performativity' of counter-terrorism policies low, it is important to pay attention to the discourse relating to the threat, to the unified approach of all actors involved and to the specific audiences that are being targeted. Although governments may attempt to keep the level of anxiety low, certain media, oppositional parties or individual citizens might feel inclined to inflate the discourse and the fear in society; especially in the current era of real-time social communication.[3] Pre-empting and preventing this requires a multidimensional approach to communicating counter-terrorism measures.

In this paper, such a multidimensional analysis of the performative power of counter-terrorism measures in Western countries is offered. This analysis helps us to assess and measure not only the short term, but also the long term and macro-sociological effects of counter-terrorism activities and strategies. In doing so, this paper also enables better insight in the way terrorists sometimes profit from or consciously use counter-terrorism activities to justify their actions and to enhance the levels of fear in society, and helps us to understand how the unwittingly sent messages by counter-terrorists often interfere with their intended communicative purposes. The performative power of counter-terrorism policies is an important factor in discussing and evaluating the effectiveness of such measures; it may very well be the way in which the process is conducted, rather than the possible outcomes of that process, that matters most.

Why it is so difficult to assess the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies?[4]

Starting with the million dollar question: How do we know what really works in the fight against

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1 De Graaf (2010a)
2 Van Hiel & Mervielde (2003)
3 See for instance Weiman (1983) and Nacos & Torres-Reyna (2007)
4 For a longer version of this argument, see De Graaf & De Graaff (2010)

terrorism? The answer to this question seems critically important, but might be less vital than one would think. It is important because a lot of money is being spent on counter-terrorism, even to the extent that governments may begin to outspend themselves. A second reason is that people want to know where we stand in the fight against terrorism: are we making any progress towards victory? Or are we losing? If governments are not able to establish whether their measures are successful, they may play into the hands of terrorists. But it still remains essentially impossible to formulate a definite solution for determining policy effectiveness. There are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, there is the difficulty of defining the nature of the problem of terrorism itself; what is it exactly, what causes it? Subsequently, defining the objectives of counter-terrorism policies seems tricky; what do terrorists want, what do governments want to prevent from happening? Is the aim to take away the fear of 'our own people' or to win over hearts and minds of 'the others'? Then there is the question of what to measure; arrests, killings, prevented attacks, decrease in number of new recruits, convictions, increased social resilience, public opinion? Context and timing also play an important role; what works in the Netherlands, might not be useful in the US, and what worked 3 years ago, might not work now. And finally, we have to ask ourselves: Do we measure results in terms of improvements of the existing situation or do we try to establish whether a government is approaching more or less an ideal democratic society, in which there are few reasons left for violent opposition? This question brings the ethical and the political component into the equation: What political choices are we willing to make? Furthermore, society and its representatives, i.e. politicians, have to decide how many people can be kept simultaneously under surveillance, before turning itself into a police, surveillance, data or intelligence state or alternatively taking the risk of losing sight of some potential terrorists. How much freedom are we willing to trade in for an increase in the level of security?

Such dilemmas demonstrate unmistakably that the question of effectiveness of counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism policies cannot be addressed in a value-free vacuum and can never be raised without addressing ethical considerations.[5] There is no such thing as effectiveness at any cost – at least not in a democratic society where the rule of law is applied. Measuring the effectiveness can, therefore, never be a question of simple arithmetics.

Performativity Matters

However, the abovementioned obstacles in measuring the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies should not lead to the conclusion that we cannot and should not try to assess the consequences of governmental policies. The issues outlined above suggest that it is not necessarily the policy measures and their intended results as such, but much more the way in which they are presented and perceived that determine the overall effect of the policy in question.

The key question is therefore really: What do counter-terrorism policymakers want? They set the agenda with respect to the phenomenon of terrorism, define it in a certain way and link it to corresponding measures. Subsequently, they execute these measures, behind closed doors, and with tacit permission of the public – or, conversely, they feel forced to 'market' their measures first, in order to generate a substantial level of public and political support or to live up to political or public pressure demanding visible actions to be taken against the (perceived) threat.

The way in which policymakers *perform*, or in other words carry out the *process* of countering terrorism, can have more impact than the actual arrests being made (or not being made). This is the so-called 'performativity' of counter-terrorism, or its 'performative power'.[6] Performativity in this context indicates the extent to which a national government, by means of its official counter-terrorism policy and corresponding discourse

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5 See for instance Chalk (1995), Meggle ed. (2005) and Honderich (2003)
6 This is the adaptation of the concept 'performance' or 'performative power' as introduced and described in J. Butler and J.L. Austin's discourse analysis and theory. See Austin (1982), Coutlhard (1985) and Butler (1997)

(in statements, enactments, measures and ministerial remarks), is successful in 'selling' its representation of events and its set of solutions to the problem, as well as being able to set the tone for the overall discourse regarding terrorism and counter-terrorism – thereby mobilising (different) audiences for its purposes.[7]

There is a difference between threat assessment and threat perception, and there are other players in the field apart from official state actors. In this paper, however, the focus is on attempts by governments to persuade public opinion of the legitimacy and accuracy of its threat assessment. In terms of developing counter-terrorism policies, this is particularly relevant because counter-terrorism officials – and academics and advisers – can exert influence particularly in this field.[8]

The presentation of counter-terrorism measures (via statements, enactments, activities, expressions made by cabinet members) sets the tone for the political and public debate. Government statements and memoranda are not mere texts: they create reality. This is certainly the case when the presentation and definition of new policy dovetails with existing threat perceptions in the population (on communism, immigration or new religions for instance); when they tune in to historical experiences (such as previous conflicts, attacks or major disasters); if they depict the alleged terrorist threat as alien, radically 'different' and fundamentally hostile; or if they succeed in promoting terrorism as a central issue in a political game or campaign (by portraying the opposition as being 'soft on terrorism' or by presenting themselves as the nation's saviour from evil).[9] When these implicitly or explicitly formulated representations of 'threats', 'enemies' and 'security' are accepted by the majority of the population, political and social conflicts can be heightened. Consensus subsequently gives way to polarisation, acceptance of the limitations of civil liberties and stigmatisation of radical ideas. Hence, counter-terrorism measures clarify which radical ideas are still tolerated, what level of sympathy with revolutionary terrorists is still permitted and which infringements on civil liberties are accepted for the sake of national security.

As to leave no doubt: a high measure of 'performative power' is *not* equivalent to effective, decisive or successful policy (if such qualities are at all measurable); it rather relates to the visibility and the mobilising power of the applied strategies. In the Netherlands up until the 1990s, for example, the security agencies predominantly kept their activities behind closed doors, made no public announcements about their actions and did not try to involve the population in their efforts. During that period, the level of performative power remained low, although the security services achieved many successes in undermining and debilitating domestic extremism and terrorism.

Evaluating the Performative Power of Counter-Terrorism

The reason for stressing the importance of paying attention to the process and the performance of counter-terrorism is the fact that research points to a distinct relation between the performative power of counter-terrorism instruments and the arc of violence carried out by terrorist movements. In *Theater van de angst*, I isolated 14 factors that enhance the performative power of counter-terrorism activities and plotted them against the number of terrorist attacks and casualties in four countries: the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and the United States.[10] The research was restricted to the 1970s due to the availability of comprehensive data both on terrorist attacks and the measures undertaken to counter them.

The performative power of counter-terrorism is in the first place defined by answering the question whether terrorism is identified by the afflicted government as a political problem and

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7 This concept is set out in greater detail in De Graaf (2010a) and its forthcoming English translation De Graaf (2011)
8 See the introduction and conclusion in Forest ed. (2009)
9 L. Hansen (2006) applied the method of discourse analysis and 'framing' of 'the other' to foreign security politics as a threat to the domestic community. Partly continuing Hansen's example, De Graaf (2010a) effectuates a conversion to domestic security policies
10 De Graaf (2010a)

correspondingly put on the political agenda. If so, was the issue given the highest priority and did it become the heart of political struggles in a country? In other words; was the question politicised?

Secondly, it is relevant whether terrorism was defined as directly threatening public safety and security, in other words, whether the 'subjective insecurity' connected to this threat was high. If terrorism is presented as a containable, low-impact problem, the performativity of counter-terrorism policies usually remains lower.

A third aspect that determines the performative power is the matter of defining the circle of terrorist perpetrators. How broad or narrow do governments define the threat of terrorism? To what extent do they include not only obvious offenders, but also sympathisers, supporters or even apologists of terrorism in their target group? Related to this issue is the extent to which the terrorist threat is discursively linked to existing threats, fears and rifts in society, such as the fear for civil strife, for chaos, for immigration, etc.

A fourth set of questions establishes the extent to which the counter-terrorism measures have a mobilising impact on society. A fifth element points to the manner in which the 'battle' against terrorism is conducted: is it presented as relentless against the broad circle of terrorists and their sympathisers, or is there some attempt to address the grievances or the objectives of the protests by the broader movement from which the terrorists in certain cases stem? Taken together, 14 aspects – related to activities undertaken by the counter-terrorism authorities – may be distinguished that affect the performative power of counter-terrorism policies.

Aspects pertaining to politicisation of counter-terrorism

1. More attention for counter-terrorism is generated when political leaders personally and explicitly express themselves on the issue, rather than leaving this to lower level authorities. When counter-terrorism has a high priority, and is demonstrated as such by the highest possible political authority (e.g. in a presidential speech), the level of performative power is correspondingly higher.

2. When counter-terrorism becomes the central issue in electoral campaigns or is employed to demonise the political opponent, the issue is politicised and the performativity increases.

3. When the perceived personal risk is high and counter-terrorism officials feel directly threatened themselves (for instance because colleagues have previously been the target of terrorist actions), the performative power increases as well, since the sense of urgency of the threat is higher.

4. The resonance of terrorist violence and the extent to which the public is prepared to accept counter-terrorism measures is also amplified when the issue has national priority over other issues (such as financial crises, environmental hazards, etc.). On the contrary, if new crises from a completely different policy field emerge, attention from terrorism might drift away, and the performativity decreases.

Aspects pertaining to discursive framing of the terrorist threat

5. When the threat is expanded to include not only the specific terrorist offenders, but also sympathisers and the broader terrorist constituency, the threat demarcation becomes broader and more urgent, which also fuels the degree of performativity.

6. When war rhetoric is used or the tone of the discourse grows more militant, the performative power increases.

7. When counter-terrorism officials or politicians refer to historical experiences of (civil) war, chaos and violence, existing or slumbering fears are invoked and the persuasiveness of counter-terrorism policy and the severity of the threat are enhanced.

8. The explicit refusal to 'talk to' terrorists – not wanting to enter into negotiations with them, for instance, or not offering them exit-strategies or re-integration programmes – also keeps the level of performative power high.

9. When no shared tradition, culture or overlap of values exists between the terrorists and those countering their actions and counter-terrorism policies explicitly capitalise on this mental distance, the discourse will be increasingly irreconcilable and intransigent. In such a case, the performative power is high: society rallies against political violence, the (alleged) terrorist sympathisers feel antagonised.

Aspects pertaining to mobilisation efforts in the struggle against terrorism

10. Counter-terrorism officials can also explicitly and directly mobilise the population. By placing fugitive terrorists on a 'Ten Most Wanted' list and initiating raids or witch hunts, the population becomes directly involved in counter-terrorism. This increases the visibility of the measures and demonstrates the government's decisiveness, but also increases the level of performance of counter-terrorism policy.

11. Deploying special units that are generally trained for a higher spectrum of violence than regular police units to investigate, prosecute or arrest terrorists adds more drama to the situation, which leads to an increase in the performative power.

12. The introduction of new anti-terrorism legislation also increases the performative power, since it establishes new legal categories, new offences and new types of perpetrators in the counter-terrorism discourse.

13. The introduction of new legislation – such as a 'gag law', data mining provisions or a law on control orders – that is not specifically aimed at terrorism also gives counter-terrorism policy a supplementary boost, since new laws affect the tone of the discussion, attract media attention and affect the terrorist's constituencies.

14. Major 'terrorism trials' – trials that involve national or regional prosecution officers (or Grand Juries) trying well-known individuals

or entire groups – often serve to generate a dynamic and mobilising power (such as solidarity campaigns, hunger strikes, protest demonstrations, acts of revenge, etc.). Hence, the performativity of counter-terrorism increases.

Some Tentative Findings

In *Theater van de angst*, I applied this framework to the situation in the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and the United States in the 1970s.[11] The source material used in this research included government archives, media sources and interviews. The research indicated that a positive connection exists between the way in which counter-terrorism in those countries was 'performed' and succeeded in mobilising the population on the one hand and the course and level of the terrorist violence on the other.[12]

The first relation was rather clear cut: when the number of incidents and victims was high, the ensuing counter-terrorism measures unfolded a large performative power, and had a great mobilising impact. This is not a surprise: terrorist actions create havoc, are usually reported all over the media, and trigger social fear and political responses. Interestingly, there was however a second relationship that points in the reverse direction. On the basis of the studied material, it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that the performative power of counter-terrorism policy sometimes also influences the course of violence. In other words, when counter-terrorism strategies had a high level of performative power and when they demonstrated a substantial potential to persuade and mobilise the public – as was the case in the United States, Italy and West Germany in the 1970s – the ensuing terrorist violence also increased. Conversely, after a certain amount of time, a decline in this performative power preceded, either visibly or less visibly, a decrease in the number of terrorist incidents.

This second link can be interpreted in different ways. Of course, the decrease of terrorist attacks could be a direct result of counter-

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11 De Graaf (2010a)
12 The underlying argument, sources and data can be found in De Graaf (2010a) and its forthcoming English translation

terrorism efforts. Nevertheless, measures often have a delayed effect: it takes some time before new competences (better investigative methods, intelligence operations, etc.) really start to undermine a terrorist movement's capacities. However, it still is remarkable that a high level of mobilising efforts went hand in hand with a continuing radicalisation of potential new terrorist recruits and with a succession of new terrorist incidents. There must thus be another explanation for this link. I would argue that the end of a cycle of terrorist violence can partly be ascribed to a decrease of political and public relevance attached to terrorism and counter-terrorism – and not solely the other way around. It appears that, in certain cases, terrorists abandon their violent course of action when they notice that terrorism fails to move public and political sentiments or when they have become unable to regroup due to a lack of recruits, sympathisers or supporters.

Contrary to what many people assume in their first response to terrorist actions, it became evident whilst studying the cycle of terrorism and the responses to it in the 1970s and the 1980s in the countries mentioned above, that a visible increase of power, responsible authorities or measures did not automatically lead to a more effective form of counter-terrorism. In the middle and long run, opting for 'punctual' crime prevention, reserved language and a certain level of secrecy constituted the most valuable contribution to the restoration of societal peace. This was the case in the seventies and for a large part it still is today, even though the speed of communication has increased, the activities of intelligence and security services are much more spotlighted and withholding information has become considerably less expedient.

It is furthermore remarkable that a lack of measures, manpower and instruments and a weak implementation power did not always work out unfavourably. The low level of performative power of counter-terrorism policy in the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s took the sharpest edge away from a number of radicalisation tendencies. The interaction between counter-terrorism strategies and terrorist activity did depend on a number of factors over which counter-terrorism officials had but little control: the initial preparedness of terrorists to commit violence, the existing fears and dominant public discourses and the political debates on threats to national security. Nevertheless, even in a state of polarisation, governmental action could have a moderating effect, as demonstrated by the German Interior Minister Gerhart Baum who singlehandedly took off the heat in 1979 when he joined former RAF member Horst Mahler in an appeal for more deliberation and less polarisation — until then unimaginable.[13] The monopoly of violence and access to national media and population are still among the government's most crucial prerogatives, particularly in the struggle against terrorism. In short, there are better alternatives for politicians than maintaining policies or continuing to enact new ones that aim to demonstrate state power or to mobilise the society at large.

Contemporary Context

Of course, the decades of the 1970s and 1980s differ from today's era of 'global jihad'. Compared with the relatively nationally oriented terrorist groups that attacked societies in previous decades, and the correspondingly nationally developed and implemented policy strategies to respond to that violence, it is more difficult for governments to control their performance in the global struggle against Jihadist terrorism post-9/11. They face a terrorist threat that – in its narrative and its ideology at least – is more global than it ever was. This makes it much more difficult for governments to stick to their own national approach. The performance of any Western government has become inextricably linked to the international struggle against terrorism since 2001. Foreign 'injustice frames' that inspire new waves of radicalisation at home are being imported from abroad by local radical movements. Israeli bombings in Gaza, for example, can serve extremist movements in Amsterdam or Antwerp – thus replacing national-level, more immediate causes or injustice frames by international and much more unpredictable and incalculable ones.

Secondly, governments have to deal with

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13 The interview was published in Der Spiegel, No. 53/1979. For the extended version, see Jeschke & Malanowski (1980)

independent global media and autonomous citizens that are continuously producing their own narratives through the internet or other real time communication instruments, such as the blogosphere and Twitter. Today, the performativity of counter-terrorism strategies seems much higher given the speed of communication means, the influence of new media and the global discourse on the 'war against terrorism'.

Furthermore, in the struggle against Jihadist terrorism, the mental distance between radical Islamists on the one hand and the open, democratic societies of 'the West' on the other is often viewed as much larger than the conflict between anti-imperialist, left wing or ethno-nationalist groups in the 1970s and 1980s. Global discourse on terrorism has become much more inflammatory and more militant since 9/11 as compared to previous decades. Moreover, the public threat discourse pertaining to Jihadist terrorism has not restricted itself to radical fractions, but has been generalised to include the Muslim community as a whole. In this context, several more potential and actual signifiers have affected counter-terrorism, fuelling the legends of injustice, oppression and discrimination that feed support for a radical ideology. Consequently, de-radicalisation policies in the West are often forced to compete against a public moral panic that is difficult to confront.

However, the same mechanisms that applied to the struggle against terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s could also provide solutions today. Whether we deal with terrorist organisations with an extremist left-wing, ethno-nationalist or religious background, in all cases it is of paramount importance that both government and its constitutive organs refrain from fanning public discourse on terrorism. In relation to the radical movement that should be countered, it is crucial to identify existing signifiers and corresponding legends in time, and to anticipate potential new ones continually. In close cooperation with organisations that represent the terrorists' constituencies, the

governments should facilitate strategies that aim at combating those legends by means of 'neutralisers' or 'counter-narratives' and, in doing so, isolate the 'entrepreneurs of violence'.[14]

This is as relevant today as it was in the 1970s. Only recently, British Foreign Secretary Miliband identified such a 'signifier' that fuelled the performative power of counter-terrorism strategies in a negative way: with their 'call to arms' in the years following '9/11', the US and UK governments had mobilised the public against a joint enemy and had proclaimed a state of emergency that warranted extreme measures. This armed persuasiveness and effective national mobilisation had nevertheless not manifested itself as a blessing, but rather as a curse to Western societies:

> 'The call for a "war on terror" was a call to arms, an attempt to build solidarity for a fight against a single shared enemy. But the foundation for solidarity between peoples and nations should be based not on who we are against, but on the idea of who we are and the values we share. Terrorists succeed when they render countries fearful and vindictive; when they sow division and animosity; when they force countries to respond with violence and repression. The best response is to refuse to be cowed.'[15]

Conclusion

Essentially, terrorists and states are conducting 'influence warfare', a battle to convince and persuade the different target audiences to rally behind them.[16] In this battle of perceptions, the different government agencies – in the areas of police, justice, intelligence and social services – therefore need to be aware of the often implicit and unwittingly produced 'stories' they tell to counter those narrated by the terrorists. It is crucial to take in consideration the fact that combating terrorism is a form of communication, as much as terrorism is itself.[17] Terrorists

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14 Demant & de Graaf (2010), see also Kessels ed. (2010)
15 Cited in The Guardian (2009). See also NRC Handelsblad (2009)
16 See the introduction and conclusion in Forest ed. (2009)
17 Casebeer & Russell (2005)

receive and interpret these messages, try to distort them and subsequently use them to fuel sentiments of oppression and injustice. Before governments issue their own counter-narrative to oppose these myths – which is demanded frequently[18] – they are forced to render an explanation of their unintentional and implicit messages.[19]

In the discussion on the effectiveness of counter-terrorism, this paper attempts to problematise a mere technical and short-term assessment of counter-terrorism measures and instead draw attention to an often neglected field: the relationship between performance of counter-terrorism efforts and terrorist activity. It has become apparent that high visibility and mobilising powers are not by definition positive concepts in relation to counter-terrorism. In general, a low level of performative power has a more rapidly neutralising effect on radicalisation and political violence than large scale, public counter-terrorism efforts. Unless governments pay careful attention to the effects of their policies, the struggle against terrorism can be likened to shooting at a mosquito with a canon, thereby creating considerable collateral damage, while the real target may still be pestering us. Given these caveats and uncertainties, it has become apparent it is not so much the effects and outcomes of counter-terrorism policies upon which we should focus, but the practices or the performance by the government in the process of countering terrorism.

This requires a change of mind that should not only come from politicians and officials. It also requires that the public at large will change its attitude vis-à-vis the risk and threat of terrorism. This demands a completely different government policy than we have seen in some of the Western countries following 9/11 – and for that matter in countries across the globe. It implies that governments refrain from measures that only increase anxiety among their citizens and lessen their resilience. Governments should empower themselves by putting more

faith in their citizens again. After all, a public that shrugs its shoulders over terrorist deeds is the best method to show terrorists that at least their means are not effective.[20] Only when governments succeed in neutralising public fears and shatter the myths and half-truth of repression the terrorists are spreading, they will manage to take the wind out of the sails that keep them floating.[21]

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18 See suggestion in Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law. Theoretical Treatise on Counter-terrorism Approaches, p. 18 and pp. 24-5
19 See also De Graaf (2009) and De Graaf (2010b)
20 Mueller (2005), p. 497
21 Sageman (2004), p. 176 and Gunaratna (2007)

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The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats and Policies

Bibi van Ginkel, Eva Entenmann (Eds.), Bérénice Boutin, Grégory Chauzal, Jessica Dorsey, Marjolein Jegerings, Christophe Paulussen, Johanna Pohl, Alastair Reed, and Sofia Zavagli

Foreword by Mark Singleton (Director, 2014 - 2016)

I joined ICCT in August 2014. At the time, we were only three staff, along with several associates, mostly Dutch academic researchers. Despite becoming a known entity in counter-terrorism research, ICCT was essentially 'just' a brand; a few people punching above their weight. With less than six months before its funding would dry up and no plans to draw from, ICCT's future was mired in uncertainty. Meanwhile, ISIS had announced itself on the world stage, and the only response most governments could come up with, was to address symptoms. So we developed a new strategy, one that would centre on policy relevance, adding value and meeting the requirements of independence. We expanded our team of associates with some renowned international researchers, exploring new territory and advising governments and INGOs. Besides several "good practice" publications for the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the flagship publication during my tenure as director was the well-received "Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union", which we presented to the Dutch government and to the 28 EU Delegations and European Commission in Brussels. Given the importance of the issue, I expected this to be the first of a series of publications; unfortunately, that did not happen. Still, it's never too late to try.

Abstract

Despite the widespread media attention for foreign fighters in Europe, very little is known about the phenomenon itself, something also evidenced by the lack of a single foreign fighter definition across the EU.

In a study commissioned by the Netherlands National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), ICCT addresses this gap by analysing not only the numbers and characteristics of foreign fighters across the EU, but also how the Union and Member States assess the threat of foreign fighters as well as their policy responses regarding security, preventive and legislative measures. The Report also outlines a series of policy options aimed both at the EU and its Member States.

Executive Summary[1]

In the summer of 2012, first reports emerged of so-called "foreign fighters" (FF) leaving their home and residence countries to join the Syrian uprising against the Assad regime. Since then, the number of these "travellers" to the Syrian, and more recently, Iraqi battlefields has grown significantly: From September 2014 to September 2015 alone, the number of FF reportedly doubled and reached 30,000 combatants coming from 104 countries. Experts and government officials have increasingly warned of the potential security threat this phenomenon might also pose to Europe and beyond.

On the occasion of the Netherlands' presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) in the first half of 2016, the Netherlands National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) commissioned the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) to report on the FF phenomenon in the EU. Specifically, this report aims to map the phenomenon and facts surrounding FF in the context of the conflicts in Syria and/or Iraq, as well as the threat assessments and policy responses both at the EU level and within individual EU Member States (MS). As such, this document is not an evaluation of policies, but rather is a charting of the FF situation and responses within the Union.

Utilising data received directly by MS in response to a questionnaire, as well as other public material, ICCT gathered information on the number of FF, their characteristics, MS' threat assessments, and the policies adopted in response to the phenomenon. Supplemented by open-source data and information from expert consultations, this report provides a close look at the FF phenomenon and responses in a total of 26 MS. Nine countries were selected to be analysed in-depth, representing a mixture of transit and sending countries from across the EU, including MS with the highest absolute and per capita numbers of FF. These nine focus countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands,

Spain, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, the report also examines developments at the EU level in response to the FF phenomenon. Several challenges were encountered during the data collection period, especially with regards to the number of FF. First, lacking a common and agreed definition of FF, and a central repository for data collected at the MS level, some countries conflate numbers on FF and foreign *terrorist* fighters, at times adding those involved in terrorism more generally. Second, authorities themselves often lack accurate data or may not disclose their information. Open source data seldom matches the official government numbers, and many reports use estimates instead of exact numbers, frequently leading to inflated FF numbers. The third challenge is that of the double counting of travellers, returnees, those who died abroad, residents, and citizens.
Foreign Fighter Numbers

Based on the responses to the ICCT questionnaire and available open-source information, numbers and key characteristics of EU FF were identified. The total number of FF in the 23 MS[2] that responded to the ICCT questionnaire is 3,710. When completing this data with open source information, the EU-wide[3] estimate lies between 3,922 and 4,294 FF. A majority of around 2,838 FF come from just four countries: Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, with Belgium having the highest per-capita FF contingent.
Many consider *returning* FF as a potential security threat; this research indicates that an average of 30% of FF have returned to their countries of departure.

Foreign Fighter Profiles

This report shows that there is no clear-cut profile of a European FF. Based on the responses from eleven MS, an average of 17% are female. With regard to the place of residence before travelling, the responses of several MS show that between 90% and 100% originate from large metropolitan areas or peripheral suburbs. Many FF originate from the same neighbourhood, which seems to

1 The Full Report is accessible at https://icct.nl/publication/report-the-foreign-fighters-phenomenon-in-the-eu-profiles-threats-policies/
2 Data collection for the questionnaires was closed at the end of October 2015.
3 Note that two countries are not included in this research: Greece and Hungary for which no information could be found.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS FROM THE EU

Total Foreign Fighters: 3922 - 4294
Returned: 30%
Confirmed Dead: 14%

Gender:
17% of foreign fighters are female.

Residence:
90 - 100% of foreign fighters come from urban or built-up areas.

Converts:
6 - 23% of foreign fighters are converts.

The percentage of returnees is based on data from nine MS accounting for 94% of FF.
The percentage of confirmed dead is based on data from sixteen MS accounting for 99% of FF.
The percentage of female FF is based on data from eleven MS accounting for 80% of FF.
The percentage of converts is based on data from three MS accounting for 51% of FF.
The percentage of urban residents is based on data from five MS accounting for 9% of FF. Four more countries responded to the question in the questionnaire, stating a majority originated from an urban environment. The nine countries together account for 30 % of the total FF, and have at least a majority of FF originating from an urban environment.

indicate that there are pre-existing (extremist) networks operating in these areas, that a circle of friends radicalise as a group and decide to leave jointly for Syria/Iraq, or recruit each other from abroad. There is no clear pattern with regard to the nationality of FF; In some countries the majority hold a nationality other than the one of the country where they departed from, whereas in other countries the opposite trend can be observed.

The data also shows a sizeable number of converts to Islam among FF: For MS with more than five FF, between 6% and 23% of the FF are converts. Also, preliminary research indicates that the mental-health status of (potential) FF might also play a role. Regarding the radicalisation process, many MS highlighted what they saw as very short and "under the radar" radicalisation processes. Additional data on, for instance, prior criminal history and family status was inconclusive across the EU.

Threat Perceptions in the EU and Member States

According to various official EU documents, four

general aspects of the FF phenomenon were identified to pose a threat: 1) Persons travelling from the EU to Syria/Iraq seeking to become a FF; 2) the threat posed to EU countries by returned FF who had acquired basic military training and battle field experience; 3) the impact of the FF phenomenon and related terrorist activity on social cohesion within the EU; and 4) the threat posed by would-be FF, who, having been prevented from travelling to Syria/Iraq, may carry out attacks within the EU instead.

The majority of MS consider the FF phenomenon as a serious security risk to their national society. Fourteen MS make use of threat-level assessment mechanisms. Only five regard the threat level in their country to be low or below average. Eleven MS have changed their threat levels since 2011, when the Syrian conflict commenced and the issue of FF started to increasingly gain attention.

Policy Developments in the EU

The EU's CT Strategy based on the four pillars

of prevent, protect, pursue, and respond, remains the primary prism through which the FF phenomenon is perceived and policy options are formulated. While the CT Strategy was set out in 2005, it was only in 2013 that the EU began to respond to the FF threat in the context of Syria/Iraq, with the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator outlining 22 proposals. In 2014, the Council of Justice & Home Affairs (JHA) Ministers set out four priority areas: "[1] to prevent radicalisation and extremism, [2] share information more effectively – including with relevant third countries, [3] dissuade, detect, and disrupt suspicious travel and [4] investigate and prosecute foreign fighters", which has remained the core of the EU's policy response to FF.

With reference to the first priority, the Commission released the communication, "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's response" in 2014. Already in 2011, the Commission had launched the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), in order to assist front-line practitioners through the exchange of experiences and good practices. In November 2015, the RAN Centre of Excellence was established. Given the prominence that IS places on its social media communications, the Commission financed the Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team, whose role is to help MS develop effective counter-narratives. Additionally, efforts have been made to improve the detection and removal of extremist social media content from the Internet. In July 2015, Europol set up the Internet Referral Unit at the behest of the JHA Council.

With regard to the second priority, international cooperation has been strengthened through intensified cooperation especially with countries geographically close to Syria/Iraq. Following the decision taken by the JHA Ministers in November 2015, Europol has launched the European Counter Terrorism Centre in The Hague in January 2016, as a platform for sharing information and coordinating cross-border investigation, focusing on FF, the trafficking of illegal firearms and terrorist financing.

With regard to the third priority, in April 2013, the much-delayed, second-generation Schengen Information System went live, allowing "for an easy exchange of information between national border control authorities, customs and police authorities on persons who may have been involved in a serious crime", a crucial tool for combatting the FF phenomenon. Another important step was the creation of the Focal Point Travellers by Europol in 2013, which contributes to information sharing among MS and third countries with regards to suspected individuals.

Regarding priority number four, the EU prioritised the investigation and prosecution of FF. A key part of this has been the drive to update the EU Council Framework Decision (FD) of 2002, as was already done once before in late November 2008 through FD 2008/919/JHA, to be able to address the new legal challenges presented by the FF phenomenon. In December 2015, the European Commission agreed on a new directive replacing FDs 2002/475/JHA and 2008/919/JHA on combating terrorism. This new directive proposes to strengthen the FD by criminalising the provision of training for terrorism, the receiving of training for terrorism, and the funding of terrorism.

All in all, much progress has been made within the EU. Many of these initiatives are part of a more general evolution of EU CT policy rather than targeting FF specifically.

Policies in the Member States

Responses to the ICCT questionnaires show that every MS has developed its own national approach to terrorism, FF, and radicalisation. Some countries, including ones that have little prior history with terrorism and only a few FF, have developed elaborate, comprehensive strategies, or are currently in the process of doing so.

The general impression is that countries have a broad set of security and legislative measures at their disposal to prevent and counter the problem of FF, from informative hotlines to deprivation of citizenship. Even though MS

often refer to the issues of prevention, law enforcement and security measures are still dominant issues.

In the wake of the January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, MS have strengthened or announced the strengthening of their security and intelligence services, including in connection to transnational crimes. Border controls have also been stepped up and national passenger name record systems are being introduced. Moreover, the use of special investigation methods has been expanded. This Report also shows that countries recently and increasingly adopt administrative measures, even if these measures do not specifically target FF.

With regard to criminalising various terrorist acts in addition to the act of terrorism itself, in line with EU FDs 2002/475/JHA and 2008/919/JHA, all 26 MS included in this research have criminalised the financing of terrorism. Twenty-two MS have criminalised the participation in or leadership of a terrorist group. Recruitment for a terrorist cause has been made an offence in twenty MS. Twenty-three MS have criminalised incitement to and/or glorification of terrorism. Another 23 MS have criminalised the *providing* of terrorist training, whereas fourteen MS have criminalised the *receiving* of terrorist training, with two additional MS being in the process of developing legislation in this regard. Finally, only nine MS have made the travel of FF a criminal offence, and legislation is being developed in two additional MS.

Prevention and addressing the root causes of radicalisation were mentioned by some countries as the primary goal when it comes to addressing the FF phenomenon. The examples of measures mentioned varied from inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, engagement with the Islamic communities, and the use of counter-narratives, to the setting up of emergency phone lines. Community policing, another preventive measure whose importance was stressed after the Paris November attacks, was not often mentioned as a response. Asked about whether MS have a rehabilitation and/or reintegration programme in place for convicted and/or returning FF, a few MS responded affirmatively.

The authors note that certain particularities or emerging trends of the current FF cohort are not (yet) reflected in more targeted policies. These include the number of women, the percentage of converts, the increasing number of (very) young people, the urban-suburban origin, the potential role of mental health issues with FF, the effectiveness of social media propaganda, as well as the sometimes very short radicalisation processes. Better understanding of these trends could help inform more effective, targeted, gender-sensitive policies and actions.

Policy Options

Based on the research for this Report, a number of policy options are proposed for the EU and MS.

Recommendations to both the EU and Member States:

1. There is a clear need for an effective (and centralised) monitoring and evaluation framework to analyse impact and effectiveness of existing and future policies and practices.

Recommendations to the EU:

2. One common definition of FF is necessary to ensure coherence in policies, accuracy in data collection and greater validity when it comes to data analysis.

3. To ensure follow-up by MS of non-binding objectives and policy guidelines formulated by the EU, the Union could consider establishing an internal reporting system, which allows for a dialogue between MS and the EU on how MS are implementing various policies.

Recommendations to Member States:

4. MS that have not yet done so, are advised to draft comprehensive strategies, including prevention programmes, to address the problem of radicalisation towards violent

extremism and FF in particular. Such multistakeholder and multidisciplinary strategies should encompass a suitable, proportional, context-specific and effective mix of policy responses, taken from a toolbox of security, legislative, and preventive measures.

5. Prevention can best be achieved at the local level, therefore first-line practitioners are to be supported through, for example, telephone help lines or other supporting facilities.

6. MS are also advised to learn from past experiences and good practices to develop rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to deal with convicted FF as well as other returnees, and to adapt and tailor these to national exigencies. For an effective implementation of these programmes, MS should also invest in training of, for instance, prison personnel, as well as preparing municipalities to deal with increasing numbers of returnees.

7. In order to better address the emerging trends in FF characteristics, MS are advised to constantly review and, where necessary, amend the current policies and recalibrate their early-warning mechanisms.

8. In order to address the risk to social cohesion within European societies, a shift in the framing of public debates is recommended. Communication is not merely a means to informing the general public about certain measures and policies, but can be an important instrument on its own. As such, careful consideration and crafting of messages intended for different audiences is recommended.

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The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible

J. M. Berger

Foreword by Alastair Reed (Director, 2016 - 2018)

It was very difficult to choose just one from the many papers ICCT published during my time as director. The research papers I have chosen to highlight is an early publication in ICCT's wider body of research on understanding and countering extremist propaganda. This paper examined extremist propaganda, but from different ideological spectrums—one on Islamist groups and the second on white nationalists—seeking to shine a light on the strategic logic behind the propaganda and identify the communication mechanisms employed that made the propaganda so seemingly effective. Properly understanding how extremist propaganda worked was the crucial first step in developing effective policy responses.

The first paper "Deciphering the siren call of militant Islamist propaganda: Meaning, credibility & behavioural change", by Haroro Ingram, was published around the height of ISIS's power, when the effectiveness and impact of ISIS propaganda was starting to be become a priority for policy makers. It aimed to shine a light on how ISIS and other Islamist groups' propaganda worked and offered an alternative to the view that ideology is the key to understanding and countering the appeal of militant Islamism. Drawing on studies from the behavioural and social sciences, it analysed how strategies of meaning, credibility, and behavioural change are deployed in militant Islamist propaganda

"The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible", by J.M. Berger, sought to analyse and explain the enduring legacy of William Pierce's 1978 racist dystopian novel and why it has been so successful in inspiring violence. Pierce's novel has inspired more than 200 murders in at least 40 terrorist attacks, including the Oklahoma Bombings, the single deadliest act of domestic terrorism in the United States. As J.M. Berger explained, "The novel hollows out white nationalist ideology, creating a flexible structure that operates as a call to action for racists with widely varied beliefs, while the dystopian format serves to magnify the book's rational-choice proposition that specific types of violence are urgently necessary."

The two papers, in their own ways, augmented our insight into and understanding of how extremist propaganda work. Between the two of them, the papers laid the foundation for many future research efforts and collaborations, as well as many additional publications on the topics by ICCT.

Due to spatial constraints, the editors were only able to include one article. However, you can access Ingram's paper on the ICCT website. You can further read more recent work by Ingram in Vol. II.

Abstract

The Turner Diaries, the infamous racist dystopian novel by neo-Nazi William Luther Pierce, has inspired more than 200 murders since its publication in 1978, including the single deadliest act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history, the Oklahoma City bombing. The book is arguably the most important single work of white nationalist propaganda in the English language, but it is not a singular artifact. *The Turner Diaries* is part of a genre of racist dystopian propaganda dating back to the U.S. Civil War. This paper will document the books that directly and indirectly inspired *Turner* and examine the extensive violence that the novel has inspired. By comparing and contrasting *The Turner Diaries* to its less-remembered predecessors, this paper analyses the reasons for the novel's lasting impact, including its focus on rational choices over identity choices, its simplification of white nationalist ideology, its repeated calls to action, and the powerfully persuasive nature of dystopian narratives, which can be understood as a secular analogue for religious apocalyptic texts.

Keywords: The Turner Diaries, extremist propaganda, white nationalist ideology, dystopian narratives, violent far-right extremism
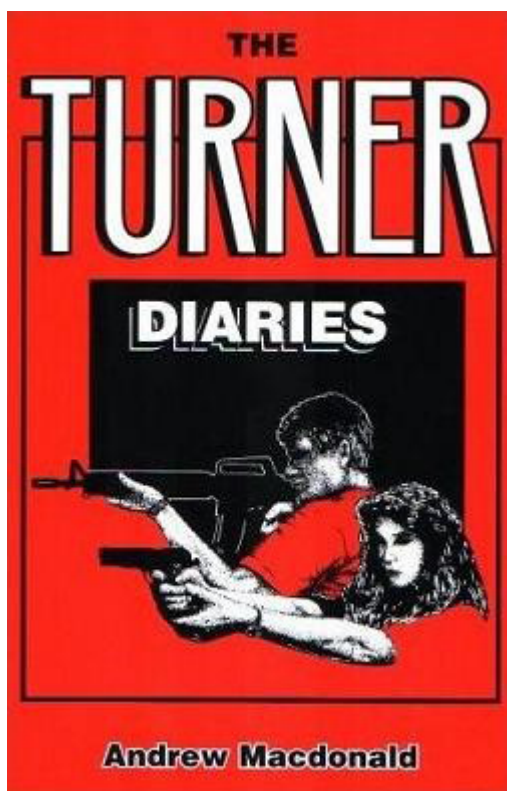
Figure 1: The Turner Diaries, original cover of 1978 collected edition

William Luther Pierce's racist 1978 novel *The Turner Diaries* has been tied to at least 200 murders in at least 40 terrorist attacks and hate crimes, starting in the 1980s and continuing through the present day. The book has established itself as one of the most influential works of violent extremist propaganda in the English language.

The Turner Diaries emerged from a long line of dystopian novels with far right or racist themes, starting with pro-slavery narratives prior to the Civil War. The dystopian genre often plays a significant role as propaganda shaping both radical and mainstream politics, but *The Turner Diaries* has been unusually successful at inspiring violence, due to innovations in its content. The novel hollows out white nationalist ideology, creating a flexible structure that operates as a call to action for racists with widely varied beliefs, while the dystopian format serves to magnify the book's rational-choice proposition that specific types of violence are urgently necessary.

Introduction

Turner Diaries is the best-known racist novel written in the English language and arguably the most influential work of white nationalist propaganda since the fall of Nazi Germany. Since its publication in 1978, at least 200 people have been killed in hate crimes and terrorist attacks by people who were influenced by the book. Most notoriously, the book directly inspired the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, which killed 168 people and injured nearly 700 (see Section 4, Table 2).

The presence of The Turner Diaries is often noted in violent extremist cases, but its content and the context around its creation have garnered less scrutiny.

In many ways, despite its outsize impact, The Turner Diaries is not a unique literary artifact but rather part of a significant corpus of politically extreme or openly racist dystopian novels dating back to the 19th century. Although now mostly forgotten, these books have often been politically consequential. The Turner Diaries is part of this literary tradition, and it was directly inspired by at least one work from that corpus. This paper will:

1. Describe The Turner Diaries and its author, William Pierce.
2. Review English-language predecessors and inspirations relevant to Turner.
3. Catalogue the history of violence inspired by The Turner Diaries.
4. Analyse The Turner Diaries' ideological influence on white nationalism.
5. Compare The Turner Diaries to other works in the subgenre and analyse reasons for Turner's enduring impact compared to those works.
6. Briefly discuss the utility of dystopian fiction in extremist propaganda.

April 19, 1995

As Timothy McVeigh drove away from the smouldering ruins of the Alfred E. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, on April 19, 1995, he carefully placed a white, legal-sized envelope on the front seat of his car.
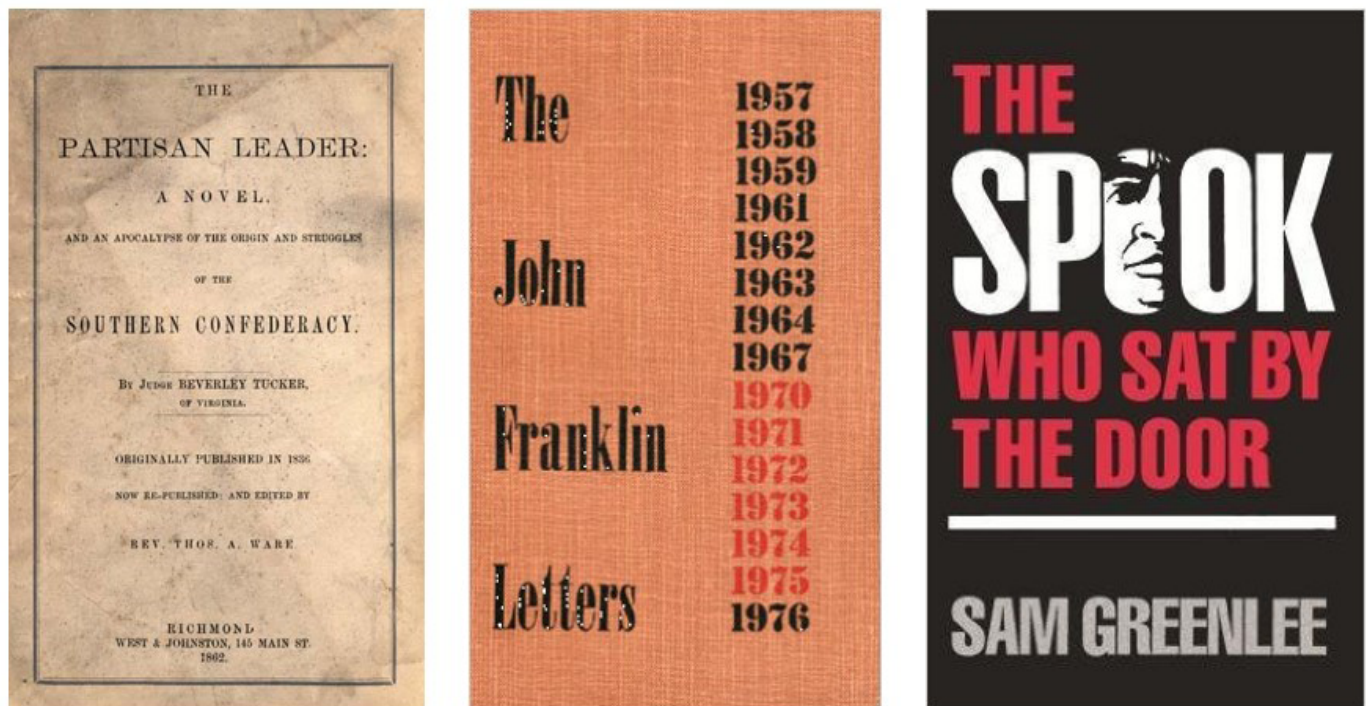
Figure 2: Covers of some of the books discussed in this paper

If anything happened to him, the envelope would ensure people knew why he had carried out the worst act of domestic terrorism in American history.

On the outside of the envelope, he had written "Obey the Constitution of the United States and we won't shoot you". Inside were right-wing propaganda pamphlets, and news clippings about gun control and the deadly siege in Waco, Texas, which had happened on the same date two years earlier.

There were also photocopied pages from McVeigh's favorite book, *The Turner Diaries.*[1]

Little known outside of extremist circles at the time, *The Turner Diaries* is a crudely written dystopian novel about blacks and Jews confiscating guns from white Americans, and the rise of a white supremacist insurgency known as "The Order". The novel is presented as a "found document", the diaries of Earl Turner, one of the white supremacists who fought in this conflict, and it is framed with a foreword and afterword written by a future historian who places the diaries in context.

The Turner Diaries was written by William Luther

Pierce, founder of the neo-Nazi organisation the National Alliance, and published as a serial in the group's newsletter, beginning in 1975. The chapters were revised and collected in book form in 1978.[2]

The events of the book begin on September 16, 1991, 25 years ago this month. The story begins after the seizure of all privately owned firearms, as an armed insurrection is launched by The Order, a terrorist cabal turned guerrilla army. The Order initially funds itself through criminal activity, seeking to spark a race war and a general uprising. The book culminates in a white nationalist takeover of the United States and global genocide against non-whites.

The Author

William Luther Pierce had all the makings of a science fiction writer.

Born in Atlanta, on September 11, 1933, his family moved to Texas when he was four. "I was sort of a nerdy kid without social skills", he recalled. Awkward around girls and counting few friends, Pierce filled his childhood with adventures from the pages of *Planet Stories*, a pulp magazine

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1 Trial transcript, USA v. Terry Lynn Nichols, 96-CR-68, 5 November 1997.
2 W.L. Pierce, The Turner Diaries, online edition, created December 2006 from print book, second edition published by National Vanguard, 1978.
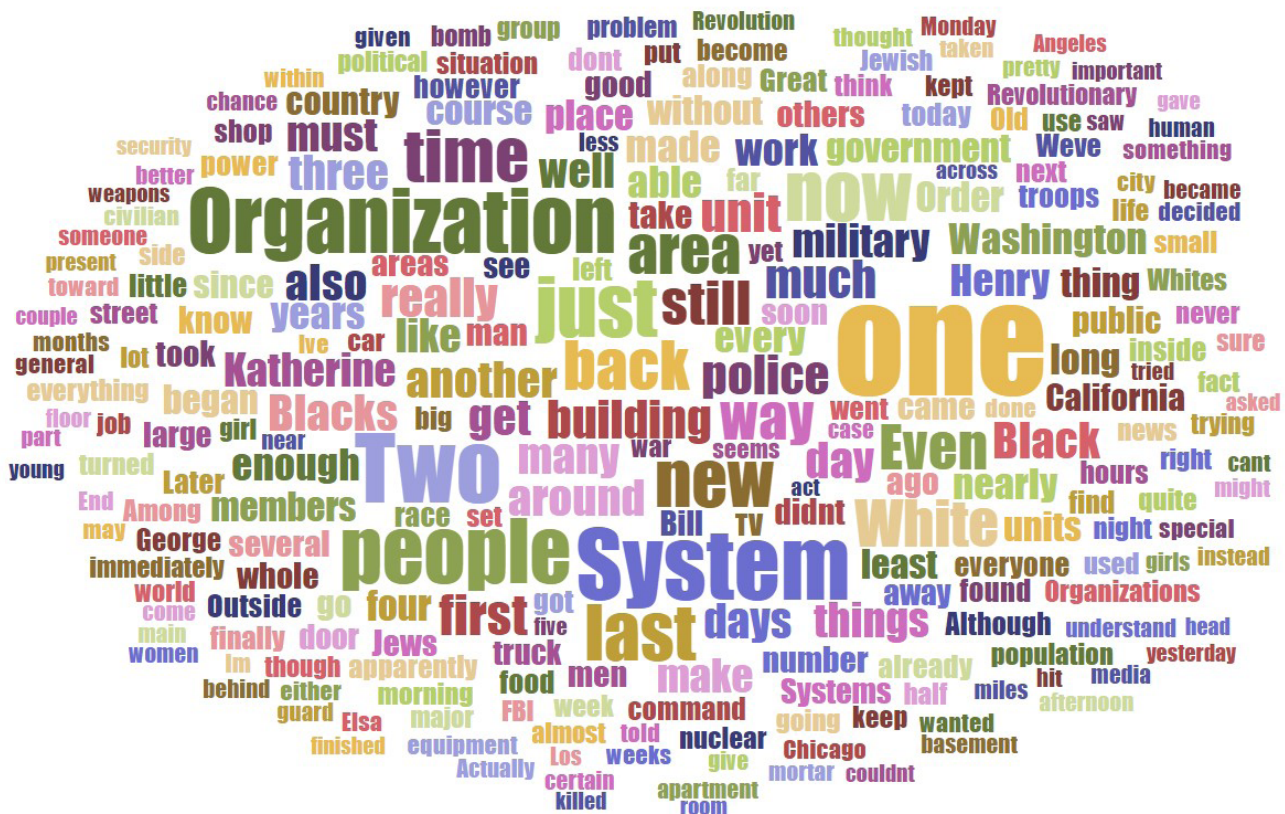
Figure 3: Most common terms in The Turner Diaries

that featured tales from future luminaries such as Ray Bradbury, Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov and Philip K. Dick.[3] The magazine's pages were frequently devoted to lurid spectacles, with titles like "Venus Enslaved" and "Warrior-Maid of Mars", its brightly coloured covers featuring illustrations of buxom women in skintight space-age costumes.

As a teenager, Pierce's interest in science fiction gave way to an interest in science. He bought electronics kits and chemistry sets using money earned mowing lawns and traded the fanciful world of pulps for glossy *Scientific American* and *Popular Mechanics*.[4]

When Pierce entered college in Texas in 1951, he studied physics. On graduation, he put his knowledge to work for the government, with research stints at Los Alamos National Laboratory (home of the Manhattan Project) and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, which was focused on

the technology of space exploration.[5] In 1957, he married a colleague, a mathematician, and in 1960, they had twin sons.

Between his family and his demanding studies, Pierce had been living in a bubble for most of his adult life, paying little attention to the outside world. He soon returned to school to complete his doctorate at the University of Colorado in 1962, continuing on at the university as teacher for three years. After graduation, his academic demands lessened and for practically the first time, he widened his gaze beyond the realm of physics. What he saw was the burgeoning civil rights movement.

Pierce claimed he was initially sympathetic to the idea of equal rights for blacks but suspicious of government efforts that he saw as forcing integration on people who should be able to freely choose with whom they associated. He fumed at what he saw as a media bias depicting segregationists as hateful and ignorant. He

3 W.L. Pierce, "The Radicalizing of an American", National Vanguard magazine 61 (1978); an index of Planet Stories publications can be found here: http://www.isfdb.org/wiki/index.php/Magazine:Planet_Stories.
4 Ibid.
5 Biographical details have been drawn from three sources. First, the previously cited autobiographical article, "The Radicalizing of an American". Second, an authorised biography of Pierce, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds, self-published by R. S. Griffin, 2001. Third, a collection of FBI FOIA documents on Pierce and the National Alliance, requested by researcher Ernie Lazar and housed at New York University's Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, https://archive.org/details/lazarfoia.

Rank	Term	Collocate	Count (context)
1	new	york	22
2	organization	members	18
3	white	population	12
4	new	recruits	10
5	new	members	9
6	white	areas	9
7	organization	work	8
8	white	people	8
9	white	girl	8
10	area	units	8
11	just	outside	7
12	new	people	7
13	new	organization	7
14	organization	time	6
15	organization	member	6
16	organization	just	6
17	just	new	6
18	just	finished	6
19	new	just	6
20	new	era	6
21	new	city	6
22	time	organization	6

Table 1: Two-word phrases occurring in The Turner Diaries

claimed he heard whispers among some of his academic colleagues that the bias was being driven by "Jews", a premise that piqued his interest.

The more he considered racial matters, the uglier his perspective became. On more than one occasion, Pierce recounted the story of a white academic colleague who had married a woman of mixed race, disparagingly describing their children as "awful looking" and wondering how their father could possibly love them. The question nagged at him persistently, and his thoughts about segregation soon grew militant.[6]

By his own admission, Pierce was prone to taking his thoughts to extreme and simplistic conclusions. "I realize that I have a turn of mind that leads me to exaggerate and oversimplify things for the sake of better understanding, and I know there are dangers in that", he told his biographer, when reflecting on his radicalisation. "But I think that tendency in me helps me get to the essence of things".[7]

One of his coworkers put it similarly, when asked by the FBI about this period in Pierce's life: "He was looking for a simple solution to the problems of the world".[8]

In 1963, Pierce saw a television clip showing protestors at a speech by George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party (ANP). The ANP was a small neo-Nazi organisation that put a high priority on publicity and propaganda, publishing newsletters and parading around in public wearing full Nazi regalia.

6 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 53.
7 Ibid., and W.L. Pierce, "The Radicalizing of an American" (1978).
8 E. Lazar, FOIA documents.

"You can do nothing until you've reached the masses", Rockwell explained in an interview. "In order to reach them without money, without status, without a public platform, you have to become a dramatic figure".[9]

Intrigued, Pierce wrote a letter to Rockwell, and they struck up a correspondence. In 1965, Pierce moved from academia to work with a defence contractor in Connecticut, and he began driving on weekends to the Washington, D.C. area, where Rockwell was based. He also spent time at the Yale University library, reading alarmist books about racial trends, many dating back to the 1920s and 1930s.[10]

As his relationship with Rockwell was blooming, Pierce was granted a "secret" government clearance through his job, although he never worked on a classified project. He rarely displayed his racism to coworkers. When the FBI opened an investigation of Rockwell's American Nazi Party, agents spoke to his former colleagues. Many found him distant and "impenetrable" and "expressed their intense dislike of him as a person". Nevertheless, they conceded, he was a "first-class physicist".[11]

But after a few months, his work began to deteriorate. Pierce quit abruptly, after less than a year. He explained to his supervisor that he wanted to be a writer and that he had been writing six hours a night for months. Going forward, the vehicle for his ambition would be a self-published journal, edited and written by Pierce, in collaboration with Rockwell.[12]

Rockwell was assassinated in 1967, by a member of his own group, and Pierce became a top leader of the ANP, which had been renamed the National Socialist White People's Party. A series of organisational affiliations followed. Pierce was in the thick of the rapidly evolving white nationalist scene, not just as a writer, but as an organiser and thought leader. The FBI's file on Pierce would eventually stretch into hundreds of pages, but he was never charged with a crime.

After falling out with Rockwell's successors over the prolific display of Nazi branding, which Pierce felt was counterproductive to recruitment, the former physicist founded his own group, the National Alliance, in 1974. At the beginning of 1975, in an effort to boost circulation of the National Alliance's racist newspaper *Attack!*, Pierce launched the first chapter of a serialised "future history" novel entitled *The Turner Diaries*, perhaps harkening back to the pulp magazines of his youth.

Pierce would lead the National Alliance until his death in 2002, producing hours of audio recordings and overseeing the production of thousands of pages of white nationalist publications over the course of decades.[13] But for all his busy years of frenetic activism, *The Turner Diaries* would be Pierce's primary legacy, inspiring the worst act of domestic terrorism in the history of the United States and prompting dozens of others to act out steps from its violent programme of racial genocide.

The Book

Beginning in January 1975, *Attack!* published one chapter of *The Turner Diaries* per issue for about three and a half years, under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald.

The book is framed by a foreword and afterword written by a future historian, looking back on "the Great Revolution" as chronicled in the recently discovered diaries of a key figure, Earl Turner. As is common in such "found document" narratives, the future historian praises the authenticity of the source. The main story was originally set in the 1980s, but Pierce revised it to the 1990s when the serialised work was collected as a book in 1978.[14]

The diaries begin 12 years before the founding of the "New Era" brought on by the "Great

9 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 98.
10 Ibid., p. 99.
11 E. Lazar, FOIA documents.
12 Ibid.
13 Anti-Defamation League, "Extremism in America: William Pierce". Undated, updated July 2002, http://archive.adl.org/learn/ext_us/pierce.html?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&xpicked=2&item=wp.
14 National Alliance, Action: Internal Bulletin of the National Youth Alliance. No. 39 (February 1975).

Revolution". The preface is almost completely vague as to the nature of the New Era, save to note that the Revolution "saved our race in its time of greatest peril".[15]

Earl Turner describes an America in which private gun ownership has been banned and the guns of most Americans confiscated by the government, using deputised "Negroes" armed with baseball bats and kitchen knives. The raids are targeted based on previously implemented mandatory gun registration records. The system is overwhelmed by the number of gun owners arrested, and most of those swept up in the first raids are released after a few days.[16]

Turner explains that the government is controlled by a Jewish conspiracy, with blacks and other minorities in subordinate positions of power, abetted by white liberals and people of mixed race. As the story progresses, the government and paragovernmental minority organisations – referred to collectively as The System – introduce increasingly repressive measures to suppress dissent and uprisings, while America's economy and infrastructure collapses under pressure from a white nationalist insurgency.

The System implements a series of laws sure to sound absurd to anyone not seized by white racial paranoia – ranging from preferential tax breaks for mixed-race couples to the repeal of rape laws (on the basis that they were an affront to race and gender equality). The narrator takes pains to describe the increasingly sordid consequences of these developments, all attuned to white racial fears. Life becomes "uglier and uglier these days", Turner's diary states, "more and more Jewish".[17]

Immediately after the gun confiscation, a surge of terrorism erupts, carried out by members of "The Organization", a nebulous group to which Turner belongs. The first wave of resistance is swiftly crushed. Turner complains bitterly about the quality of most of The Organization's recruits, who choose not to act due to a combination of cowardice, complacency and corruption. Some of Turner's most vituperative condemnation is reserved for "conservatives" who lack the will to stand up for their values – the "talkers" who do not act.

After the initial attacks fail to produce a popular revolution, The Organization steps up its rhetoric and planning, seeking to purge "the fainthearts and hobbyists – 'the talkers.'" The Organization infiltrates the police and the government, with the bulk of its members organising in semi-autonomous cells, including "underground" units made up of people who are already known to the authorities as subversive, and "legal" units consisting of people whose affiliation to the group remains secret.[18]

Turner walks readers through his cell's preparations, step by step, and often in very specific detail, from how to store and conceal weapons caches to secure communications to the construction of bombs. The book falls only a little short of being a "how to" manual for terrorism and insurgency.

The Organization begins assassinating law enforcement officials and politicians, using everything from shotguns to axes. At the start, the Organization targets mostly non-whites in positions of power, but it soon turns its attention to white collaborators. Based in the Washington, D.C., area, Turner's cell initially funds itself through robberies, aided by elaborate disguises, and later through counterfeiting operations, which have a dual-purpose of raising funds and damaging the System's economy – a tactic that would later be emulated by real-world readers of *The Turner Diaries*.[19]

The cell's first major operation is the bombing of FBI headquarters, an act directed by the Organization's Revolutionary Command. The construction of the explosive device is described in painstaking detail, an improvised truck bomb powered by 4,400 pounds of ammonium nitrate, a volatile substance used as

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15 W.L. Pierce, The Turner Diaries. Online edition (PDF). Forward.
16 Ibid., Chapter 1.
17 Ibid., Chapter 9.
18 Ibid., Chapter 1.
19 Ibid., Chapters 4, 15.

a commercial fertiliser. Combined with fuel oil and a high-energy detonator, it forms a powerful explosive. The bomb described is very similar in size and design to the improvised explosive used by Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City, although McVeigh made changes to increase the explosive yield of his device.[20]

The explosion kills more than 700 people, including many whites, which Turner justifies by the extremity of the political problem and peril to the existence of the white race. The Organization subsequently bombs a Washington TV transmitter and the printing presses of the Washington Post, seen as a liberal ally of The System, then assassinates the Post's editorial page editor. Turner and his fellow cell members continue on a spree of bombings and mortar attacks targeting the media and federal government buildings. Turner reflects that these activities hurt The System but do not help The Organization win the hearts and minds of other white Americans.[21]

The Organization fires mortars on a crowd gathered to hear a presidential address against the "racist, terrorist" killing spree and shoots down an Israel-bound airliner full of "mostly Jews". This, in turn, leads to more and more crackdowns, even as the Organization's activities inspire imitators from unconnected groups.

"Every nut with an ax to grind seems to have gotten into the act", Turner notes.[22]

Turner is eventually inducted into the inner sanctum of The Organization. After being vetted, he is given a book to read. Its contents are described in only the vaguest and most mystical terms, but its effects are clear:

For the first time I understand the deepest meaning of what we are doing. I understand now why we cannot fail, no matter what we must do to win and no matter how many of

us must perish in doing it. Everything that has been and everything that is yet to be depend on us. We are truly the instruments of God in the fulfillment of His Grand Design.[23]

Based on the overwhelming persuasiveness of this otherwise undescribed text, Turner is "born again" with a new fervour for the movement and is invited to join an organisation within the Organization. In a cult-like ceremony, he is inducted into "The Order", a secretive cabal that controls The Organization.[24]

As a consequence of his new status, Turner is given a poison pill and instructed to commit suicide rather than be captured by the government. But when his cell is raided by the System, he is apprehended and tortured extensively by black and Jewish captors, as described in graphic detail. After confessing everything he knows, except for the existence of The Order and the contents of the mystery book, Turner is thrown into solitary confinement.

In solitary, "it was nice not to have to worry about Blacks", he notes.[25]

While Turner is in prison, The Organization shifts its focus to economic targets, including terrorist bombings in Houston that kill more than 4,000 people, moving on to telephone exchanges and nuclear power plants.

After more than a year passes, his compatriots break him out of prison, but Turner faces an internal tribunal for breaking his oath to die before capture. He is sentenced to carry out a suicide mission on behalf of The Order at some point in the future. Turner is relocated to the West Coast, where he helps The Organization seize a significant amount of territory in California, including an Air Force base equipped with nuclear weapons.[26]

The Organization ethnically cleanses the area under its control, killing or relocating all nonwhites and people it suspects might be

20 Trial transcript, USA v. Timothy James McVeigh, No. 96-CR-68, 1 May 1997.
21 W.L. Pierce, The Turner Diaries. Online edition (PDF). Chapters 5, 7, 27.
22 Ibid., Chapter 12.
23 Ibid., Chapter 10.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., Chapter 15.
26 Ibid., Chapter 21.

of mixed parentage. Turner details what The Organization finds when it takes control of nonwhite areas, including cannibalism and a host of other graphic atrocities.

"But even the tiny beginning we have already made fills me with joy and pride. What a miracle it is to walk streets which only a few weeks ago were filled with non-Whites lounging at every street corner and in every doorway and to see only White faces -- clean, happy, enthusiastic White faces, determined and hopeful for the future!" Turner writes, in one of his tamer reflections.[27]

All this culminates in what Turner calls the Day of the Rope, in which white "race traitors" are summarily lynched, including "the politicians, the lawyers, the businessmen, the TV newscasters, the newspaper reporters and editors, the judges, the teachers, the school officials, the 'civic leaders,' the bureaucrats, the preachers", actors and musicians, and anyone else who cooperated with the system, as well as anyone who took part in an interracial sexual relationship. After a wave of public executions by The Organization, private citizens rise up in mobs to kill still more blacks and Jews who escaped the initial purge.

"I am sure that, without the forceful lesson of this Day of the Rope, we would not have so quickly elicited this sort of citizen cooperation", Turner writes. "The hangings have helped everyone get off the fence in a hurry".[28]

The Organization smuggles nuclear missiles out of California before the System can launch a counterstrike and detonates several in New York City. It launches the rest of its missiles from the air base at both Israel and the Soviet Union, forcing the U.S. government to launch full-scale strikes on the Soviets to pre-empt retaliation. The Soviets respond by wiping out Baltimore and Detroit, while the U.S. government nukes The Organization in Los Angeles.[29]

In the chaos, other Organization members seize territory and create an all-white armed

enclave in Maryland, but its gains are tenuous and the war remains stalemated. To shift the balance of power, the secretive leaders of The Order assign Turner to a suicide mission to crash a plane carrying a nuclear weapon into the Pentagon, in completion of his sentence for oath-breaking.[30]

The diary comes to an end. The future historian's epilogue notes that Turner's attack succeeded, turning the momentum of the insurgency toward The Organization. In 1999, six gruesome years after the diary ends, The Organization takes control of the United States, and by the dawn of 2000, the world, although it takes The Organization some additional time to exterminate all non-whites on the planet.

In the epilogue, the future historian notes that the turning point came in 1999, after Turner's death and "110 years after the birth of the Great One", an oblique reference to Adolf Hitler and a signal about the ultimate nature of the New Era.[31]

Key Themes

While *The Turner Diaries* is fundamentally a novel, written in a very crude and simplistic style, it is also a highly efficient work of propaganda, including an array of elements and techniques designed to maximise its impact on readers. These include:

- Call to action
- Emphasis on authenticity
- The objectives of terrorism
- Practical guidance

Call to Action

Perhaps the primary theme of *The Turner Diaries* is the urgency of action. Earl Turner articulates a litany of missed opportunities that precede the book's apocalyptic events, explicitly stating that earlier action would have produced a better outcome:

27 Ibid., Chapter 22.
28 Ibid., Chapter 23.
29 Ibid., Chapter 26.
30 Ibid., Chapter 28.
31 Ibid., Epilog.

We have allowed a diabolically clever, alien minority to put chains on our souls and our minds. These spiritual chains are a truer mark of slavery than the iron chains which are yet to come.

Why didn't we rebel 35 years ago, when they took our schools away from us and began converting them into racially mixed jungles?

Why didn't we throw them all out of the country 50 years ago, instead of letting them use us as cannon fodder in their war to subjugate Europe?

More to the point, why didn't we rise up three years ago, when they started taking our guns away? Why didn't we rise up in righteous fury and drag these arrogant aliens into the streets and cut their throats then? Why didn't we roast them over bonfires at every street-corner in America? Why didn't we make a final end to this obnoxious and eternally pushy clan, this pestilence from the sewers of the East, instead of meekly allowing ourselves to be disarmed?

Some of the book's harshest criticisms are aimed at those who share The Organization's white racial identity but fail to act:

We had hoped that when we set the example of resisting the System's tyranny, others would resist too. We had hoped that by making dramatic strikes against top System personalities and important System facilities, we would inspire Americans everywhere to initiate similar actions of their own. But, for the most part, the bastards just sat on their asses. […]

Of all the segments of the population from which we had hoped to draw new members, the "conservatives" and "right wingers" have been the biggest disappointment. They are the world's worst conspiracy-mongers—and also the world's greatest cowards. […]

Woe betide any whining conservative, "responsible" or otherwise, who gets in the way of our revolution when I am around! I will listen to no more excuses from these self-serving collaborators but will simply reach for my pistol.

As discussed in greater detail in Section 5, "Why Turner", *The Turner Diaries* does not attempt to persuade readers that they should be racists. Rather, it assumes readers have already made an identity choice (broadly defined as "white"). Instead, it seeks to persuade readers that imminent violent action is a rational choice. The overriding message of the book, accentuated to some extent by the urgency embedded in a dystopian-apocalyptic storyline, is that the hour for action is now. As discussed in detail below, this call to action has been answered repeatedly, at the cost of many lives.

Emphasis on Authenticity

As other authors (discussed in more detail below) discovered, the epistolary format of *The Turner Diaries* offers several advantages to propagandists. Epistolary novels present a narrative in the form of "found documents" such as letters, diaries or news reports. The format offers a number of advantages to propagandists.

Epistolary fiction adopts the voice of a protagonist. Readers can attribute awkward or crude language to the narrator rather than the author, and the lack of polish can even enhance the feeling of authenticity. The format also allows for looser plotting, as the narrator is not required to be omniscient.

The format is also more natural for political commentary compared to other formats, such as Socratic dialogue (in which views are expounded by characters having conversations). In a diary or a letter, the protagonist can express opinions directly to readers, without contrivance and without breaking the flow of the narrative.

Framing mechanisms, such as forewords and afterwords, also magnify the impact of epistolary works, particularly dystopian narratives that describe wars or unrest. In *The Turner Diaries*, and in some of the works that preceded it, a "future historian" can put a grim narrative in context by explaining that the dark times depicted in the primary story ultimately produce a utopian outcome, without having to provide potentially implausible details that might detract from the authenticity.

The Objectives of Terrorism

The Turner Diaries contains several astute insights into the mechanics and effects of terrorism. For instance, Turner discusses how The System helps The Organization by overreacting to its terrorist threat – instituting emergency powers and doubling down on the provocations that started the conflict in the first place.

Turner also holds forth on the idea of terrorism as the "propaganda of the deed", a concept that originated with anarchists in the early days of modern terrorism and is still relevant in the current age of jihadist terrorism. Terrorism is not just about blowing things up, the book explains, it's about setting an example for others.

Another passage was highlighted in the photocopies that Timothy McVeigh carried with him on the day of the Oklahoma City bombing, taken from Earl Turner's diary entry after the cell carries out a critical mortar attack on Washington, D.C.:

The real value of our attacks today lies in the psychological impact, not in the immediate casualties. More important, though, is what we taught the politicians and the bureaucrats. They learned this afternoon that not one of them is beyond our reach. They can huddle behind barbed wire and tanks in the city, and they can hide behind the concrete walls of their country estates, but we can still find them and kill them.[32]

Turner also repeatedly discusses the importance of strategic action, a message that appears to have resonated less with its violent readers. After an initial attack on the Washington Post yields only a minimal result, Turner writes:

We have resolved that, in the future, we will undertake no mission on our own initiative until we have carefully evaluated its objective and convinced ourselves that it is worth the risk. We cannot afford to strike the System simply

for the sake of striking, or we will become like an army of gnats trying to bite an elephant to death. Each blow must be carefully calculated for its effect.[33]

As the story progresses, each attack is discussed not just for its body count or operational details, but for its desired strategic effect. For instance, terrorist attacks that cause economic damage are prioritised, because the audience The Organization wishes to radicalise will not respond unless they are made uncomfortable.

"What is really precious to the average American is not his freedom or his honor or the future of his race, but his pay check. He complained when the System began busing his kids to Black schools 20 years ago, but he was allowed to keep his station wagon and his fiberglass speedboat, so he didn't fight", Turner writes.[34]

Practical Guidance

Finally, *The Turner Diaries* is meant to serve as a practical guide to carrying out a terrorist insurgency. In this respect, *Turner* follows the template of previous works, discussed in the following section, which were written with the same objective and which directly inspired Pierce's writing.

Most memorably, the book provided detailed guidance on building a truck bomb very similar to the device detonated in Oklahoma City in 1995.[35]

Additionally, the book outlines a plan of action, including an initial phase of criminal activity to finance the cause, which several readers of the book have specifically emulated (detailed in Section 4, "A Legacy of Violence", page 24). It also offers advice on storing and stockpiling weapons, lessons on how to structure a covert organisation and conduct secure communications, and instructions on target selection.

32 Ibid., Chapter 9.
33 Ibid., Chapter 7.
34 Ibid., Chapter 14.
35 Ibid., Chapter 5.

The Turner Lineage

The Turner Diaries is an example of the dystopian fiction genre, stories and novels which are overtly concerned with the corruption and/or collapse of human society at some point in the foreseeable future. The genre emerged in response to the concept of "utopia", a mythical perfect society, as articulated by Sir Thomas More in the 1516 novel of the same name.[36] Dystopia is the word for the opposite of utopia, describing a society that is profoundly broken.

Dystopian novels began to emerge as a literary force in the 19th century, and today the concept ranks among the most popular literary genres. In its earliest incarnations and repeatedly through the history of the genre, dystopian stories and novels have served as propaganda tools, often at the service of radical or extremist causes. Racism is a recurrent theme in the history of the dystopian genre, with dozens of racially charged dystopian works published before and after the writing of *The Turner Diaries*.[37]

The earliest popular dystopian novels aimed to defend the institution of slavery in the United States and promote the idea of secession from the Union. *The Turner Diaries*' dystopian family tree stretches back to these first rumblings of the American Civil War.

The section that follows will briefly describe several works that influenced the development of *Turner*, whether directly (works likely read by Pierce) or indirectly (works that inspired works read by Pierce). The conclusion of the paper will consider the critical components responsible for *Turner*'s influence as an evolution and advancement of the narratives, themes and techniques used in earlier works.

The Fire Eaters

The modern dystopian genre first flowered as a response to the seething tensions of the American abolitionist movement in the mid-1800s. As conflict brewed between Northern and Southern states over the issue of slavery, a public debate erupted, including dueling pamphlets, newspaper opinion articles and books. Much of this material was ephemeral, and some has been lost to time. While it is not possible to create a comprehensive record, several major works have survived.

Novels presented a compelling format for both sides of the slavery debate to explore issues in a powerful and emotional way. The most famous example, Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slavery tale *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was the best-selling novel of the 19th century and is credited with playing an important role in pushing abolition to the forefront of American cultural debate in the run-up to the Civil War.[38] The novel inspired direct responses casting slavery in a positive light, such as *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* and *Life at the South; or, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" As It Is*.[39]

But even before the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pro-slavery authors turned to the relatively new genre of dystopian fiction — imagining a future world where white racial supremacy was replaced with the horrors of racial equality, race-mixing and civil war.

In 1835, an obscure author named Jerome B. Holgate wrote a remarkably vituperative book called *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*, under the pseudonym "Oliver Bolokitten", the earliest example I could find of a racist dystopia and ranks as one of the very first examples of the modern dystopian genre more broadly. The book imagines a 20th century society in which miscegenation is not only accepted but enforced as a solution to racial inequality. The book focuses on the physical horrors of race-mixing, including lengthy and lurid descriptions of the revulsion that future

36 T. More, Utopia. 1516, http://theopenutopia.org/full-text/introduction-open-utopia/.
37 Some of the most significant examples include The Red Napoleon (1929), Sown in Darkness AD 2000 (1941), The Camp of the Saints (1973), and numerous novels published by white nationalist Harold Covington starting in the 1980s.
38 W. Kaufman, The Civil War in American Culture (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 18-20; "Slave narratives and Uncle Tom's Cabin", Africans in America. PBS.org. Undated, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2958.html.
39 Ibid.; J.R. Tandy, "Pro-Slavery Propaganda in American Fiction of the Fifties", South Atlantic Quarterly 21, no. 1 (1922), p. 41.

whites must suppress in order to breed with grotesquely caricatured blacks.[40]

One year later, *The Partisan Leader; A Tale of The Future* presented a more political take on tensions between North and South. The book's author, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, was known as one of the "Fire-Eaters", a group of fanatical pro-slavery extremists who had long lobbied in favor of secession.[41] As a literary figure, Tucker famously mentored Edgar Allen Poe.[42] As a politician, he wrote extensively on secession. Eric H. Walther, writing in *The Fire Eaters*, explained Tucker's role as one of several important secessionist propagandists who "indoctrinated people with arguments for state sovereignty, issued warnings about hostile sectional majorities, and argued for the necessity of perpetuating and protecting slavery".[43]

Set 13 years in the future, *The Partisan Leader* follows the battles of an underground guerrilla movement formed in Virginia to fight the tyrannical four-term President Martin Van Buren, who has spearheaded a Northern conspiracy to "subdue the spirit" of the South. The fictional Van Buren bears comically little resemblance to his real world counterpart, who was elected in 1836 and soundly defeated after a single term. The deep Southern states secede and form a Confederacy, while Virginia struggles to throw off the federal yoke through a guerrilla war waged by irregular militias.

In the North, the book was republished in 1861 with a new title page, adding the phrase "A Key to the Disunion Conspiracy", and "Secretly Printed in Washington (in the year 1836) ... but afterwards suppressed". It was touted as proof the Southern states had been planning secession for almost 30 years. The *New York Times* noted its republication, calling it a

"curious book, prophetic of the whole secession movement", and "a work of very great interest at the present moment". In the South, the book was retitled to suggest it contained literal prophecy -- *The Partisan Leader: A Novel, and an Apocalypse of the Origin and Struggles of the Southern Confederacy*.[44]

In 1859, popular adventure writer John Beauchamp published a 502-page novel called *Wild Southern Scenes: A Tale of Disunion! And Border War!* A pop-culture confection despite its dark social undertones of support for slavery and a notable streak of anti-Semitism, the story gets the imminent Civil War almost perfectly wrong, tracing the exploits and romances of Southern families against the backdrop of a Northern secessionist rebellion, while a Southern president struggles to keep the Union together.[45]

One of that book's most influential readers was Virginia plantation owner Edmund Ruffin, another a member of the Fire-Eaters.[46] Ruffin was so committed to the Southern cause that when the war broke out, he enlisted as a Confederate soldier, despite being over 60 years old. He committed suicide in 1865, according to contemporary news accounts, having "declared it impossible for him to live under the [Union] government". His obituary credited him with firing the literal first shot of the Civil War at Fort Sumter, "an act of which he always spoke with pride and exultation".[47]

"Finished reading 'Wild Scenes of the South,' a very foolish book which I regret having bought or spent time in reading", Ruffin wrote in 1860. But the concept appealed to him. "The idea might be carried out to good purpose", he added. Ruffin had also read *The Partisan Leader*. He took to his writing desk, and composed his own dystopian propaganda

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40 O. Bolokitten, "Jerome B. Holgate", A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation, in the Year of Our Lord 19 (1835).

41 Although secession was a complex issue that went beyond slavery and white supremacy, racial issues were key to the politics of the day as well as to white nationalists of later generations.

42 E. H. Walther, The Fire-Eaters (LSU Press, 1992), pp. 30-47; N. B. Tucker, The Partisan Leader (New York: 1836; Reprinted by Rudd & Carleton, 1861).

43 E. H. Walther, The Fire-Eaters, p. 10.

44 "The Partisan Leader," New York Times, May 18, 1861. N. B. Tucker, The Partisan Leader: A novel, and an apocalypse of the origin and struggles of the Southern Confederacy (West & Johnston, 1862).

45 J.B. Jones, Wild Southern Scenes A Tale of Disunion and Border War (T.B. Peterson and Bros: Philadelphia, 1859).

46 E. H. Walther, The Fire-Eaters, Chapter Seven.

47 "THE SUICIDE OF RUFFIN.; The Man who Fired the First Gun on Fort Sumter Blows His Brains Out He Prefers Death to Living Under the Government of the United States," The New York Times, 22 June 1865.

epic, *Anticipations of the Future,* published in 1860.[48]

Anticipations opens four years from its present-day, 1864, and continues through 1870, tracing a fictional path for real-life political figures. In the book, William Seward, the former governor of New York and a committed abolitionist, defeats Abraham Lincoln in his bid for re-election, ushering in a war of the states.

Ruffin fuses political complaints about overweening federal government power with arguments in favor of white racial supremacy. The narrative describes the legalisation of black citizenship and the appointment of African-Americans to government offices starting in 1866. As war erupts, a Northern army contingent made up largely of black soldiers crosses into Kentucky. Most white families flee its advance, but those who cannot, suffer a bloody fate, foreshadowing some of *Turner*'s more lurid passages.

"The consequences were too horrible to be described in detail", Ruffin wrote, leaving details to the fervid imagination of his readers. "All the men, women and children so captured were butchered — after the infliction of still greater horrors". Later, he specifies that the army's crimes included "acts of murder, rape, or arson". The advance fails because many of the black soldiers are escaped slaves who enlisted only so that they could defect and return to their masters.

As the tide of the war continues to turn against the North, unrest breaks out in New York, Philadelphia and Boston, with widespread, alcohol-fueled outbreaks of looting and murder among the poorest whites, then eventually both blacks and whites. By the end, New York is burned to the ground (another plot point that would be echoed in *Turner*), and the other cities ravaged.

Anticipations is not a traditional novel, entirely forgoing the "foolish" melodrama of *Wild Southern Scenes* that Ruffin disdained.

Presented as a series of dispatches from a British resident of the United States to the *Times of London*, the book is essentially a series of future newspaper stories summarising the course of an imagined Civil War, without a protagonist or any individual drama whatsoever. Among the striking similarities between *Anticipations* and *Turner* is their shared epistolary format.

The Iron Heel

The Iron Heel is a 1907 dystopian novel by Jack London, the author best known for *The Call of the Wild,* in which the United States is corrupted by a fascist Oligarchy, in response to which a socialist resistance movement emerges. The book is frequently mentioned as a possible inspiration for *The Turner Diaries*, due to similarities in plot and structure.[49] London was deeply involved with socialist parties in the United States, and he published several propaganda works in support of his beliefs.[50]

In *The Iron Heel,* London depicts the rise of a fascistic capitalist dictatorship known as The Oligarchy and the seeds of its ultimate defeat, a revolution that eventually ushers in an age of socialist utopia. Like *Turner*, *The Iron Heel* opens with a future historian describing the rediscovery of the book's main contents, "The Everhard Manuscript", about 700 years after the early 20th century events depicted.

The main body of London's book is set in the not-too-distant future, starting in 1912 and running through 1932. The similar plot and nearly identical framing mechanism have led many to speculate that *The Iron Heel* directly inspired *The Turner Diaries*.

Where the language of *Turner* is sparse and crude, *The Iron Heel* is a floridly overwritten seminar in remedial socialist doctrine, delivered via the Socratic Method in a seemingly endless series of arguments among the characters. Although the plot follows the collapse of democracy in the United States, the rise of a

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48 I. Binnington, Confederate Visions: Nationalism, Symbolism, and the Imagined South in the Civil War (University of Virginia Press: 2013); E. Ruffin, Anticipations of the Future (Richmond: J.W. Randolph,1860).

49 "Did Dr. William Pierce 'Plagiarise' The Turner Diaries?" Online forum Church of Creativity, http://creativityalliance.com/forum/index.php/topic,3898.0.html?PHPSESSID=3-fauAPOjNTytKwQ6ueD,3.

50 A. Kershaw, Jack London: A Life (Macmillan, 1999), pp. 45, 159, 271.

brutal dictatorship, and the socialists' doomed first revolt against the system, these events are mostly depicted in lengthy conversations among the story's characters. As the framing text explains, it would take hundreds of years more to finally overthrow the Oligarchy. Mercifully, London did not feel obliged to recount all of them.

Some socialists – then and now – took issue with the idea that *The Iron Heel* is fairly characterised as a pro-socialist work, given the generally pessimistic tone of the book and London's racial politics (he once wrote a dystopian story celebrating an American racial genocide carried out against Asians).[51] Although left-wing in orientation, *The Iron Heel*'s protagonist, Ernest Everhard, is described as a "superman, a blond beast such as Nietzsche had described". As the dystopia unfolds, Asian countries embark on racial-nationalist wars, with Japan "aiding the yellow and brown races against the white".

The John Franklin Letters

In his authorised biography, Pierce pointed to a specific inspiration for *The Turner Diaries*: a 1959 novel called *The John Franklin Letters*, by an anonymous author.[52]

Set mostly in the 1970s, *The John Franklin Letters* is again framed with a preface written by a future historian. The main document is made up of letters from the title character to his elderly uncle.[53]

Unabashedly right-wing in orientation, *Franklin* depicts a United States destroyed by the New Deal and a "takeover" by its liberal successors. America is occupied by foreign fighters under the auspices of the United Nations, imposing a system of crushing government bureaucracy, the Buros. In the first year of the takeover, "about twenty million American men, women and children were either killed or carried to

slavery in Africa or Asia", with "tailored" atomic bombs used to wipe out entire cities.

The regime is opposed by the "Rangers", a secretive, informally organised group that foresaw the coming troubles and laid plans for a counter-revolution. Prior to the rise of the Buros, the Rangers stockpiled weapons, hiding caches around the country, trained in combat and guerrilla techniques, and made plans for secure communications. Like Turner, *Franklin* is filled with tips and tricks about how to actually do these things and soon earned a reputation as a sort of "how to" manual for insurgency, with an emphasis on preparation and strategic patience.[54]

Like *The Iron Heel*, *Franklin* has a component of ideological explanation, although the author is admirably succinct in outlining his anti-Communist, anti-liberal views. Similar to *Anticipations of the Future*, the plot focuses primarily on politics at the national level.

The John Franklin Letters was foremost a work of anti-Communist propaganda, distributed and popularised by the John Birch Society soon after its establishment, and likely written by one of its members.[55] A former Bircher sent Pierce a copy of *Franklin,* directly inspiring *Turner* in much the same way that *Wild Southern Scenes* inspired *Anticipations of the Future*.[56]

The Spook Who Sat by the Door

One intriguing possible influence that deserves a measure of consideration is *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, a 1969 novel by African-American writer Sam Greenlee.[57]

Greenlee was a military veteran and former government propagandist. His novel tells the story of a black CIA agent who takes his spycraft training to the streets to lead a black revolution. The book was adapted as a movie amid some controversy in 1973, roughly a year

51 J. London, "The Unparalleled Invasion," McClure's (magazine), July 1910; S. Trott. "Jack London's The Iron Heel." Socialist Standard, January 2008, http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/2000s/2008/no-1241-january-2008/jack-londons-iron-heel.
52 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 145.
53 Anonymous (The John Birch Society), The John Franklin Letters (New York: The Bookmailer, 1959).
54 D. Russell, The Man who Knew Too Much (Carroll & Graf, 2003) pp. 111, 494.
55 S. E. Atkins, Encyclopedia of Right-Wing Extremism in Modern American History (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), p. 186.
56 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 146.
57 S. Greenlee, The Spook Who Sat by the Door: A Novel (Wayne State University Press, 1990).

before Pierce began work on *Turner*. The race-obsessed Pierce could certainly have noticed the controversy surrounding the film, which was abruptly pulled from American movie theaters (a move that Greenlee attributed to FBI dirty tricks).[58]

The book tells the story of Dan Freeman, the first black CIA agent, recruited as a token to address a politically inspired controversy over the Agency's lack of integration. Freeman is placed in a highly visible post with little responsibility; the title of the book is a play on words referring to his job (to sit by the door and be seen), with the word "spook" as double-entendre – a common slang term for "spy" and, in a different context, a racial epithet.

From the very start, Dan Freeman's real agenda in taking the job, is to receive training in spycraft and violence as a CIA officer and to use his position to study global insurgencies, then take that knowledge back to the Chicago ghettos where he grew up.

He seeds and guides a black insurgency by recruiting and training gang members, whom he organises into covert cells that spread out nationally, following the same insurgency strategy described in *The John Franklin Letters* and *The Turner Diaries*. As in those books, attacks that create economic pressure are key to the strategy, in this case with the intent of making white politicians choose between maintaining racist policies and maintaining the United States as a global superpower.

As in *Turner*, the insurgents rob banks to fund their operations and rob armouries to gain access to deadly munitions in preparation for revolution. The book follows the insurgency through its successful launch, against the backdrop of riots in Chicago. The narrative ends abruptly in the middle of the revolution, shedding no light on the movement's tangible goals or its anticipated end game – except, as Freeman argues toward the end of the book, to be left alone.

"I don't want to change this system", he says, "just get it off my back".

Like *The Turner Diaries*, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* declines to put a label on its ideology. It describes intensive efforts to create propaganda, but gives little insight into its contents. "What are you?" one of Freeman's recruits asks, during a discussion of the propaganda plan. "A Muslim, nationalist, black power advocate? What?"

"Why can't I just be a man who wants to be free, who wants to walk tall and proud on his own turf as a black man?" Freeman says. "Why can't it be as simple as that?"

In a 2003 interview, Greenlee said his intention was not far removed from the authors of *Franklin* and *Turner*. "It's a training manual for guerrilla warfare", Greenlee said. "That's why it scared the white folks so much".[59]
Both *The Turner Diaries* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* make for uncomfortable reading, but the latter emanates from a very different social and historical context – the perspective of a disadvantaged minority, rather than a privileged majority. Its racial grievances are articulated clearly and mostly grounded in the real, contemporary world of its author, as opposed to *Turner*'s paranoiac fears about bat-wielding gun-grabbers.

Because of these factors, among others, the book tends to get a pass on racism, at least among those who determine literary standing. It won several awards, including "Book of the Year" from *The Sunday Times* in London. Some contemporaneous reviews of the film adaptation note that "the film makes it clear that the revolution arose not out of hate toward whites, but out of love for the black people and their liberation".[60]

Yet hatred for whites can be found in the book, in ample supply. Greenlee's depiction of white characters is unsparing. Whites in *The Spook*

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58 Greenlee's suspicions are not easily dismissed as paranoia, given the activities of the FBI under the COINTELPRO program at the time. The claim is more fully explored in the documentary, "Infiltrating Hollywood: The Spook Who Sat by the Door" (ChiTrini Productions, 2011).
59 L. L. Joiner, "After 30 Years, a Controversial Film Re-emerges", The Crisis, November/December 2003, p. 41.
60 C. Rogers, "How the Riots Might Have Turned Out", Chicken Bones: A Journal, Undated, http://www.nathanielturner.com/spookbythedoor.htm.

Who Sat by the Door are either overt racists or barely covert racists, without exception. No exchange between Freeman and a white character takes place without an expression of hostility and a critical racial commentary, sometimes nuanced, sometimes less so. But unlike The Order in *Turner*, Freeman's movement never expresses or acts on genocidal intentions.

A November 1973 review of the film adaptation by *The New York Times*, published just over a year before *The Turner Diaries* was written, judged the film harshly:

[T]here is a lack of respect in the film for human life that makes the skin crawl. … No true revolutionary, past or present, would countenance the kind of slaughter that is presented in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. It is devoid of reason; it is killing just to kill.

But, if only in comparison to *Turner*'s celebration of genocide, Freeman's carefully targeted violence looks almost charitable. The use of violence in *Spook* is framed as necessary, justified and inevitable, but it is also predicated on provocation. Freeman's gang recruits, the Cobras, wait to strike until a police shooting of a teenager brews a riot and subsequent crackdown in the Chicago ghetto.

They bomb the mayor's office in the middle of the night to avoid casualties. "No one would want to make that ass a martyr", Freeman says during a phone call claiming responsibility. A series of nonviolent protests follow. The Cobras only start shooting when the National Guard is deployed to control the rioting, and their targets are almost exclusively armed combatants.

The framing of violence and race in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* raises challenging questions about its literary status, made more acute by the extensive parallels between the book and *The Turner Diaries,* which carries Greenlee's themes to further extremes. Recent racially charged military-style attacks on police in Dallas and Baton Rouge in 2016 also create uncomfortable resonances for modern readers.

Hunter and Serpent's Walk

The Turner Diaries is the best-known racial nationalist dystopia, and it is Pierce's best-known work by far. But it was not his final effort to master the genre.

Hoping to recapture *Turner*'s popularity, the National Alliance published a second novel with dystopian elements by Pierce titled *Hunter*, which follows a white nationalist "lone wolf" who progresses from murdering mixed-race couples to a more ambitious assassination campaign. The book's crude style and violent content clearly mirror the approach taken in *Turner*.

Hunter's protagonist, Oscar Yeager, begins as a serial killer and is eventually drawn into battle with a conspiracy of Jewish- and African-Americans within the government, joining forces with a white nationalist organisation, the National League.

Some readers consider *Hunter* to be a prequel to *The Turner Diaries,* with the National League eventually becoming the Organization, and – as discussed in more detail below – many of those who carried out violence after reading *Turner* are also documented as having owned and read *Hunter*.

In 1991, the National Alliance returned to the dystopian well with *Serpent's Walk,* by Randolph D. Calverhall, believed by some to be another pseudonym for Pierce, although the book is not attributed to him in his authorised biography.[61] *Serpent's Walk* is a much more ambitious novel than *The Turner Diaries*, with a heavier focus on science fiction and a much more sophisticated writing style.

Opening in the year 2041, it posits that key leaders of the SS survived the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, biding their time and building an international network with the intention of returning to political power.

The book features mercenaries armed with lasers and an artificial intelligence with a holographic body, among other science fiction conceits, and traces the outbreak of global

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61 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 61; R. D. Calverhall, Serpent's Walk (National Vanguard Books, 1991).

biological warfare. Unlike *Turner, Serpent's Walk* is also a polemical work, following the progression its protagonist, Alan Lessing, from racial agnosticism and generally accepting attitudes toward non-whites to a full-blown embrace of Nazism. Reminiscent of *The Iron Heel*, the book features lengthy and tedious Socratic discussions of Nazi ideology, interspersed with violent action sequences and intrigues.

Both *Hunter* and *Serpent's Walk* frequently surface on extremist reading lists, and both books were found in the possession of Oklahoma City bombing conspirators,[62] but neither novel has come close to the influence and impact of *The Turner Diaries*.

Earl Turner's Family Tree

As the works discussed in this section illustrate, dystopian fiction has long been a vehicle for political propaganda, including the advancement of racist and anti-government views, from the earliest days of the genre. These works do not exist in a vacuum. They represent an evolving approach to incitement and persuasion.

Anti-abolitionists were the first political movement to instrumentalise dystopia for political purposes, presenting fictional scenarios of miscegenation and lurid racial violence, while arguing for the inevitability of secession if abolitionists continued to make gains.

Ruffin's *Anticipations of the Future* introduced this form of argumentation in the form of an epistolary narrative, a conceit that was revived in the early 20th century by Jack London in *The Iron Heel*, featuring a very similar narrative of American collapse and adding an element of validation in the form of comments from a future historian on the book's "found document".

All of these elements were then fused into *The John Franklin Letters,* which Pierce cited as the most important direct influence on *Turner*. That book added a crucial instructive element,

offering practical advice on how to emulate the protagonist's struggle against the dystopian future regime.

In part due to this addition, *Franklin* inspired direct action in ways that its predecessors did not. Distributed by the John Birch Society, the book was at least partially responsible for inspiring the birth of the Patriot movement, including the creation of a short-lived paramilitary group named after and based on the fictional Rangers.[63] The book has also been cited as the inspiration for the creation of the Minutemen, one of the first and most important antigovernment militia groups in the United States.[64]

Sam Greenlee, who in his early career wrote anti-Communist propaganda for the government, was in a position where he could easily have encountered the anti-Communist *Franklin* and its inclusion of guerrilla warfare tips and tricks. His book, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, abandoned the epistolary format, but incorporated the how-to element, and added a more traditional action-story plot absent from its predecessors. Greenlee's book is not as clearly documented to have inspired violent actors, but that prospect raised alarms with law enforcement. For a time, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* was reputedly required reading for FBI trainees.

William Pierce was directly inspired by *Franklin,* but he began writing *The Turner Diaries* soon after the film adaptation of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* created a national controversy. *Turner* incorporates Greenlee's focus on action, layering in still more violence on a genocidal and apocalyptic scale. Pierce's addition of explicit exhortations for action by readers, along with the emphasis on authenticity provided by the epistolary format, further distinguish *The Turner Diaries* from *The Spook Who Sat by the Door,* and the combination of elements helps explain the former's outsize impact.

It is possible that these works represent parallel literary strains rather than a transmission of ideas and techniques. But the similarities are striking,

62 "Re: Michael Fortier Fingerprint Evidence", Terry Nichols Defense Attorney Memorandum, 26 September 1996.
63 D. Russell, The Man who Knew Too Much (Carroll & Graf, 2003) pp. 111, 494.
64 Ibid., pp. 72-73; R. B. DePugh, Blueprint for Victory (Self-Published, 1966).

and reading the corpus as a whole, it is difficult to conclude that the continuity of themes and narrative techniques are wholly coincidental, even if direct paths of transmission cannot be definitively established. *The Turner Diaries* can be seen as an evolutionary refinement of a propaganda approach dating back to before the Civil War.

A Legacy of Violence

The Turner Diaries would be a footnote in a literary subgenre of racist and political dystopian fiction, if not for the acts of violence it has inspired.

Within a few years of its publication, *The Turner Diaries* started to inspire imitators, people who were influenced by the book and other factors to take up arms and commit horrific crimes, which are discussed in detail below.

Some important caveats pertain to this discussion as regards the reporting of ideological influences. The incidents documented below are based on media reports. The notoriety of *The Turner Diaries* after the Oklahoma City bombing ensured that its influence would be more frequently noted by news reporters.

On the one hand, this means the influence of *Turner* may be overreported relative to a book like *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, whose relevance would not be as immediately relevant to journalists or law enforcement investigators.

On the other hand, reporting on hate crimes is extremely inconsistent. Smaller incidents, such as racially motivated murders committed by people who do not openly identify with a specific white nationalist ideology, receive little investigative and journalistic scrutiny, especially when the facts of the case are not in dispute (for instance, a fight outside a bar with many witnesses).

It is likely therefore that *Turner*'s influence has been somewhat overreported compared to other works, while being underreported on an absolute basis. This imbalance, of course, only serves to increase the book's reputation and thus its readership.

The Order

One of the first imitators of *The Turner Diaries* was Robert Jay Mathews, who took an interest in the John Birch Society at the precocious age of 11. Born in Texas and raised in Arizona, he began leading militia groups as a teenager, bolstered by the conviction that the United States was on the brink of collapse.[65]

After his initial foray – a Mormon survivalist group called the "Sons of Liberty" – fell apart in 1974, he moved to a rural tract of land in Metaline Malls, Washington. For a while, it seemed like Mathews had lost his militant edge, but he soon drifted toward white supremacy, and the National Alliance, whose literature he consumed avidly. After taking part as a follower for a while, he felt the urge to lead.

In the early 1980s, he founded an "action group" that at first called itself "The Organization", and then "The Order", both names that were used to describe the terrorists in *The Turner Diaries*.

When he recruited a former Klansman, Thomas Martinez, to the group, he did so by handing over a copy of *Turner* – one of scores that he kept in storage. Members of the group referred to the book as their "Bible". "Tom, in there is what the future will be", Mathews told Martinez. "You must read it. You must".

Mathews and his Order embarked on a series of robberies, very loosely following the self-financing model of Earl Turner and his resistance cell. They started by robbing stores and eventually graduated to banks and armoured cars. Like the fictional Turner and his compatriots, the real-world Order later expanded into counterfeiting operations. The group was responsible for at least three murders, including the assassination of outspoken Jewish radio host Alan Berg, in 1984.[66]

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65 Mathews biographical details are drawn from T. Martinez and J. Guinther, Brotherhood of Murder (iUniverse, 1999); and K. Flynn and G. Gerhardt, Silent Brotherhood (Signet Book, 1990).
66 W. Turner, "5 Neo-Nazis Get Stiff Sentences for Crime Spree", New York Times, 7 February 1986.

The FBI infiltrated The Order, a dozen men strong at its height, and finally moved to arrest Mathews, who went down fighting, killed in a fire after a 36-hour standoff. By the time its reign of terror ended, the Order's illegal activities had netted millions of dollars, more than $1 million of which was never recovered. The FBI believed Mathews had distributed much of the cash to white nationalist leaders and organisations, including *Turner* author William Pierce and the National Alliance.[67]

The investigation of The Order resulted in a large number of arrests, including a sedition prosecution against 13 white supremacist leaders accused of receiving money from Mathews for purposes of overthrowing the U.S. government.[68]

The trial ended in acquittal in 1988, but the FBI continued to search for the money for years and launched an extensive undercover investigation of the Patriot movement on persistent rumors that some associated with the original Order were seeking to re-create its glory.[69]

The investigative documents are filled with references to "The Second Order" and "The New Order". The investigation found plots aplenty; conspiracies in multiple states, brimming with sinister figures who claimed to have known Mathews and to be continuing his work. In the early 1990s, the FBI even created a sting operation consisting of undercover agents pretending to do the very same thing. But its efforts were largely for naught, resulting in almost no arrests or indictments.[70]

The FBI worried that extremists might try to emulate other plots contained in *The Turner Diaries*. In a 1991 memo, an agent in the San Antonio field office cited the fact that the real-world dates of fictional events in the book were approaching, writing:

Although the... novel is similar in nature to the futuristic "1984" by [George] Orwell, we are equally aware, as is [FBI headquarters] of the prior manifestations from the "Turner Diaries" of aspects such as "the Order" and acts of violence such as assassinations (ALAN BERG) and armored car robberies by "the Order". These <u>exact</u> actions came from the fictional accounts of the "Turner Diaries".[71]

In 1994, a Christian Identity-linked gang known as the Aryan Republican Army began a spree of bank robberies inspired by The Order – both the fictional version and Mathews' real-life creation. Members of the group have been credibly linked to the Oklahoma City bombing conspiracy, although the extent of their involvement is unclear.[72]

At one point, the group recorded a bizarre rambling two-hour video statement that espoused Christian Identity beliefs and urged listeners to read *The Turner Diaries*.

"For you budding young revolutionaries, a good book to read is *The Turner Diaries*", a masked gang member said, holding up a copy. "Now it's the fictional account of a race warrior that gives you a good idea of what is to be expected as the struggle heats up". Interested viewers can pick it up "at your local seditious conspiracy bookstore". [73]

Another gang member appears later in the video, recommending *The Silent Brotherhood*, a nonfiction book about Mathews and his Order.

The Aryan Republican Army committed at least 22 armed robberies, frequently employing improvised explosives, in at least seven states before the FBI rolled it up. The conspirators had crisscrossed the country, meeting a number of people involved in Mathews' Order and other luminaries of white supremacy and the Patriot movement.

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67 The SAGE Encyclopedia of Terrorism, Second Edition, (Sage, 2011), p. 450.
68 K. Bishop, "Conspiracy Trial of 14 White Supremacists Begins", New York Times, 18 February 1988.
69 J.M. Berger, "PATCON: The FBI's Secret War Against the 'Patriot' Movement, and How Infiltration Tactics Relate to Radicalizing Influences", New America Foundation, 2012.
70 J.M. Berger, "PATCON" (2012).
71 FBI Letterhead Memorandum, August 20, 1991, Obtained via Freedom of Information Act.
72 M. S. Hamm, In Bad Company: America's Terrorist Underground (Upne, 2002).
73 Aryan Republican Army propaganda video, undated, 45:09, 1:05.

Several ARA members landed for a time in an armed Christian Identity compound in rural Oklahoma known as Elohim City, where members of the security detachment were required to read both *The Turner Diaries* and *The Silent Brotherhood*.[74]

A number of extremists passed through Elohim City, including Chevie Kehoe, who -- after reading *Turner* and *The Silent Brotherhood* -- formed a small group called the Aryan People's Republic, and embarked on a murder, bombing and armed robbery spree that eventually left five dead and ended in a violent shootout with Ohio police in 1997. Kehoe was captured and given three life sentences without parole.[75]

Oklahoma City

During the mid-1980s, a young college dropout named Timothy McVeigh saw an ad for the book in *Soldier of Fortune*, a right-wing pro-gun magazine devoted to the business of mercenaries, but also often read by teenagers who imagined themselves as future men of action. He was attracted to the tagline used to promote the book: "What will you do if the government comes for your guns?"[76]

Worried about growing sentiment for some kind of gun control in the wake of the 1981 assassination attempt on President Reagan, McVeigh found something credible and compelling in *Turner*'s improbable narrative.

McVeigh became obsessed with the book, loaning and gifting copies to his friends, and recommending it to just about everyone else he met. He sent a copy of the book to his sister with sections highlighted, then sent her clippings to highlight sections again. When he joined the Army, he shared copies of the book with his fellow soldiers and carried it with him in his pack on maneuvers, until he was ordered to stop.[77]

The Turner Diaries was McVeigh's constant

companion. When he left the Army in 1992, disaffected and depressed, the book came with him. He traveled the country, selling various wares at gun shows. Stacks of the red-covered tome were always for sale on his table, always available to start a conversation.[78]

The world of Earl Turner was dark and brutish, full of fear and anger, and McVeigh's psyche was never far from that vision of the imminent future. He claimed that the book's gun-rights message was the core of its appeal. But while McVeigh was not especially known for vocalising overt racism, or embracing a specific racist ideology, it is difficult to understand his romance with the book in any other context. *The Turner Diaries* does not hold up as a story of colour-blind revolution.

McVeigh's associates, and co-readers, ran the gamut of ideological racism. His travels took him deep into Patriot and white supremacist circles, where he found many others who shared his love for the book. He met the security director for Elohim City, who also swore by the novel, and he may have visited the Oklahoma compound. He was rumoured to have met and possibly even collaborated with the Aryan Republican Army bank robbers, and circumstantial evidence suggests this could be true.[79]

McVeigh also passed through the same Patriot circles that the FBI suspected of trying to resuscitate the Order. It is still not clear how deep those relationships went. What was clear, however, was his commitment to the imagined reality of the book.[80]

On April 19, 1995, McVeigh detonated a truck bomb in a parking area next to the Alfred E. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and wounding hundreds more. The date had wide resonance in the Patriot movement, most notably for being the anniversary of the siege of Waco, in which 76 people were killed when the FBI stormed

74 M. S. Hamm, In Bad Company (2002), pp. 190.
75 M. S. Hamm, In Bad Company (2002), pp. 157.
76 L. Michel and D. Herbeck, American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing (New York: Harper, 2001), p. 38.
77 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
78 Trial transcript, USA v. Terry Lynn Nichols, 96-CR-68, Nov. 17, 1997.
79 J.M. Berger, "PATCON" (2012).
80 Ibid.

a compound filled with apocalyptic cultists. McVeigh had followed the siege closely, and was outraged by the government's actions, which he and other Patriots saw as a trial run for a wider federal gun confiscation.[81]

McVeigh's improvised bomb was made from ammonium nitrate, similar in size and design to a bomb that Earl Turner uses to destroy FBI headquarters in the book, although not identical. McVeigh drew on other sources as well, keeping to the same basic concept, but tweaking the ingredients to increase the explosive power.[82]

Mechanically, however, the device was nearly identical to *Turner*. When McVeigh and his coconspirator Terry Nichols built the bomb, they walked through precisely the same steps described in the book, recreating Earl Turner's acts in the real world, but with themselves as the protagonists.

The process of building the bomb took hours; it is unimaginable that the parallels escaped McVeigh, who had kept the book by his side so obsessively, and for so many years. He likely imagined his actions would touch off its long-prophesied revolution.[83]

A few hours after the bombing, when McVeigh was arrested, police found anti-government propaganda in his car, including highlighted photocopies of pages from *Turner*, similar to those he had sent his sister. One passage in particular stood out, taken from Earl Turner's diary entry after the cell carries out a critical mortar attack on Washington, D.C.:

The real value of our attacks today lies in the psychological impact, not in the immediate casualties. More important, though, is what we taught the politicians and the bureaucrats. They learned this afternoon that not one of them is beyond our reach. They can huddle behind barbed wire and tanks in the city, and they can hide behind the concrete walls of their country estates, but we can still find them

and kill them.

The impact of McVeigh's mass murder was ultimately detrimental to the movement he was trying to inspire. Many in the then-thriving Patriot movement were appalled by the attack, particularly the deaths of 19 children in a daycare centre within the federal building, directly adjacent to where McVeigh parked his truck. Other Patriots and white supremacists feared that a government crackdown would follow the attack.

Instead of the explosive uprising McVeigh had imagined, the bombing caused an implosion of the domestic right-wing extremist underground. Those who stayed involved went further underground. Others simply dropped out. Within two short years, the movement had nearly collapsed. Only one extremist cause managed to benefit from the bombing -- *The Turner Diaries* itself.

Pierce claimed the book, which in 1995 sold for $4.95, had already sold 185,000 copies, a figure that could not be independently verified. It was, at least, already well-known to the authorities. "This book is a constant", an FBI domestic terror expert told *The New York Times* in 1995. "It's everywhere you turn".[84]

The controversy around the book fueled new interest, and Pierce was happy to exploit the tragedy. A New York publisher gave the book its first mainstream print run. The new edition trumpeted its connection to the bombing on the cover, along with its newly enhanced taboo chic. "MANY WOULD LIKE IT BANNED", the cover read, in blood-red block letters. "IT IS BEING PUBLISHED TO ALERT AND WARN AMERICA".[85]

After the Order was crushed by the FBI in 1984, Pierce had been happy to embrace Mathews' cause, lionising him as an example to be emulated. Pierce had known Mathews personally.

81 Ibid.
82 M. S. Hamm, In Bad Company (2002), pp. 226-227; FBI FD-302, record of interview, Terry Nichols, 28 April 2005.
83 M. S. Hamm, In Bad Company (2002), pp. 229.
84 J. Kifner, "THE GUN NETWORK: McVeigh's World -- A special report; Bomb Suspect Felt at Home Riding the Gun-Show Circuit", New York Times, 5 July 1995, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/05/us/gun-network-mcveigh-s-world-special-report-bomb-suspect-felt-home-riding-gun.html?pagewanted=all.
85 Publisher: Barricade Books; Second Edition (1 May 1996).

Perpetrators	Victims killed	Arrested or killed
The Order	3	1984
Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols	168	1995
Larry Wayne Shoemake	1	1996
Aryan Republican Army	No fatalities	1996
Chevie Kehoe/Aryan People's Republic	5	1997
Shawn Berry, Lawrence Russell Brewer, and John King (Jasper, Texas dragging attack)	1	1998
David Copeland	3	1999
Jason Robida	1	2006
Paul Ross Evans (Texas abortion clinic bomber)	0	2006
Peter Mangs	3	2010
National Socialist Underground	10	2011
Pavlo Lapshyn	1	2013
Frazier Glenn Cross	3	2014
Zack Davies	No fatalities	2015
Thomas Mair	1	2016

Table 2: People reportedly killed by readers of The Turner Diaries documented in this paper

"Bob was a very intense young man, and quite different from the weaklings I see so many of in America today", Pierce told his biographer. "Bob was obviously very much taken with *The Turner Diaries*, and it was clear he drew a lot of the elements from the book in the way he did things and the terminology he used and so on".[86] Pierce eulogised Mathews repeatedly in interviews and on shortwave broadcasts of the National Alliance's radio programme.

With McVeigh, the calculus was more complicated, the backlash more severe. Pierce took pains to say he had never met McVeigh, and there is no evidence to say otherwise, although McVeigh's telephone records, presented in court, showed that he made efforts to contact the National Alliance prior to the bombing.

Pierce was defensive about whether and how specifically McVeigh's actions could be said to have been inspired by the book, despite a mountain of evidence pointing toward its relevance. Waco was the inspiration for Oklahoma City, Pierce argued, not his book, which simply depicted the world as it was. "I guess the old idea about blaming the bearer of bad news is still valid", he said.[87]

At the same time, Pierce sometimes said McVeigh reminded him of Bob Mathews. He waffled as to whether he approved of the bombing, sometimes saying yes, sometimes no, and sometimes commenting that the time was simply not right for such tactics. Both his approval and his disapproval were qualified.

"It was the only way he knew to get people to look up from their ball games for a minute and pay attention to what's happening to their world", Pierce said in 2000, two years before his death from cancer. "There are Americans who care about these things as much as I do. And by God, we intend to do something about these things, even if we have to do it Timothy

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86 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 213.
87 Radio Broadcast, American Dissident Voices. 19 April 1997.

McVeigh's way".[88]

And other readers of the book would try to do it McVeigh's way.

Reign of Terror

Copies of *Turner* have been found in the possession of many perpetrators of hate crimes. The list is long and bloody, and it continues through the present-day. At least 200 murders have been committed by readers of The Turner Diaries to date, including the 168 killed in the Oklahoma City bombing, and at least 33 people killed by other readers of the book (see Table 2, next page).

20th Century Incidents

On April 12, 1996, Larry Wayne Shoemake of Jackson, Missisippi, shot and killed one person, wounding 10 more. All of his victims were black. His friends and family said he had changed dramatically after reading *The Turner Diaries*. He also reportedly read Pierce's *Hunter*.[89]

In 1998, three white men in Jasper, Texas, chained a disabled black man to the back of a pickup truck and dragged him down the road, horribly mutilating and killing him. In a statement to police, one of the men said "We're starting *The Turner Diaries* early". In reality, they were starting late. The events of the book begin in 1991.[90]

The influence of *The Turner Diaries* soon reached beyond America's shores. In 1999, David Copeland, a British reader, targeted blacks and gays with shrapnel-bomb attacks in London that killed three and maimed and injured 140 more.

"If you've read *The Turner Diaries*, you know [in] the year 2000 there'll be the uprising and all that racial violence on the streets", Copeland said in his confession to police. "My aim was political. It was to cause a racial war in this country".[91]

21st Century Incidents

Starting in 2000, a German neo-Nazi group called the National Socialist Underground began a terror spree that lasted for more than a decade, including at least 10 murders, multiple bombings and 15 armed robberies. A copy of *The Turner Diaries* was found on a computer used by the group, and it was believed that most members of the cell had read it.[92]

In 2006, a Massachusetts teenager named Jason Robida went into a gay bar, ordered a drink, and then began swinging a hatchet at the other patrons. When they rushed him and seized the weapon, he pulled out a gun. Four people were seriously wounded by the time he escaped. He fled to Arkansas, where he killed a police officer and an ex-girlfriend, before shooting himself in the head. In his home, investigators found Nazi paraphernalia and a copy of *The Turner Diaries*.[93]

The same year, a Texas abortion clinic bomber was arrested after his device failed to detonate; the book was found in his apartment.[94]

Between 2009 and 2010, serial shooter Peter Mangs killed three people and shot at a dozen more in Sweden, targeting immigrants and their friends. Mangs was initially drawn in by *The Turner Diaries*, and later read *Hunter*.[95]

Ukrainian fanatic Pavlo "Pasha" Lapshyn

88 American Dissident Voices. 1 July 2000.

89 J. Mitchell, "National Alliance Founder William Pierce's Writing Inspires Slaughter", Southern Poverty Law Center, 15 March 1999, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/1999/national-alliance-founder-william-pierce%E2%80%99s-writing-inspires-slaughter.

90 P. Miller, "Black man's killer said: 'We're starting The Turner Diaries early,'" The Scotsman, 23 February 2000.

91 "The Nailbomber", BBC Panorama, 30 June 2000.

92 J. Jüttner, "Neo-Nazi Trio: What Have We Learned about the NSU?", Spiegel Online, 7 August 2013. http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/nsu-neo-nazi-terror-trial-enters-summer-recess-a-915356.html; C. Arnowski, "Die Turner-Tagebücher und der NSU," BR, 4 February 2016, http://www.br.de/nachrichten/nsu-prozess/160204-tagebuch-gerichtsreporter-100.html.

93 "Inspired by Neo-Nazi Tracts, Youth's Rampage ends in Death", SPLC Intelligence Report, 19 April 2006, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/inspired-neo-nazi-tracts-youths-rampage-ends-death.

94 "Would-Be Clinic Bomber Gets 40 Years", SPLC Intelligence Report, 1 October 2007, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2007/would-be-clinic-bomber-gets-40-years.

95 C.Anderson, "A Murder Trial in Sweden, With Echoes of Norway," New York Times, May 15, 2012; G. Ramnefjell, "Hvem er den «smarteste» rasistiske morderen - svenske Peter Mangs eller Anders Behring Breivik?" Dagbladet, 30 November 2015.

emigrated to England in 2013 and wasted no time waging a race war. Within days of his arrival, Lapshyn murdered an elderly Asian Muslim, stabbing him in the back as he walked home from prayers. He then began a bombing spree against UK mosques. Through a combination of luck and Lapshyn's incompetence, no one was killed. When he was arrested, authorities discovered he had linked to *The Turner Diaries* from a social media post. He had an audiobook of *Turner* on his computer when he was arrested, and a copy of a Russian translation of *Hunter*.[96]

In 2014, at the age of 73, Frazier Glenn Miller Jr., a notorious American white supremacist, shot and killed three people at a Jewish community centre in Overland Park, Kansas. Years before the attack, Miller had published white nationalist newsletters praising *Turner*, and he even claimed to have received $200,000 from Bob Mathews and The Order back in the 1980s.[97]

In 2015, British neo-Nazi Zack Davies tried to behead a Sikh man (mistaking him for Muslim) in North Wales. Police discovered a wealth of racist literature in his home, including *Turner* and *Hunter*.[98]

Links to Turner have been the subject of speculation in a number of other prominent 21st century terrorism cases, including the 2011 Norway terror attack by Anders Breivik that left 77 people dead, and the case of Dylann Roof, who killed nine African-Americans in South Carolina in 2015. However, both men wrote manifestos that did not reference the book, and the links remain speculative.[99]

In 2016, British nationalist Thomas Mair was arrested for the murder of UK Member of Parliament Jo Cox. Subsequently, Mair was revealed to have ordered literature from Pierce's National Alliance, but investigators have not, to date, directly cited evidence that *The Turner Diaries* influenced the alleged killer.[100]

Why Turner?

While many of the books discussed in this paper had a political impact in their day, few of them are remembered, except by non-historians and historically minded white nationalists. They are no longer relevant.

Why has *The Turner Diaries* endured? Surely not because of its literary merits. Even Pierce admitted that it was poorly written, telling his biographer that he would have spent more time on the writing if he had known how much attention it would receive.[101] It is not a sophisticated book, and its characters are not well realised, except for the titular diarist, who is still at best only a rough sketch of a man.

But *The Turner Diaries* continues to inspire violence 25 years after its prophesied dystopia failed to materialise and nearly 40 years after it was written.

The Civil War-era racist dystopias played a role in the crises of their day, but they are largely forgotten. Some socialists still speak glowingly of *The Iron Heel*,[102] and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* is remembered as a niche product of considerable interest, due in part to the movie adaptation and its attendant controversy.[103] But it is extremely difficult to argue for the lasting

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96 "Ukrainian admits UK terrorism", Hate Speech International, 24 October 2013, https://www.hate-speech.org/ukrainian-student-admits-anti-muslim-terror-in-the-uk/.

97 "Frazier Glenn Miller", SPLC Extremist Files, Undated, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/frazier-glenn-miller.

98 http://religiousreader.org/neo-nazi-found-guilty-attempted-murder-sikh-dentist-revenge-lee-rigbys-murder/.

99 J. Kay, "How a 2011 Norwegian massacre echoes a 1978 American novel," National Post, 24 July 2011, http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/jonathan-kay-on-breiviks-norwegian-massacre-and-the-turner-diaries-how-a-2011-crime-was-plucked-straight-from-a-1978-novel.

100 "Alleged killer of British MP was a longtime supporter of the neo-Nazi National Alliance", Southern Poverty Law Center. Hatewatch, 16 June 2016, https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/06/16/alleged-killer-british-mp-was-longtime-supporter-neo-nazi-national-alliance.

101 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 141.

102 E. Vincentelli, "Review: 'The Iron Heel' Reworks a Jack London Dystopia", New York Times, 31 July 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/01/theater/review-the-iron-heel-reworks-a-jack-london-dystopia.html?_r=0.

103 D. Somerset, "The Battle of Chicago: The Spook Who Sat by the Door", British Film Institute, 31 March 2015, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/battle-chicago-spook-who-sat-door.

political impact of either work.

At the time of its publication, *The John Franklin Letters* won favourable notices from *The National Review* and angry denunciation from the political left, but it was not a mainstream publication.[104] Its legacy is somewhat more substantial than the other works reviewed here, in part because of its role inspiring ongoing American antigovernment movements. But the book itself has dropped out of sight and out of print.

What makes *Turner* different?

Narrative Simplification

By their nature, dystopian stories look into the future, and they are often situated in the "not-too-distant" future. This creates risks for their shelf life, and many of *Turner*'s predecessors were rendered obsolete by the march of history.

The mid-19th century secessionist dystopias fell victim to this dynamic. Each of them imagined a slightly different path to secession, most of them used real political figures as characters, and all of them were substantially wrong in their forecasts. Once secession had become a reality, their relevance quickly faded, although they are remembered by some white nationalists, mostly as historical curiosities.[105]
But more importantly, these historical intricacies reflect a complexity in narrative, with Tucker and Ruffin labouring to provide a credible political argument for the possibility of the events they foretold. *The Iron Heel* is similarly polemical, its lengthy Socratic dialogues explaining socialist tenets making for difficult, almost painful, reading.

While *The Turner Diaries* is set in a specific not-too-distant future time frame that has now passed, it largely avoids the pitfalls that dated its predecessors. Because the book opens

with the first shots of the revolution, its events do not emerge from a detailed political context so much as a paranoid fear of gun confiscation, which has not ebbed over time. The book does not fictionalise real political figures, and its warring factions are blurry portraits of carefully generic archetypes – The Organization and The System.
This lack of detail, whether intentional or the product of lazy writing, results in a bare-bones story that is not especially dependent on current political conditions. This generic quality is enhanced by what was almost certainly a deliberate choice by the author to ground the story in broad racial hate and not in a specific ideology.

Perhaps most importantly, the lack of grounding in contemporary events or complicated political polemics makes *The Turner Diaries* a simple read that depicts a world of stark contrasts and few subtleties. It does not seek to explain its politics (as detailed in the following section), it instead seeks to polarise its audience with visceral horror stories. This simplicity of the narrative reflects and helps to foster an extremist worldview in which shades of gray do not exist.[106]

Ideological Vacuum

When studying racist violence, it is useful to distinguish between ideological racism and pedestrian racism. The former relies on elaborate belief structures to explain and justify racism, the latter is garden-variety bigotry that does not seek justification. Most racism in society is pedestrian, but violent racism is often ideological.

Prior to the rise of Pierce's National Alliance, Christian Identity – a movement championed by William Gale – was the gold standard of American ideological racism. Sprung from the obscure roots of a 19th century historical conspiracy theory that argued white Europeans

104 M. Newberry, The Yahoos (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1964), pp. 20-21; The National Review 7, 1959; The National Review 11, 1961; More recently, Franklin has been credited with popularising the National Rifle Association slogan "No dictatorship has ever been imposed on a nation of free men who have not been first required to register their privately owned weapons", but in fact, the line had been circulating in pro-gun circles, verbatim, since no later than 1953.
105 See, for instance, http://www.occidentaldissent.com/2012/04/17/confederate-history-month-2012-nathaniel-beverly-tucker-on-race-and-secession/ and https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t70576-5/.
106 J. Kaplan and L. Weinberg, The Emergence of a Euro-American Radical Right Economy (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 11.

were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel described in the Bible,[107] the concept was refined in America into a convoluted argument that the people currently known as Jews were not God's chosen Israelites from Biblical times, but instead subhuman descendants of Satan, along with all other non-white races.[108]

William Pierce was not an Identity adherent, and his National Alliance took pains to disassociate itself from Christianity for various reasons (he eventually invented his own pseudo-religion, known as Cosmotheism[109]). But many of his close associates were involved with religious justifications for racism. Although Pierce's racist activism began with the flamboyant American Nazi Party, he eventually adopted the view that the trappings and the name of the Nazi Party were counterproductive to white nationalist recruitment. As Pierce told his biographer:

If you put on a show as he was doing, calling yourself the American Nazi Party and waving swastika banners around in front of the White House, if you come on with an incendiary approach, most level-headed people, even if they think of themselves as National Socialists, are going to be hesitant to get involved with that kind of circus.

This view strongly suggests that the narrative decision to avoid an ideological explanation within *The Turner Diaries* was deliberate. Pierce's carefully vague description of the Order's magically persuasive book of ideology in *The Turner Diaries* leaves a wide opening for ideological racists to bring their own justifications to the table, while drawing in people who have not committed to an ideology.

As Haroro Ingram writes, successful propaganda typically combines appeals to rational choices (based on a cost-benefit proposition for the desired outcome) and identity choices (decisions based on one's identification with a group or organisation).[110]

Part of *Turner's* unique impact derives from its assumption that its readers have already made an identity choice, and that this identity choice is primarily "white". Secondarily, readers may identify with a white nationalist ideology, but the text does not limit readers to any specific organisation or belief system.

The use of language within the text subtly reinforces this presumption. For instance, whites are frequently described using modifiers (for example, "white people", "white women") while blacks and Jews are simply "blacks" and "Jews". The phrase "black people" appears only once, in a quote attributed to a black person. Racially offensive terms for African-Americans are used in the text, with the word "Negro" occurring more frequently in the first half of the book, and the word "nigger" appearing more frequently in the last quarter of the text, after readers have been desensitised.[111]

While Pierce's decision to forgo an overt identity-choice appeal marginalises the book for popular audiences and limits its readership, the lack of a specific ideological orientation maximises the audience of potential racist extremists to include the adherents of any white nationalist faction, as well as pedestrian racists who identify simply as "white". The reader can fill *Turner's* ideological vacuum with a specific set of beliefs, or simply with racial animus or anxiety. In this context, it is noteworthy that Timothy McVeigh showed no clear indication that he subscribed to any specific white nationalist ideology, despite his fixation on the text.

Ultimately, *The Turner Diaries* drips with racial animus but contains little rhetoric explaining the reasons for its views on race. It is instead a call to immediate, violent action, with specific ideas for how to carry out such action.

Although the social prevalence of pedestrian racism creates a space for non-ideological

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107 Among many others, W.H. Poole (Rev.), History, The True Key to Prophecy, in Which the Saxon Race is Known to be the Lost Tribes of Israel (Brooklyn: George W. Greenwood, 1880).

108 W.P. Gale, The Faith of Our Fathers (Ministry of Christ Church, 1963); see also Anti-Defamation League, "Christian Identity", undated, http://archive.adl.org/learn/ext_us/christian_identity.html.

109 W. L. Pierce, Cosmotheism Trilogy, Published online at https://archive.org/details/CosmotheismTrilogyByWilliamLutherPierce and on the National Alliance's National Vanguard website.

110 H.J. Ingram, "A Brief History of Propaganda During Conflict: Lessons for Counter-Terrorism Strategic Communications", The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague 7. no. 6 (2016).

111 Word analysis performed with Voyant Tools, 21 August 2016, http://voyant-tools.org.

propaganda, it is not the only arena in which a hollowed-out appeal can produce real-world mobilisation.

V for Vendetta, a dystopian graphic novel with an anti-fascist and pro-anarchist message, was adapted for film in 2006. Author Alan Moore complained that the movie stripped out his political message and replaced it with "a thwarted and frustrated and perhaps largely impotent American liberal fantasy". The film valorises its terrorist protagonist and replaces the book's discussions of anarchism with vague references to freedom.

Figure 4: Radicalisation Process

As a result, *V for Vendetta*'s iconic image of a Guy Fawkes mask (worn by the protagonist and others) has become a generic symbol of radicalism and revolution, adopted by a variety of movements, from the cyber-activists of Anonymous to the protestors of the Arab Spring. The mask has even been used by pro-ISIS hackers.[112] The power of a strong story and vivid image can transcend its original context – amply illustrated by the fact that the historical Guy Fawkes was an anti-Protestant extremist, far removed from the context in which his name is now used.[113]

Action Orientation

The lack of ideological persuasion in *The Turner Diaries* empowers a singular narrative focus on rational choices – specifically the necessity of immediate, violent action.

The John Franklin Letters and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* each aspired to guide readers in adopting a specific strategy of violence, but both approached that challenge in a careful way, leading readers through a series of ideological justifications. Violence is necessary and present in each narrative, but at some remove from the narrative.

Turner also includes the how-to element but dramatically ups the ante in its depiction and glorification of violence – the latter a deliberate choice by Pierce, who told his biographer that the violence was primarily intended to keep readers coming back to his serialised story month after month.[114] But Pierce articulates another explanation within the book itself, when Earl Turner discusses The Organization's propaganda:

In fact, we intensified it and deliberately made our propaganda as provocative as possible. The purpose was not only to attract new members with a militant disposition, but at the
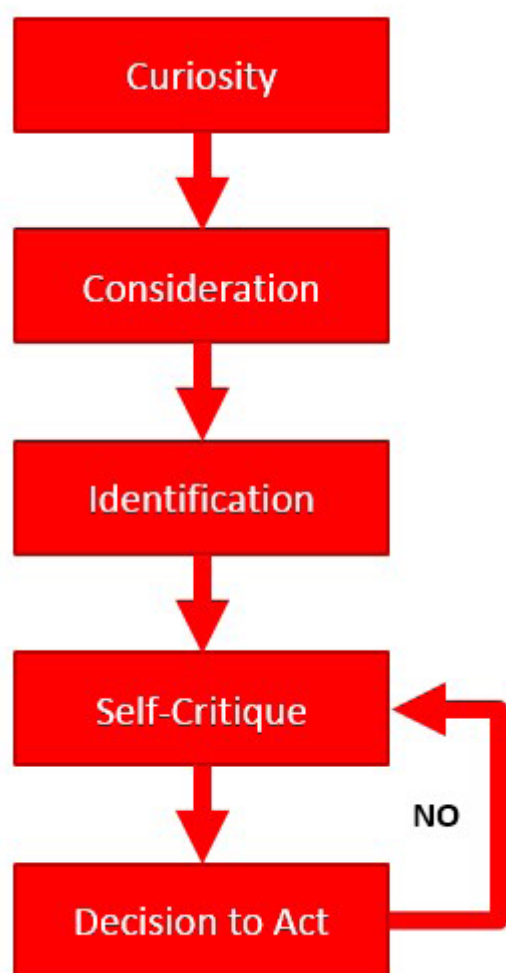
112 "Alan Moore: The Last Angry Man", MTV News, 2006, http://www.mtv.com/shared/movies/interviews/m/moore_alan_060315/; "There is Nothing Libertarian about 'V for Vendetta'", The Anarchist Notebook, 8 January 2006, https://anarchistnotebook. com/2015/01/08/v/; T. Ough, "Anonymous: How the Guy Fawkes mask became an icon of the protest movement", The Independent, 4 November 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/anonymous-how-the-guy-fawkes-mask-became-an-icon-of-the-protest-movement-a6720831.html; A.E. Garrison, "The impersonal politics of the Guy Fawkes mask", The Conversation, 23 December 2015, https://theconversation.com/the-impersonal-politics-of-the-guy-fawkes-mask-51091.
113 C. Turner, "9 things you never knew about Guy Fawkes", The Telegraph, 5 November 2004, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/11209784/9-things-you-never-knew-about-Guy-Fawkes.html.
114 R. Griffin, Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds (2001), p. 141.

same time to purge the Organization of the fainthearts and hobbyists—the "talkers".

The book repeatedly and explicitly recriminates "cowards" and "talkers", those who "were never able to screw up the courage to look the obvious solutions in the face".
People who engage in violent extremism (VE) often go through several stages of radicalisation that can be usefully defined in the context of recruitment and messaging.[115] These include:

1. Curiosity – recruitment target's first contact with a VE ideology.

2. Consideration – target evaluates the VE ideology for credibility, relevance.

3. Identification – target identifies him/herself as an adherent of VE ideology.

4. Self-critique – target asks whether he or she is doing enough for the cause. If the answer is yes, the self-critique repeats periodically. If the answer is no, the target proceeds to the next step.

5. Decision to act – target decides whether to undertake violent or material action on behalf of VE ideology. If the decision is made to act, the target proceeds to Movement-critique. If decision is not to act, the target either disengages from the radicalisation process or revisits an earlier stage.

As discussed in the preceding sections, *The Turner Diaries* assumes that readers have either gone through these steps already or do not otherwise require them. The book's argument is instead focused on the penultimate stage in radicalisation to violent extremism – self-critique.

The Turner Diaries repeatedly prompts readers to ask if they are doing enough to prevent a dystopian racial future. It repeatedly contrasts the actions of Turner and his compatriots with the cowardice and complacency of most

"right wingers". This direct critique challenges engaged readers to ask whether they are the "cowards", "talkers", "fainthearts and hobbyists".

The Turner Diaries distinguishes itself from all of the other works examined in this paper with this heavy focus on shaming people who lack the courage to act on their convictions. In combination with the other factors discussed, this theme helps account for the book's track record of galvanising violence by lone actors.

With respect to the call for action, it is also worth considering the intrinsic nature of dystopian fiction, which inherently elicits fear, and succeeds when it forces readers to ask, "What if this could really happen?" That was the pitch that drew in Timothy McVeigh, the lure that prompted him to send money in response to a magazine ad.

Dystopia and Cosmic War

Dystopian fiction is a natural vehicle for political and especially extremist propaganda, since its intrinsic nature is a depiction and critique of a society gone profoundly wrong in the foreseeable future, based on trends that the author believes are reflective of current conditions.

Most extremist movements believe their waking reality has already become dystopian and they are participants in what Mark Juergensmeyer calls a "cosmic war". For jihadist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS, this belief is articulated as a global "war on Islam".[116] For anarchists and socialists, a fascist oligarchy controls free market societies.[117] In the case of white nationalism, the "white race" is threatened with extinction due to widespread miscegenation and the erosion of white supremacist social norms.[118] As Juergensmeyer notes, *The Turner Diaries* is an exemplary proponent of the white

115 J.M. Berger, "Making CVE Work: A Focused Approach Based on Process Disruption", The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague 7. no. 5 (2016).
116 M. Slackman, "Bin Laden Says West Is Waging War Against Islam", New York Times, 24 April 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/24/world/middleeast/bin-laden-says-west-is-waging-war-against-islam.html; "The Evolution of a Radical Cleric: Quotes from Anwar al-Awlaki", New York Times, 8 May 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/world/09quotes.html.
117 A. Damon, "The American oligarchy", World Socialist Web Site, 18 October 2014, https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/10/18/pers-o18.html.
118 See, for instance, "About White Genocide", Undated, http://whitegenocideproject.com/about-white-genocide/.

nationalist conception of this "cosmic war".[119]

For extremist readers, dystopian fiction can amplify existing fears about the direction of society, and it can also introduce and illustrate such fears to mainstream readers. *Turner* advances trends seen in the real world – including discussions of gun control and the increasing diversity of American society – and twists them into a worst-case outcome.

If a reader can be led to feel a whole-of-society disaster is imminent, then undertaking extreme action to prevent that outcome becomes a rational choice. The advantage of fiction in this context is that it can produce such feelings based on purely hypothetical scenarios. The author argues from the hypothetical and does not have to marshal factual support.

When an author successfully immerses the reader in a dystopian vision's emotional content, it empowers a range of persuasive arguments that would not otherwise be possible. For some extremists, fear of a looming dystopia can provide the justification for violent action, provided the depiction is adequately lurid and visceral. Here, *Turner* outperforms its better-written and more thoughtfully plotted predecessors.

A dystopian premise, if seen as plausible, may simulate the intensity and character of religious apocalyptic beliefs, without requiring readers to subscribe to a specific religious ideology. In many apocalyptic texts, spiritually aligned forces align to wage "cosmic war" in which supernatural enemy combatants are "intent on destroying life and reducing the ordered world to chaos", invoking an archetypical "combat myth" but imbuing it with absolute existential stakes.[120]

Similarly, dystopias typically warn of an imminent cosmic war – fought by secular figures but constructed on a platform of similarly existential magnitude. Invoking these archetypes in a cautionary tale provides radical political actors with latitude to take extreme, system-disruptive action, and in rarer cases, they can justify the erasure of normal taboos against prohibited violence.[121]

Antinomianism – the religious concept that certain extreme conditions lead to the reversal of ordinary moral norms – is often a characteristic of millenarian movements.[122] *The Turner Diaries* is a textbook millenarian narrative, predicting an imminent apocalyptic change in the world with cosmic war as violent precursor to a utopian era of peace (the New Era described in the foreword and afterword). As such, engaged readers may feel it sanctions a departure from conventional morality.

Conclusions

The Turner Diaries presents a substantial challenge for those concerned with countering violent extremism and strategic counterterrorism communications. It is part of a long legacy of racial and political dystopian fiction, yet its hold on the extremist imagination is extraordinary and unusual. It has displayed a lasting impact that outstrips similar works that are better written and more thoughtful. Several white nationalist and antigovernment authors have attempted to emulate William Pierce's template, but thus far, none of their works has remotely approached *Turner*'s impact.[123]

By understanding the text in the context of similar works that preceded and, to a greater or lesser extent, inspired *The Turner Diaries*, we can identify a combination of characteristics that make it effective and enduring. These include:

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119 M. Juergensmeyer, Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 149-150.
120 N. Cohn, Cosmos. Chaos. and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith (Yale University Press, 2001), Kindle Edition, locations 972, 2274.
121 R. Landes, Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
122 Y. Talmon, "Millenarian movements", European Journal of Sociology 7. no. 02 (1966), pp. 159-200; Landes, Heaven on Earth (2011), p. 16.
123 K. Hicks, "Neo-Nazi Harold Covington Authors Cheesy Occult Novels", Intelligence Report, Southern Poverty Law Center, 15 August 2003, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2003/neo-nazi-harold-covington-authors-cheesy-occult-novels; J.M. Berger, "The Patriot Movement's New Bestseller Tests Their Anti-Racism", Daily Beast, 8 June 2012, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/06/08/the-patriot-movement-s-new-bestseller-tests-their-anti-racism.html.

- A dystopian scenario, predicted for the not-too-distant future.

- A social context described vaguely enough to avoid being made obsolete by historical developments.

- A simplified narrative featuring intense violence.

- The decision to avoid articulating a specific ideology, allowing readers to project their own expectations onto the text.

- A focus on rational-choice appeals, at the expense of identity-choice appeals, maximising the book's potential extremist audience while limiting its mainstream audience.

- Repeated calls to action and strong recriminations for inaction.

After an initial wave of violent incidents in the 1980s and 1990s, connected by a web of personal relationships and a shared social context, *Turner* has subsequently been linked to a significant and growing number of largely unconnected terrorist attacks and hate crimes, including nearly three dozen documented incidents involving at least 10 perpetrators since 2000, and more than one attack per year since 2013.[124]

There is little reason to hope this trend will abate or reverse itself any time soon, especially in light of recent changes in the American and European white nationalist landscape that favour the book's continued influence.

Since the 1990s, ideological white nationalism in the United States has declined. But since 2008, recruitment based on less-defined racial fear and hostility has risen to take its place, emphasising ideologically neutral concepts such as "white genocide"[125] and shifting toward less clearly delineated movements (such as

the "alt right").[126] Users participating in these new movements on social media routinely and selectively highlight incidents of racial unrest and black crime as evidence that "*The Turner Diaries* are coming true".[127]

These trends reflect – and may be inspired by – Pierce's strategy for both the National Alliance and *The Turner Diaries*, downplaying ideological complexities or flamboyant Nazi affiliations in favor of more conservative language and symbolism designed to appeal to a much wider audience identifying as "white" before "white nationalist".

Immediately after *Turner*'s publication, its primary effect resembled that of *The John Franklin Letters* – inspiring the creation of new (albeit small) organisations, such as The Order, the Aryan Republican Army and the Aryan People's Republic. But these groups were significantly influenced by social networks surrounding Pierce and other bricks-and-mortar centres of ideological racism, most notably the Christian Identity compound in Elohim City, Oklahoma.

Promoting groups was likely Pierce's intent, as the most common phrases in the text pertain to organising – including "organization members", "new recruits", "new members" and "organization work". But in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, *Turner* took on a new mystique as an inspiration for "lone wolf" attacks (in part due to misreporting that downplayed the depth of McVeigh's involvement with antigovernment movements[128]). Since the first wave of organisational inspirations faded with the arrest of most remaining members in 1997, the book has been linked to at least nine lone actors, but only one small terrorist cell.[129]

For now, *The Turner Diaries* presents a singularly difficult challenge for those seeking to counter violent extremism. It is a

124 See section 4, A Legacy of Violence, of this paper for details.
125 J.M. Berger, "Nazis vs. ISIS on Twitter: A Comparative Study of White Nationalist and ISIS Online Social Media Networks". George Washington University Program on Extremism. September 2016, https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Nazis%20 v.%20ISIS%20Final_0.pdf.
126 R. Gray, "How 2015 Fueled The Rise Of The Freewheeling, White Nationalist Alt Right Movement", BuzzFeed, 27 December 2015, https://www.buzzfeed.com/rosiegray/how-2015-fueled-the-rise-of-the-freewheeling-white-nationali.
127 See, for instance, https://twitter.com/JeffKaos/status/751451425503342592, https://twitter.com/2shyscorpio/status/752199263405285376 and https://twitter.com/Eukodol_gonzo/status/633824074913972224.
128 J.M. Berger, "PATCON" (2012).
129 Section 4, A Legacy of Violence.

standalone text with high name-recognition, widely circulated online and off. It offers few ideological arguments to refute, and as fiction, it is relatively immune to factual refutation due to its carefully generic and simplified narrative. The book draws an audience of both committed and casual racists, making it difficult to define a target audience for countermessaging.

The book resonates most dangerously with people who have reached the self-critique stage of radicalisation, where few avenues for intervention have much chance of success.[130] Efforts to counter the message *The Turner Diaries* and other similar works must therefore take the approach of discouraging violent action rather than targeting extremist beliefs,[131] in accordance with other data suggesting that a war of ideologies may not be an effective approach to preventing extremist violence.[132]

Within the limited range of possible messaging initiatives, a possibly fruitful avenue is to emphasise the failure of the book and its previous emulators – including The Order, the Aryan Republican Army and the perpetrators of the Oklahoma City bombing – to accomplish any significant social change.

However, the current political climate in the United States and Europe may provide new hope to those who seek to spark a racial cosmic war, as mainstream politicians ratify white racial fear and white nationalist beliefs predicated on worries about terrorism and immigration, resulting in new waves of overt harassment and hate crimes targeting people of colour, immigrants, Muslims, and the LGBTQ community.[133]

In the United States specifically, rising racial tensions stemming from the presidential campaign, police killings of African-Americans, and the related targeting of police by black extremists in Dallas and Baton Rouge[134] all serve to reinforce *Turner*'s mythology of an impending race war, a prospect of overwhelming interest to domestic extremists. And U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump has fanned fears of gun confiscation, one of the most resonant elements in *Turner*'s plot, even going so far as to suggest that gun owners should take matters into their own hands if his opponent wins.[135]

In this highly charged social climate, in which tensions appear to be escalating rather than diminishing, the book is likely to find traction with a new generation of readers, a dynamic further empowered by its wide availability as a free text online.

The Turner Diaries is destined to be found on the computers and bookshelves of violent extremists for years to come. And while white nationalism is particularly suited to *Turner*'s blend of fearmongering and ideological flexibility, it is likely that future authors will succeed in crafting similarly potent brews in the service of other causes.

The rising popularity of dystopian fiction as a mainstream genre[136] may further encourage future extremist ventures in this space.

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130 J.M. Berger, "Making CVE Work" (2016).

131 A. Norton, "A new frame for CVE: Analyze beliefs. but counter behavior", The Brookings Institution, Markaz blog, 17 March 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/03/17-lawfare-foreign-policy-essay-norton-cve.

132 J. Mort et al., "Role of Ideology and/or Religion as They Impact or Motivate Terrorism or Violence against Civilians", White paper: Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats, Air Force Research Laboratory, January 2010.

133 P. Holley, "Top Nazi leader: Trump will be a 'real opportunity' for white nationalists", Washington Post, 7 August 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/08/07/top-nazi-leader-trump-will-be-a-real-opportunity-for-white-nationalists/?utm_term=.bee07b683778; H Smith and N. Lancefield, "'Race hate' crimes on UK railways increase sharply after Brexit vote", The Independent, 21 August 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/race-hate-crimes-uk-railways-increase-brexit-vote-eu-referendum-a7202121.html; H. Khaleeli, "'A frenzy of hatred': how to understand Brexit racism", The Guardian, 29 June 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/29/frenzy-hatred-brexit-racism-abuse-referendum-celebratory-lasting-damage; A. Do, "Anti-Muslim and LGBT bias reports on the rise in OC hate crimes report", LA Times, 4 August 2016, http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-oc-hate-crimes-20160804-snap-story.html.

134 "Investigation: People Shot by Police in 2016 to date", Washington Post, Undated, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-2016/; "Times Topic: Attacks on Police". New York Times, Undated, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/a/attacks_on_police/index.html.

135 N. Corasaniti and M. Haberman, "Donald Trump Suggests 'Second Amendment People' Could Act Against Hillary Clinton", New York Times, 9 August 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/us/politics/donald-trump-hillary-clinton.html.

136 A. Campbell, "Why is dystopian fiction still so popular?", The Guardian, 18 November 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2014/nov/18/hunger-games-dystopian-fiction-appeal-to-teenagers-alex-campbell.

Additional study of the history and utility of dystopian visions in the service of radical political causes may point the way to a better understanding of how and why these works resonate.

About the Author

J.M. Berger is an ICCT Associate Fellow and a fellow with George Washington University's Program on Extremism. He is a researcher, analyst and consultant, with a special focus on extremist activities in the U.S. and use of social media. Berger is co-author of the critically *acclaimed ISIS: The State of Terror* with Jessica Stern and author of *Jihad Joe: Americans Who Go to War in the Name of Islam*. Berger publishes the website Intelwire.com and has written for Politico, The Atlantic and Foreign Policy, among others. He was previously a non-resident fellow with the Brookings Institution's Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, and an associate fellow with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

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The Practitioner's Guide to the Galaxy – A Comparison of Risk Assessment Tools for Violent Extremism

Liesbeth van der Heide, Marieke van der Zwan and Maarten van Leyenhorst

Foreword by Renske van der Veer (Director, 2018 - 2020)

The research paper I would like to highlight that was published during my time as ICCT director is "The Practitioner's Guide to the Galaxy – A Comparison of Risk Assessment Tools for Violent Extremism", by Liesbeth van der Heijde, Marieke van der Zwan and Maarten van Leyenhorst. I think it is an excellent example of the added value that ICCT can have and does have for practitioners and policy-makers alike. It is a thorough research paper that sheds constructively critical light on a topic – risk assessment tools- that is often misunderstood, and does so in an academically sound and methodical way. As the authors state, when it comes to risk assessment tools, people more often than not are "(....) expecting a silver bullet that will allow them to assess future behaviour or recidivism". On a topic like this, adding to policy and practitioners practise from evidence, ICCT's core business, is particularly necessary and useful. The paper gives practical considerations, next to a structured analysis and comparison. From a more personal perspective, the paper also brings to mind the pleasure I had working with Liesbeth and all other great colleagues at ICCT - that motivated, fun and sometimes nicely quirky bunch. I wish ICCT all the best in its next decade and far beyond and feel honoured to be part of the ICCT family – because that is what it feels like, really.

Abstract

This paper critically compares seven widely used risk assessment tools for violent extremism, including the VERA-2R, the ERG 22+, the SQAT, the IR46, the RRAP, the Radar, and the VAF. For each risk assessment method, the authors (1) provide background information about its country of origin, the field of expertise/discipline within which they were created, their underlying methodology (theory or case-based), and the various ways these tools are structured; (2) describe the purpose of the risk assessment tools and their respective target audience(s); and (3) elaborate on the use (practical implications) of the tools. The objective is to enable policymakers and practitioners to better navigate the often muddy, copyrighted, and expensive waters of the world of risk assessment of violent extremism—as well as to facilitate their decision-making process when it comes to determining what approach is best suited to their needs.

Introduction

In recent years, the number of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) charged with, arrested, or incarcerated for terrorism-related offenses has increased steadily across Europe.[1] Partially this is due to the increased number of offenders (including lone actors, foreign fighter returnees, sympathisers, and homegrown terrorists) against the backdrop of the civil war in Syria and Iraq and the rise and decline of ISIS. At the same time, in response to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and EU guidelines, many governments have criminalised a range of (preparatory) offenses related to (preparing to) travel to these countries and joining or supporting terrorist groups.[2] Together, these developments led to high numbers of VEOs in prisons worldwide, including in Europe.[3] The majority of VEOs will eventually be released and with that in mind, numerous countries are developing and implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programs to prevent recidivism and safeguard long-term security. Program evaluations and internationally agreed upon good policy documents (such as the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders and the UN Security Council Resolution 2178)[4] emphasise the importance of an individual approach. But what should such an individual approach to rehabilitation look like?

In the academic literature on prisons and terrorism, prisons are often viewed as so called 'hotbeds of radicalisation'.[5] Paradoxically, violent extremists are kept behind bars for the sake of public security; however, prisons can turn out to be the place where radicalisation takes place.[6] Mehdi Nemmouche,[7] the perpetrator of the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in 2014 and Amedy Coulibaly,[8] who murdered a police-officer and four visitors of a Jewish supermarket in Paris in 2015, were both radicalised in prison. Academic research shows that many European foreign fighters have been imprisoned before joining violent extremist groups.[9]

The challenge faced by practitioners working in custodial or probationary settings is to determine or to be informed of the risk posed by (suspected) violent extremists. This requires the implementation of proper risk assessment tools. The outcome should provide an estimation of the likelihood of an adverse situation occurring.[10]. Violent extremist offenders demonstrate different risk indicators compared to ordinary violent offenders. Thus, the mere use of risk assessment approaches for regular crimes can blur important distinctions.[11]

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1 Europol, The European Terrorism and Situation Trend Report (The Hague: Europol, 2018). See also: GLOBSEC, Who Are the European Jihadis? From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?, Midterm Report (Bratislava: GLOBSEC, 2018), https://www.globsec.org/publications/who-are-european-jihadis-from-criminals-to-terrorists-and-back/.

2 Liesbeth J. van der Heide and Jip Geenen, "Preventing Terrorism in the Courtroom – The Criminalisation of Preparatory Acts of Terrorism in the Netherlands," Security and Human Rights 26, no. 2-4 (2015): pp. 162-92, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02602016.

3 I.e. in France, roughly 500 individuals are believed to be incarcerated for terrorism-related offenses with an additional 1200 inmates that are believed to be radicalized. Marc Hecker, "Jihadist Prisoners: The Fear of Recidivism," Real Clear World, 12 July 2018, https://www.ifri.org/en/espace-media/lifri-medias/jihadist-prisoners-fear-recidivism.

4 Global Counterterrorism Forum, Initiative to Address the Life Cycle of Radicalisation to Violence -
Addendum to the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders (The Hague: Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2018), https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Toolkit-documents/English-Addendum-to-the-Rome-Memorandum-on-Legal-Frameworks.pdf.

5 Andrew Silke and Tinka Veldhuis, "Countering Violent Extremism in Prisons: A Review of Key Recent Research and Critical Research Gaps," Perspectives on Terrorism 11, no.5 (2017): pp. 2-11.

6 Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele J. Gelfand, Anna Sheveland, Maxim Babush, Malkanthi Hetiarachchi, Michele Ng Bonto, and Rohan Gunaratna, "What a Difference Two Years Make: Patterns of Radicalisation in a Philippine Jail," Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide 9, no. 1-3 (2016): pp. 13-36.

7 "Amedy Coulibaly," Counter Extremism Project, accessed 14 March 2019, www.counterextremism.com/extremists/amedy-coulibaly.

8 "Mehdi Nemmouche," Counter Extremism Project, accessed 14 March 2019, www.counterextremism.com/extremists/mehdi-nemmouche.

9 Fabienne Thijs, Elanie Rodermond, and Frank Weerman, Verdachten van Terrorisme in Beeld (The Hague: Sdu, 2018); Thomas Renard and Rick Coolsaet, Returnees: Who are They, Why are They (not) Coming Back and How Should We Deal with Them? Assessing Policies on Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, (Brussels: Egmont, 2018).
http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2018/02/egmont.papers.101_online_v1-3.pdf?type=pdf.

10 Victoria Herrington and Karl Roberts, "Risk Assessment in Counterterrorism." in Countering Terrorism: Psychosocial Strategies, eds. Updesh Kumar and Manas (London: Sage, 2012), pp. 282–305.

11 J. Maghan and R.J. Kelly, "Terrorism and Corrections. The Incarcerated Radical," in International Terrorism: The Decade Ahead,

To assess whether or not someone will engage in extremist violence, specific indicators that are relevant to violent extremism need to be included.[12] Risk assessment is the process of identifying risks to and from an activity, event, individual, or organisation[13] and the outcome should provide an estimation of the likelihood of an adverse situation occurring.[14] Individual risk assessments for violent extremist offenders (VEOs) aim to identify how risks, motivations, criminogenic needs, responsivities, vulnerabilities, and protective factors interact at a given point in time and within a given context.[15] The context depends on where the individual under assessment is in his or her trajectory vis-à-vis terrorism. This can vary from the idea that someone starts in the process of adopting a violent ideology to searching for evidence that someone is about to commit a terrorist attack. The assessment is generally based on the nature of the extremist ideology, the justification of the use of violence to achieve desired goals, intentions to engage in such violence, and the capacity of the individual to plan and act at a given time (i.e. the extent to which they are embedded in a network and have access to resources).[16]

Over the years, a wide range of tools has been developed with the aim of assessing whether someone will engage in violent extremism. Such instruments are implemented either in pre-trial, detention, or post-detention settings.[17] In July 2018, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)'s Prison and Probation Working Group published a first overview of risk assessment instruments used in the prison and probation context, including guidelines on the use and implementation of these specific tools.[18] The paper provides information on three main risk assessment methodologies (the ERG22+, the VERA-2R and the RRAP). The overview provided by RAN is generally descriptive in nature whereas the present study offers a more comparative framework. Furthermore, this paper expands the overview provided by RAN with four other risk assessment tools for violent extremist offenders: the Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT), the RADAR, the IR46 and the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF). More recently, Monica Lloyd (2019) published a comparison between risk assessment tools for violent extremism.[19] Lloyd based her study on input by the developers of the tools, whereas the underlying study is focused on the practitioner level and the use of the tool in different professional contexts. Additionally, this paper contextualises these instruments through a literature review on *What is risk assessment?*, *What are the main approaches used in risk assessment?,* and *What sets violent extremism apart from other forms of criminal behaviour?* Next, the seven risk assessment approaches will be compared along the following lines:

- What is the purpose of the tool;
- In what context (country, institutional environment) was the tool developed;
- For what audience has the tool been developed; and
- Which indicators are included?

By providing a more comprehensive and comparative overview of some of the main risk assessment approaches to violent ex-

ed. Jane Rae Buckwalter (Chicago, Il: University of Illinois Press, Office of Criminal Justice, 1989), 29-53.; Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," pp. 167-202.
12 John Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," Psychology, Public Policy and Law 18, no.2 (2012): pp. 167-202.; Randy Borum, "Assessing Risks for Terrorism Involvement," Journal of Threat Assessment and Management 2, no. 2 (2015): pp. 63-87.
13 Karl Roberts and John Horgan, "Risk Assessment and the Terrorist," Perspectives on Terrorism 2, no.6 (2010), http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/38/html.
14 Victoria Herrington and Karl Roberts. "Risk Assessment in Counterterrorism." in Countering Terrorism: Psychosocial Strategies, eds. Updesh Kumar and Manas (London: Sage, 2012), pp. 282–305.
15 Monica Lloyd, Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory (Lancaster: Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, 2019).
16 Pressman, Elaine D, "Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism," Public Safety Canada, February 2009, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/index-en.aspx; Lloyd, Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory.
17 Such as the RADAR, the VAF and the SQAT; see also John Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism: Recent Developments," in The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism, eds. Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich (New York: Wiley, 2017): pp. 520-34.
18 Simon Cornwall and Merel Molenkamp, "Developing, Implementing and Using Risk Assessment for Violent Extremist and Terrorist Offenders," Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), RAN Ex Post Paper, 9-10 July 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-p-and-p/docs/ran_pp_developing_implementing_using_risk_assessment_brussels_09-10_07_2018_en.pdf.
19 Lloyd, Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory.

tremism, this paper can be used as a foundation for practitioners and policymakers faced with the question of what assessing the risk of VEOs entails.

Literature Review

According to Herrington and Roberts, the term *risk assessment "refers to any process involving the systematic gathering and interpretation of information pertaining to an individual in order to predict the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behaviour of concern in the future."*[20] For a long time, risk assessment has been used in the mental health care sector by clinical and forensic psychologists to predict the likelihood that violent offenders will reoffend.[21] Researchers and practitioners distinguish several methods that can be employed in individual (violence) risk assessments—the four main approaches (unstructured clinical judgment, the actuarial method, structured professional judgment (SPJ), and self-assessment questionnaire) are discussed below.

The realisation that motivations, objectives, and methods of violent extremists differ from those individuals committing 'ordinary' violent acts is of recent nature.[22] Borum (2015) argues that SPJ tools for violence in general assume a cumulative risk model, implying that the more risk factors are present, the higher the chance of engaging in violence. This assumption however is not supported by the literature on individuals engaging in extremist violence. Pressman et al (who developed an SPJ tool) emphasise that one of the specifics of violent extremism is that sometimes just a few risk indicators that

are present can lead to an overall high risk.[23] If someone is highly committed to an extremist ideology, has assigned a target for an extremist attack, and has already obtained weapons to commit the attack, all other indicators may be considered irrelevant. According to Borum[24] *"an individual's risk for being involved (or re-engaging) in terrorism cannot be answered with any existing statistical formula or with a simple tally of possible risk factors. What we know of terrorism involvement suggests that it has many possible path ways."* Another challenge is posed by Lloyd (2019), who writes that past violent behaviour does not have to be a precursor for violent extremism, even though it often serves as a predictor for 'ordinary' violence.[25] This results in a diminished information position and accordingly makes the assessment of violent extremism "a more difficult one."[26] All in all, the study of risk assessment for violent extremism is "still in its infancy."[27] Researchers in the field are focusing their attention on developing and implementing risk assessment tools specifically designed to assess the risk of violent extremism. This requires understanding of the several methods that can be employed in individual (violence) risk assessments.

Unstructured Clinical Judgment

One method is an unaided approach to determine the estimation of risk.[28] This method may be referred to as a clinical approach and includes unstructured or semi-structured approaches. Essentially, the clinician makes the judgment/decision based on experience, knowledge and expertise.[29] An example of risk assessment tools based on unstructured

20 Herrington and Roberts, "Risk assessments in counterterrorism," pp. 282-305.

21 Joanne Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes," International Peacekeeping 25, no. 3 (2018): pp. 373-93, DOI:10.1080/13533312.2018.1440177.

22 Tore Bjørgo, "Dreams and Disillusionment: Engagement in and Disengagement from Militant Extremist Groups," Crime, Law and Social Change 55, no.4 (2011): pp. 277-85.; Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," pp. 167-205.

23 Pressman, Elaine, Nils Duits, Thomas Rinne, and John Flockton, "VERA-2R A Structured Professional Judgement Approach," European Commission, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/node/11702_en.

24 Borum, "Assessing risk for terrorism involvement," 79.

25 Lloyd, Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory.

26 Ibid.

27 Andrew Silke, "Risk assessment of terrorist and extremist prisoners," in Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, ed. Andrew Silke, (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 108-21.

28 Stephen D. Hart and Caroline Logan, "Formulation of Violence Risk Using Evidence-Based Assessments: The Structured Professional Judgment Approach" in Forensic Case Formulation, eds. Peter Sturmey and Mary McMurran, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011). DOI: 10.1002/9781119977018.

29 Stephen D. Hart, Christine Michie, and David J. Cooke, "Precision of Actuarial Risk Assessment Instruments," British Journal of Psychiatry 190, no.49 (May 2007): pp. 60-5.

clinical judgment is the HKT-R, an instrument developed to assess the risk for violent recidivism with leave applications using a semi-structured approach.[30] Traditionally carried out by a clinician, i.e. a professional with appropriate training and expertise, such decision-making is frequently described as informal, impressionistic, and subjective.[31] Clinical or unstructured approaches do not provide sufficient reliability and validity in the risk assessments nor do they allow for reliable repeated measures, since several clinicians could reach different decisions about the same individual.[32] Furthermore, this approach is more likely to miss out on important indicators. It is also vulnerable to a range of biases (e.g. confirmation bias), because of its dependency on professional discretion.

Actuarial Approach

A second method is the actuarial approach, derived largely from the insurance industry where statistics are closely monitored in order to price policies such that those most at risk pay more than those least at risk.[33] Actuarial assessments involve obtaining the answers to a set, specified number of questions (e.g. number of previous convictions).[34] Some actuarial assessment can be completed from file information only (e.g. age at first conviction), while some require greater interaction, and understanding about an offender (his or her attitudes to crime, for example).

To complete the actuarial assessment, the answers to each and every question (or risk indicator) are 'scored' followed by the establishment of a total score (and sometimes sub-totals). These tools are therefore formal, algorithmic, and objective.[35] These assessments tend to be more reliable than clinical judgment because, in theory, if several practitioners use the same actuarial tool on the same offender, they should reach a similar conclusion.[36] These approaches, however, use rigid and limited risk indicators that are not appropriate for all types of individual risk assessment.[37] The heterogeneity of the motivations and forms of violent extremism, the limited amount of empirical (primary source) data available, and the complex integration of risk indicators with potential psychopathology that may lead to violent extremism make the actuarial method les suitable for this specific type of offender population[38] The actuarial approach has also been criticised for being too strict, lacking sensitivity for change.[39] Furthermore, they are criticised for failing to support risk management and, in consequence, preventing violence.[40]

Structured Professional Judgment

A third method can be seen as the combination of a structured systematic evaluative protocol with professional judgment: the Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) approach. In this approach, decisions are based on guidelines, structured questions, or lists of criteria that must be considered. These indicators are developed from the existing empirical knowledge base (often through literature

30 Marinus Spreen et al., Handleiding en Methodologische Verantwoording. HKT-R Historische, Klinische en Toekomstige – Revisie (Groningen: Stichting FPC Dr. S. van Mesdag, 2014), p. 7.

31 William M. Grove and Paul E. Meehl, "Comparative Efficiency of Informal (Subjective, Impressionistic) and Formal (Mechanical, Algorithmic) Prediction Procedures: The Clinical-Statistical Controversy," Psychology, Public Policy, and Law 2 (1996): pp. 293-323.

32 Thomas R. Litwack, "Actuarial Versus Clinical Assessments of Dangerousness," Psychology, Public Policy, and Law 7, no.2 (2001): pp. 409-43, DOI: 10.1037//1076-8971.7.2.409.

33 David H. Morgan and Stan Ruszczynsky, eds., Lectures on Violence, Perversion, and Delinquency, (London: Karnac Books, 2007). ISBN: 9781855754959.61.

34 Stephen D. Hart, "The Role of Psychopathy in Assessing Risk for Violence: Conceptual and Methodological Issues," Legal and Criminological Psychology 3 (1998): pp. 121-37.

35 Ibid.

36 Robyn M. Dawes, David Faust, and Paul E. Meehl, "Clinical Versus Actuarial Judgment," Science 243 (1989): pp. 1668-74.

37 Michele Buurman et al., Research and Practice in Risk Assessment and Risk Management of Children and Young People Engaging in Offending Behaviours: A Literature Review, (Paisley: Risk Management Authority Research, 2007).

38 Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," pp. 167-205; Kiran Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalisation from Nonviolence into Terrorism," American Psychologist 72, no.3 (2017): pp. 278-88.

39 Kirk Heilbrun, "Prediction versus Management Models Relevant to Risk Assessment: The Importance of Legal Decision-Making Context," Law and Human Behavior 21, (1997): pp. 347-59.

40 Kevin S. Douglas, James R.P. Ogloff, and Stephen D. Hart, "Evaluation of a Model of Violence Risk Assessment Among Forensic Psychiatric Patients," Psychiatric Services 54, no. 10, (2003): pp. 1372-79. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.54.10.1372; see also: Charles L. Scott and Phillip Resnick, "Violence Risk Assessment in Persons with Mental Illness," Aggression and Violent Behaviour 11, no.6 (2006): pp. 598-611.

reviews) and from professional practice.[41] This approach can be seen as an attempt to close the gap between actuarial and unstructured clinical approaches.[42] The term has also been described as the ''guided clinical approach''.[43]

SPJ is a relatively new approach to assessing risk of violence, but has rapidly become the method of choice due to its demonstrated reliability and validity (see for instance the Historical Clinical Risk Management-20 (HCR-20), probably the most well-researched and widely used SPJ tool).[44] Whilst it is capable of assessing the likelihood of future violence through identifying salient risk factors with similar (moderate) degrees of accuracy as actuarially-based schemes, SPJ has the distinct advantage that it also provides guidance for managing or reducing the identified risk(s)— aiming to prevent violence.[45] Risk assessment tools based on this approach always contain a clear link between the identified risk factors and the proposed risk management strategies.

There are many advantages to the SPJ approach: it includes both static and dynamic risk factors with a strong empirical bases; it is structured but retains a role for professional judgment and provides flexibility and individualisation in its application; and there is a clear link between risk factors and risk management strategies.[46] Due to the heterogeneity of the target population, the potential relevance of historic information and the specific risks related to terrorism (e.g. ideology), it will come as no surprise that experts consider SPJ as the most appropriate method for risk assessment of terrorists and violent extremists. However, there is also a clear disadvantage: SPJ assessments are time—and resource—intensive and require a reasonable understanding of risk assessment and violence literature as well as appropriate training to assure a proper understanding of all aspects of the specific tool.[47][48]

Quantifying Information: Self-Reporting

Furthermore, self-report questionnaires can prove useful in quantifying information pertaining to attitudes, motivational elements, commitments to ideologies justifying violence, and grievances. Such elements are known to be related to violent political extremism. Self-rating of motivational elements, ideology, and social support can provide important insight into the psychological drivers and contextual influences of violent extremism unique to the individual. Since research has shown that specific attitudes have been associated with vulnerability for radicalisation recruitment,[49] such self-report information is valuable in an analysis of individual risk. As such, the availability of self-report information can enhance the background information available for risk assessment.

Specifically, self-report questionnaires can be subject to biases of social desirability wherein the respondents report what they feel would serve their interests— such bias is avoided in the SPJ approach, which is not based solely on for example individual's own impressions. A different bias may exist in the observational approach. In cases where the assessors are also the agents implementing rehabilitation, there may be a tendency to be less than objective about rehabilitation success.[50] That

41 Randy K. Otto and Kevin S. Douglas, eds., Handbook of Violence Risk Assessment Tools (Milton Park: Routledge, 2011).
42 Kevin S. Douglas and P. Randall Kropp, "A Prevention-Based Paradigm for Violence Risk Assessment: Clinical and Research Applications," Criminal Justice and Behavior 29, no. 5 (2002): pp. 617-58, DOI: 10.1177/009385402236735.
43 Karl Hanson, "What do we know about sex offender risk assessment?" Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 4(1998): p. 52
44 Otto and Douglas, Handbook of Violence Risk Assessment Tools.
45 Douglas and Kropp, " A Prevention-Based Paradigm for Violence Risk Assessment: Clinical and Research Applications," pp. 617-58.
46 Laura S. Guy, Ira K. Packer, and William Warnken, "Assessing Risk of Violence Using Structured Professional Judgment Guidelines," Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice 12, no.3 (2012): pp. 270-83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228932.2012.674471.
47 Pressman, "Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism," p. 25, p. 31, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/index-en.aspx.
48 Caroline Logan, "Reporting Structured Professional Judgement," in The Forensic Psychologist's Report Writing Guide, eds. Sarah Brown, Erica Bowen, and David Prescott (London: Routledge, 2017),pp. 82-93.
49 Alex P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review," ICCT Research Paper (March 2013), https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf; Chris Angus, "Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses," NSW Parliamentary Research Service 1, (February 2016): pp. 5-13,
50 Daryl G. Kroner and Wagdy Loza, "Evidence for the Efficacy of Self-Report in Predicting Nonviolent and Violent Criminal Recidivism,"

bias is avoided in the SQ self-report approach. Jointly, the two approaches in the battery methodologically complement each other by controlling for biases that are inherent in each approach individually.[51] Examples of risk assessment tools using self-questionnaires are: Measure of Criminal Attitudes and Associates,[52] and the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ).[53] These are all tools developed to assess the risk for violence. Only the validity of these tools has been proven.[54] The validity of self-reporting risk assessment tools for violent extremism has not extensively been researched yet.

Methods

Risk assessment means different things to different people. The type of risk that is measured is not just dependent on the context within which a risk assessment tool is used but often, 'risk' is not explicitly operationalised in the guidelines accompanying risk assessment tools. Where in correctional settings risk might refer to the risk of escape or the risk of radicalising others, outside of the prison context risk can also refer to the risk that an individual will use violence or the risk that they might be socialised into an extremist network. And some assessments focus on the current risk, posed by an individual here and now whereas other tools are concerned with the potential future risk of an individual.[55] In all these cases, risk refers to something different. However, as all risk assessment tools are based on the idea that the indicators presented can inform the user about a process of radicalisation as a psychological construct, the indicators are believed to be features of this process.[56]

To draft a list of all available risk assessment tools for violent extremism, a three-step approach was adopted. First, a list was compiled of all risk assessment tools already known to the authors, including the risks assessment tools described in the RAN paper on risk assessment instruments used in the prison and probation context. Second, a systematic literature review was conducted based on a Google Scholar database search on risk assessment tools that have been developed with the aim of assessing the level of radicalisation towards violent extremism—for use either in pre-trial, detention, or post settings. The search was based on the following terms: risk assessment AND terrorism, risk assessment tools AND (violent) extremism, risk assessment tools AND radicalisation. In the third step, through snowballing, the current literature was used as a starting point to identify additional risk assessment tools for violent extremism. Through using the bibliography of these studies we were able to find additional tools and literature on these tools.

The result of this approach was the identification of 15 risk assessment tools for violent extremism. In this paper, a comparative overview is provided of seven widely used instruments that are included based on certain criteria, which are outlined in the next section. After an introduction to the instruments an overview is provided in Table 1, including the background and the structure of the tools. This schematic overview is followed by a more in-depth assessment of all tools. For each risk assessment method, we (1) provide background information including the field of expertise/discipline within which they were created, the underlying methodology and the various ways in which these tools are structured; (2) describe the purpose of the risk assessment tools and their respective target audience(s); and (3) elaborate on the use (practical implications) of

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Journal of Interpersonal Violence 16, no2. (2001): pp. 168-77.

51 Rodger Tarling, Analysing Offending: Data, Models and Interpretation (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1993).

52 Jeremy F. Mills, Daryl G. Kroner, and Adelle E. Forth, "Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA) Development, Factor Structure, Reliability, and Validity," Assessment 9, no.3 (2002): pp. 240-53, https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191102009003003.

53 Wagdy Loza, The Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ): A Tool for Assessing Violent and Non-violent Recidivism (Toronto: Mental Health Systems, 2005).

54 Wagdy Loza et al., "Cross-Validation of the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ)," Journal of Interpersonal Violence 19, no.10 (2004): pp. 1172-90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260504269180.

55 Kiran M. Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalisation from Nonviolence into Terrorism," American Psychologist 72, no. 3, (2017): pp. 278-88.

56 Akimi Scarcella, Ruairi Page, and Vivek Furtado, "Terrorism, Radicalisation, Extremism, Authoritarianism and Fundamentalism: A Systematic Review of the Quality and Psychometric Properties of Assessments," PLoS ONE 11, no. 12 (2016): e0166947, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166947.

the tools.

Selection Criteria

Three inclusion criteria were used to select risk assessment tools for the analysis in this paper:

1. Risk assessment tools[57] that are especially designed to assess the risk of violent extremism, or tools that are used to assess the level of radicalisation of an individual;

2. Risk assessment tools that contain a number of indicators to determine the risk level for violent extremism or the extent of radicalisation of an individual;

3. Risk assessment tools that were developed, or have received an update, from 2010 onwards.

Based on the criteria above, seven risk assessment tools were selected and analysed. Eight tools were excluded because they did not meet the selection criteria or there was a lack of access to the relevant information to analyse the tool. These include the *Quick Scan Radicalisering (Quick Scan Radicalisation – QSR)* because it provides an overview of knowledge about radicalisation amongst professionals, rather than providing guidelines in the form of indicators for assessing risk for violent extremism.[58] Another tool that was not included due to lack of information is the Risk Assessment for Violent Extremists (RAVE), a tool developed by Geoff Dean.[59] The tool is based on a neurocognitive learning model

of the radicalisation process and consists of two elements: (1) a checklist of 31 "cognitive" risk indicators and (2) a software program, which visualises the scored factors.[60] The Radicalisation Assessment Monitor (RAM)[61] was excluded because it consists of a quick scan of symptoms rather than a set of indicators. The RAM assesses risk factors and protective factors to determine the level of radicalisation of an individual.[62] The outcome of the tool is twofold: it assists the practitioner in his or her assessment of the level of risk and it provides information about the decision if, when and how to contact third parties.[63] The developers of the RAM also aim to contribute to a common language for discussing topics associated with radicalisation and ideology.[64] The Radicx tool was also excluded because it is a set of guidelines rather than indicators, developed in the Netherlands for teachers and school staff to recognise signs of radicalisation at an early stage and distinguish it from other phenomena, such as teenage angst, mental disorders and drug or alcohol problems.[65] The tool consists of six steps, which should be discussed with a group of people who are close to the person that is subject to the risk assessment.[66] The Guidance for Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP) was excluded because it describes risk behaviour but does not provide a risk assessment methodology as such.[67] Another tool that was not included in this study is the Classification of Violence Risk (COVR), because it is aimed at hospitalised persons with mental disorders rather than violent extremists specifically.[68] The Multi-

57 Tool is defined here as a framework that assists professionals in determining the risk of the violent extremist offender on the individual level;

58 Gert van den Berg et al., "Quick Scan Radicalisering, Verkenning van de Lokale Praktijk", Nederlands Jeugdinstituut Movisie, July 2016. https://www.nji.nl/nl/Download-NJi/Publicatie-NJi/Quickscan-Radicalisering.pdf.

59 Geoff Dean and Graeme Pettet, "The 3 R's of Risk Assessment for Violent Extremism," Journal of Forensic Practice 19, no.2 (2017): pp. 91-101.

60 Geoff Dean, "What are the Tools for a NeuroCognitive Risk Assessment? Violence Prevention Consulting," Violence Prevention Consulting, 2014, http://geoffdean.com.au/what-are-the-tools-for-a-neurocognitive-risk-assessment/.

61 Mental Healthcare Organisation in The Netherlands

62 Christophe Paulussen, Janne Nijman, and Karlien Lismont, "Mental Health and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon: A Case Study from the Netherlands," ICCT Report (2017), https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ICCT-Paulussen-Nijman-Lismont-Mental-Health-and-the-Foreign-Fighter-Phenomenon-March-2017-1.pdf.

63 Wilfried D. J. Ekkers, Roland van de Sande and J. Levy, Radicalisation Assessment in Mental Health Care (RAM), (The Hague: Parnassia Groep, 2017).

64 Paulussen, Nijman, and Lismont., "Mental health and the foreign fighter phenomenon: A case study from the Netherlands."

65 Anniek Verhagen, Maartje Reitsma, and Ine Spee, Vroegtijdige Signalering van Radicalisering, ('s-Hertogenbosch: KPC Groep and APS, 2010).

66 Ine Spee and Maartje Reitsma, Puberaal, Lastig of Radicaliserend? ('s-Hertogenbosch: KPC Groep, 2010).

67 Jon Cole et al., Guidance for Identifying People Vulnerable to Recruitment in Violent Extremism (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2010), http://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/uploads/editor/files/IVP_Guidance_Draft_v0.3_web_version.pdf.

68 John Monahan et al., "The Classification of Violence Risk," Behavioral Sciences & the Law 24, no.6 (2006): pp. 721-30, http://dx.doi.

Table 1: Overview background and structure of tools

	VERA-2R	ERG 22+	SQAT	IR 46	RRAP	Radar	VAF
Full name	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment, Version 2 Revised	Extremism Risk Guidance	Significance Quest Assessment Test	Islamic Radicalisation Model	Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prison	Radar	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
Country of Origin	Canada & The Netherlands	United Kingdom	United States	Netherlands	Portugal	Australia	United Kingdom
Developer(s)	D.E. Pressman, N. Duits, T. Rinne, & J. Flockton	M. Lloyd & C. Dean	A. W. Kruglanski	Dutch Police	P. das Neves	K.Barelle & S. Harris-Hogan	NOMS/ Channel
Organisation	Netherlands Institute for Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology	National Offender Management Service	-	Dutch Police	R2PRIS	-	Channel Programme
Background developers	Academia and Forensic mental health experts	Police and Justice Institutions	Social Psychology	Police	Police and Justice Institutions	Academia	Police and Justice Institutions
Approach	SPJ	SPJ	Self-questionnaire	SPJ	SPJ	SPJ	SPJ
Basis / sources for tool development	Literature	Literature + cases	Literature + expert input	Academia + case studies	Literature	Academia, forensic mental health experts, and police counter-terrorism practitioners	Literature + cases
Structure of the tool							
Number of indicators	45	22	66	46	-	27	22
Categories/ dimensions/ sections	8	3	3	2	3	5	3
Type of categories	Beliefs & Attitude; Social Context; History & Capacity; Motivators; Risk mitigating indicators. Additional domains: Personal history; Criminal history; Psychopathology	Engagement, Intent, Capability	Needs, Narrative, Network	Social context, ideological factors	Behavioral, emotional, cognitive dimensions	Social Relations, Coping, Identity, Ideology, Action Orientation	Engagement, Intent, Capability

Level Guidelines (MLG) was not included because it is not focused on an individual but instead, it assesses group-based violence.[69] Finally, the Terrorist Radicalisation Assessment Protocol-18 (TRAP-18) was not included in this study, as the developers have identified the tool as an investigative template rather than an assessment tool because it not well enough tested yet.[70] Table 1 provides an overview of the seven included tools.

As discussed in the introduction to the methods used, risk is perceived in different ways by the authors of the tools. Considering the tools reviewed for this overview, a general distinction can be made with on the one hand instruments that focus on the risk of an increased willingness to contribute to violent extremism (such as the VERA-2R). The SQAT has a similar goal in that it the underlying model proposes that 'radicalisation reflects a high level commitment to the ideologically suggested goal (e.g., liberating one's land from occupation), and to violence as a means to its attainment, coupled with a reduced commitment to alternative goals and values'.[71] Other instruments that seek to provide an indication of the *level* or *degree* of radicalisation (including the R-Rap, IR46 and the Radar). Given that radicalisation is known to be a complex process that is influenced by a myriad of factors on the personal, the group and the structural level, risk does not equal radicalisation nor does radicalisation equal violent extremism.

Findings

Background

This paragraph provides a short description of the country of origin, the field of expertise/discipline within which they were created, the authors, the underlying methodology (theory or case-based), and the structure (indicators) of the tools. The tools will also be categorised into (1) risk assessment tools with a focus on known terrorist offenders and (2) risk assessment tools with a focus on the early identification or screening of potential violent extremist offenders. The selected risk assessment tools were developed in six different countries: The United Kingdom (UK); the Netherlands; Portugal; the United States (US); Canada; and Australia. However, some of the tools are implemented or have been used in several countries.[72]

In 2009, the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA), developed by Dr. Elaine Pressman, was published. The VERA was the first risk assessment tool specifically developed for violent extremism.[73] The VERA arose from the increasing need to assess the danger and risk posed by ideologically motivated violent individuals.[74] It is based on the existing empirical knowledge of violent extremists and terrorists. In 2012, the VERA2 was developed, which is a modified version based on user feedback. The current VERA-2R is an updated version of the VERA-2, including additional motivational indicators that have been identified as relevant to the radicalisation to violence process: status, fear, and a search for significance. The VERA-2R also includes

org/10.1002/bsl.725.

69 Alana Nicole Cook, Risk Assessment and Management of Group-Based Violence (British Columbia: Simon Fraser University Diss. Arts & Social Sciences: Department of Psychology, 2014), pp. 19-22, https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0166947.

70 J. Reid Meloy, and Paul Gill, "The Lone-Actor Terrorist and the TRAP-18," Journal of Threat Assessment and Management 3, no.1 (2016): pp. 37-52.

71 Michelle Dugas and Arie W. Kruglanski, "The Quest for Significance Model of Radicalisation: Implications for the Management of Terrorist Detainees," Behavioral Sciences & The Law 32, no. 3 (2014): pp. 423-39.

72 The VERA2 has been used in Nigeria in the de-radicalisation process of prisoners in Nigeria. For more information see: Atta Bryans Barkindo, "De-Radicalising Prisoners in Nigeria: Developing a Basic Prison based De-Radicalisation Programme," Journal for deradicalisation, no. 7 (Summer 2016), ISSN: 2363-9849. The SQAT was used with detained individuals suspected of membership in the Abu Sayaaf organizations in the Philippines, as well as with Muslim community samples in Spain, Morocco, and the West Bank. For more information see: "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," ICCT [non communicable].

73 Dean, "The 3 R's of Risk Assessment for Violent Extremism," pp. 91-101.

74 "RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism," Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), 2016, https://www.ifv.nl/kennisplein/Documents/2016-RAN-Preventing-Radicalisation-to-Terrorism-and-Violent-Extremism.pdf .

additional indicators related to non-violent criminal history, personal history, and mental disorders. These additional indicators have been identified as potential aggravating factors that may support radicalisation to violence and terrorism actions.[75] The VERA-2R is based upon academic research until 2018, and in the user manual extensive explanations based on the literature are provided for each indicator.

The VERA-2R has an overlap in indicators with the Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG22+), developed by M. Lloyd & C. Dean. Both Lloyd and Dean were (at the time of development) practicing forensic psychologists within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) of England and Wales. Both tools adopt a SPJ approach and focus on protective factors and risk factors.[76] During the development of the first version of the ERG22+, the developer of VERA consulted the developers of the ERG22+ to see whether they could collaborate and work on a single framework.[77] However, as the goals and purposes of the tools differed too much, they decided not to cooperate on one single framework but rather, to focus on the development of their own tools. In contrast to VERA-2R, the ERG22+ is based on casework rather than academic literature. The first ERG22+ was based on input from 20 cases of convicted extremist offenders in the UK. Ultimately, 21 risk indicators were identified from these cases. Based on feedback from users and additional casework knowledge, the ERG22+ was further developed, resulting in a tool that consists of 22 risk indicators divided under three dimensions. The "+" suffix in the title of ERG22+ should accommodate any other factor(s) that appear(s) relevant to the assessor.[78]

Another tool that is also specially designed

for use in prison and probation setting is the Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons (RRAP) Tools Set, developed by R2PRIS. The R2PRIS Radicalisation Prevention in Prisons is a 3-year project, which started in 2015 and is supported by the European Commission. The project is coordinated by BSAFE LAB Law Enforcement, Justice and Public Safety lab[79] within the University of Beira Interior in Portugal, together with Innovative Prisons Systems (IPS).[80] The project team of R2PRIS developed among others the RRAP tool, which comprises three risk assessment instruments: Helicopter view, Frontline Behavioural Observation Guidelines (FBOG) and Individual Radicalisation Screening (IRS), and one readiness assessment tool (Critical Incidents Readiness Assessment (CIRA). The RRAP focuses on signalling risk and vulnerability in the general prison population instead of already charged or convicted terrorist offenders.[81] Several sources of information can be used to use the tool (i.e. interviews with the inmate and observation reports). The tool consists of 39 items in 9 dimensions (emotional uncertainty, self-esteem, radicalism, distance, and societal disconnection, need to belong, legitimisation of terrorism, perceived in-group superiority, identity fusion, and identification, and activism). For each dimension, the "severity" must be indicated using a scale (from one to five), which indicates low, moderate, or high vulnerability. Finally, the assessment of the risk level will be judged by a decision maker, who decides on the category of risk or the need for intervention.[82]

Another tool that focuses on the prevention of violent radicalisation is the Islamic Radicalisation model 46 (IR46), which was developed by the Dutch Police in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Justice and Safety,

75 Among others, Paul Gill and Emily Corner, "There and Back Again. The Study of Mental Disorder and Terrorist Involvement," American Psychologist 72, no.3 (2017): pp. 231-41.; Norah Schulten et al., Radicalisation, Terrorism & Psychopathology: State of Affairs, Gaps and Priorities for Future Research (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2019), https://english.wodc.nl/binaries/2911_Summary_tcm29-373042.pdf.

76 Monica Lloyd and Christopher Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," Journal of Threat Assessment and Management 2, no.1 (2015): p. 40.

77 Pressman, "Risk assessment decisions"; see also D. Elaine Pressman, and John Flockton, "Calibrating Risk for Violent Political Extremists and Terrorists: The VERA 2 Structured Assessment," The British Journal of Forensic Practice 14, no.4 (2012): pp. 237-51.

78 Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 40.

79 BSAFE LAB Law Enforcement, Justice and Public Safety lab is an open interdisciplinary research and technology transfer laboratory.

80 R2PRIS, "Multi-level in-Prison Radicalisation Prevention – Certification Training".

81 RAN, "Developing, Implementing and Using Risk Assessment."

82 European Commission, Conference on Radicalisation in Prisons. Event Report European Commission (Brussels: European Commission, 2018); See also: RAN, "Developing, Implementing and Using Risk Assessment for Violent Extremist and Terrorist Offenders."

and academics in the field of terrorism studies. IR46 is a risk assessment tool that helps police, the intelligence services and so called 'care-providers' (organisations that are in close contact with specific persons that are subject to concerns about radicalisation or extremism) to recognise signals of Islamic radicalisation at an early stage. The IR46 is developed on the basis an international literature review, interviews with experts, and case studies and is updated every three years. The IR-46 is the new name and successor of a preceding instrument named *Kennis in Modellen (Knowledge in Models)* (KIM), dating back to KIM1.0 in 2009.[83] The IR46 was introduced in 2016, adopts an SPJ approach and consists of four phases with indicators related to ideology and the social context of an individual. In total, the IR46 consists of (not surprisingly) 46 indicators that are subdivided under nine groups. The IR46 leads to a so-called 'signaling'—or traffic light—model that prioritises local policies. Subsequently, a tailor-made approach is developed targeting regional individuals who are potentially radicalising. Additionally, the professional that uses the IR46 can add case-specific factors to the assessment as deemed appropriate. It is not required to exclusively rely on objective information. Information based on the gut-feeling of a policeman can be included in the tool.

The U.K. Government developed the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) that also adopts an SPJ approach.[84] The VAF is mainly used in local partnerships (i.e. staff in the education, local authorities, youth services, and health sector) that work with the Channel program[85]. The VAF is used *"to assess whether individuals need support to safeguard them from the risk of being targeted by terrorists and radicalisers"*.[86] The VAF consists of 22 factors - across three dimensions: engagement, intent and capability – *"that may cause an individual (a) to engage with a terrorist group,*

(b) to develop the intent to cause harm and (c) to develop the capability to cause harm". In contrast with some of the other tools, the VAF does not use a point scale, because scaling each factor can be highly subjective according to the creators of VAF. Therefore, assessors have to fill in all the information that is available for each factor without attaching a score to the indicator. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that the characteristics mentioned in the framework do necessarily indicate that an individual is engaged with a terrorist group or may become involved with a terrorist group. The framework can be used to complement professional judgment when practitioners need to make decisions.[87]

The Radar (developed and used in Australia) is a protocol designed to systematically document all aspects of a person and his or her environment. It functions as a basis to structure information to aid decision-making. The protocol consists of two assessments: an initial screening that determines whether an individual is potentially suitable to participate in a program, followed by (in case of a positive answer) an in-depth risk and needs assessment to determine whether an intervention is appropriate and to design a case management plan. Radar is used to identify specific individuals who would benefit from programs designed to reduce the risk or mitigate the impact of radicalisation, as opposed to trying to predict the likelihood of low base rate violent actions. The Radar is based on Kate Barrelle's pro-integration model[88] and assesses five areas of an individual's life: social relations, coping, identity, ideology, and criminal action orientation. The underlying idea to develop this risk assessment protocol was that the Australian police and social services felt a need for a context-specific tool based on Australian research. The Radar also explicitly focuses on behaviour rather than ideology or beliefs; all indicators relate to observable behavioural

83 Lloyd, Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory, p. 19.
84 Kiran, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalisation from Nonviolence into Terrorism."
85 The Channel program is a program in the UK which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to radicalisation.
86 "Channel Vulnerability Assessment," HM Government, 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-vulnerability-assessment.
87 "Channel Vulnerability Assessment."
88 Kate Barrelle, "Pro-integration: Disengagement from and Life after Extremism," Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression 7, no 2 (2015): pp. 129-42. The Pro-Integration Model emerged from the Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTRC) in 2009-2015 wich was completed by Monash University's.

facts.

A risk assessment tool that is not based on an SPJ approach is the Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT), developed in the United States by professor Arie Kruglanski. The SQAT is a self-questionnaire and is designed to measure detainees' degree of radicalisation, or adherence to violent extremism.[89] The questionnaire consists of 66 items spread across three scales: 'needs'; 'narrative'; and 'network' (the 3N-approach). The individuals under assessment have to respond to these items by marking a Likert scale with appropriate labels that indicate the extent to which they agree with a statement, or their degree of endorsement of the statement. The point scale of SQAT is ranging from *rarely or never* (1) to *very often* (7). The scores for the questions are then translated into an overall risk level for an individual and provide insight on the level of risk posed by the given individual.

Purpose and Target Audience(s)

The target audiences of the VERA-2R differ per country as some countries use the tool to assess the risks for conditional release while other countries use the tool for pre-trial risk assessment. The VERA-2R can support analysis of future extremist violence and can be used to identify objectives for management of violent extremism.[90] The ERG22+ also focuses on individuals that are convicted for terrorism-related offenses. The purpose of the tool is for professionals to comment on offender risk and needs through an assessment their engagement to an extremist group, cause or ideology their intentions and their capabilities.[91] In contrast, the RRAP emphasises individuals in prisons who are vulnerable to radicalisation or shows signs of radicalisation and the purpose of the tool is to assess the level of vulnerability and risk of radicalisation.[92] The SQAT is also used within prisons and its purpose is to measure the risk posed by an inmate. Furthermore, the SQAT can also provide insight in the impact of deradicalisation programs (by re-assessing

over time).[93] Regarding the IR46, VAF, and the Radar, they are not used or specifically designed to be used within prisons but focus on individuals in the general population who manifest signs of radicalisation. The IR46 focuses on individuals from 12 years and older.

Use and Practical Implications

In this paragraph, we will provide insight in (1) the objective of the tool; (2) the end-users of the tool and training requirements; (3) the institutional context within which the tool can be used; and (4) the type and level of information that is required for a valid assessment. Finally, the practical implications of using the tools will be discussed. An overview of the implementation aspects of the risk assessment tools is presented in Table 2 below.

Objectives

As can be seen in Table 2, the objective of the tools ranges from creating a general awareness of radicalisation to an explicit focus on assessing the level of radicalisation and tools that are used to inform decision-making about for example intervention plans in or after detention. The objective of both the IR46 and the VAF is to enable professionals to structure their 'gut-feeling' and create a (more) comprehensive view of a specific individual on the basis of which they can determine if there is actual cause for concern and if yes, take appropriate action. The IR46 functions as an early-warning method for professionals within the security field to identify signs of Islamic radicalisation.[94] The VAF was developed with the objective to support local partnerships that work with the Channel program to guide their decisions on whether an individual needs support from Channel and the kind of support to address their vulnerability to radicalisation. The Radar is a protocol designed to identify individuals that could benefit from early interventions (not too high risk, not to low risk) and aid the decision making process of police

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89 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," ICCT [not publicly available].

90 Pressman et al., "VERA-2R: A Structured Professional Judgment Approach."

91 Lloyd, Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory, p.13.

92 R2PRIS, "Multi-level in-Prison Radicalisation Prevention – Certification Training."

93 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," ICCT.

94 Politie Nederland, Islamitisch Radicaliseringsmodel, (2017).

Table 2: Use of risk assessment tools

Use	VERA-2R	ERG 22+	SQAT	IR 46	RRAP	Radar	VAF
Objective	To obtain information on the likelihood of violent extremist action; to develop risk management strategies; to monitor risk-trajectories; and to obbtain information for early release decisions	To inform proportionate risk management; increase understanding and confidence amongst front-line staff and decision-makers, and facilitate effective and targeted intervention	To enable professionals to measure the level of radicalization. And to measure the impact of deradicalization programs	To enable professionals within the safety field to early detect signs of Islamic radicalization	To enable prison staff to identify risk; and screen and assess inmates that may be at risk of becoming radicalized	To identify high-risk individuals who would benefit from programs designed to prevent radicalization	To determine whether individuals should be accepted into the Channel program
Target audience	Violent extremist offenders and radicalized individuals	Convicted extremist offenders in England and Wales	Radicalized individuals in and after detention	Persons +12 years old who shows signs of Islamic radicalization	Inmates that are suspected of being vulnerable to or already in a process of radicalisation	Radicalized individuals in and outside the prison context	Individuals deemed vulnerable to radicalization
Intended users	Forensic mental health experts, national security analysts, police, probation, prison staff	In context of prison: front-line staff and decision-makers	Professionals, including prison and probation staff who are managing detained individuals; religious advisors; volunteers and academia	Police, security services and "care-providers"	Prison staff	Police and social workers	Local authorities, education staff, mental health care professionals
Training required?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Unknown

staff and civil servants on the municipality level, thus providing a justification for interventions and treatment.

The RRAP, the Radar, the ERG22+, the VERA-2R and the SQAT can be helpful to make informed decisions about, for example, placement issues in detention and early release. The objective of the RRAP is twofold; on the one hand, it enables prison staff *"to identify risk, and screen and assess inmates that may be at risk of becoming radicalized"*[95] and on the other hand it enables them to train fellow staff members in using the tool.[96] The assessment will be used by a decision maker to decide on the category of risk or the need for intervention.[97] The ERG22+ is also used to inform decisions on extremist offenders. According to Lloyd and Dean (2015):

> *"The ERG has played a critical role in informing decisions that concern convicted extremist offenders across NOMS, including how they are managed, supervised, and monitored; what interventions they complete; whether these have affected risk; and whether and how they should be located, relocated, released, and reintegrated into society or recalled into custody."*[98]

Furthermore, the ERG22+ provides an approach to identify, manage, and address extremism for law enforcement agencies and correctional agencies.[99] The VERA-2R functions as an analytical protocol to assess the individual's risk of radicalisation to violent extremism. Additionally, the VERA-2R can be used to obtain information on the likelihood of violent extremist action and ways to prevent this; to assist in intervention and to monitor efficacy. The SQAT has two objectives; on the one hand it can measure the level of radicalisation of an individual, which can be used to inform risk decisions. On the other hand, SQAT can also be used by an assessor to measure the impact of

a deradicalisation program over time through re-assessment over several time intervals.[100]

End-users

Some of the tools are intended for use by multiple professions (i.e. the IR46 is intended for professionals of the police intelligence services and so-called 'care-providers'), while other tools are specifically designed for a specific profession or professional (i.e. the RRAP is developed for professionals working in a prison setting). What almost all end-users of the tools have in common is that they are likely to be in close contact with individuals deemed at risk of (further) radicalisation. Besides professionals who work in the security field, academic experts who use tools to assess the effect of deradicalisation programs. An overview of all (potential) end-users for each tool is presented in Table 2.

A distinction can be made between tools that require training before people can use the tools and tools that can be used without training. The Radar, the VERA-2R, the ERG22+, the SQAT and the RRAP all require some level of training (in some cases trainees will receive certification after which they are deemed 'Certified Users'). The developers of the ERG22+ specifically state that only very experienced assessors, such as fully qualified forensic psychologists and experienced probation officers, should use ERG22+. Also, they argue that users should have experience with professional guidelines and require a level of political awareness in the area of extremism.[101] The training for the RRAP, for professionals at different levels of the prison administration, consists of a combination of both online and offline training. Professionals that obtain a certification upon completion of the RRAP training will be allowed to train other colleagues in the use of RRAP as well. On the contrary, the use of the Radar is restricted to trained users. Trained users cannot share the tool with colleagues or train others in

95 R2PRIS, "Multi-level in-Prison Radicalisation Prevention – Certification Training".
96 Ibid.
97 European Commission, Conference on Radicalisation in Prisons. Event Report European Commission.
98 Lloyd and Dean, ""The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p.49.
99 Ibid, p. 40.
100 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," ICCT.
101 Martine Herzog-Evans, "A Comparison of Two Structured Professional Judgment Tools for Violent Extremism and Their Relevance in the French Context," European Journal of Probation 10, no.1 (2018): pp. 3-27.

the use of the tool. The training consists of a two-day training program with 70% of the training focusing on learning what the different concepts of radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism entail and what the differences are between disengagement and de-radicalisation. A specific section of the training is devoted to specifying the objective of the use of the tool for the specific group of users, including a discussion on what success looks like.

The developers of VERA-2R have developed a protocol that only allows people who are trained by the developers to use the tool, to preclude that people will use the tool in an inadequate way.[102] The training for VERA-2R includes background information on the VERA-2R, the knowledge base related to violent extremism, terrorism and the radicalisation process. Users acquire experience during the training program in applying the VERA-2R indicators and completing assessments using actual case studies. The SQAT can be used by anyone who has received the appropriate training. In the training for the SQAT the focus is among others on the methodology of the survey used in SQAT, how to instruct the survey takers and how to respond to questions from individuals who have to fill out the survey.[103]

Institutional Context

A distinction can be made between tools that are structurally used, because they are part of repetitive procedures (e.g. the intake procedure in a prison), and tools that are used on a more ad-hoc basis, for example when professionals have a 'gut-feeling' that something is off, or to assess the level of radicalisation when they believe that someone shows signs of radicalisation.

Since 2011, the ERG22+ is embedded within the NOMS and is used to support informed decision making about sentence planning, relocation, reintegration and release. [104] Besides the ERG22+, the Radar, the VERA-2R and the SQAT can also be used within prison settings. They can inform decisions regarding the handling

of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) and on the effectiveness of risk management and interventions regarding disengagement. The SQAT can be used upon arrival of an inmate and will serve as a baseline assessment in the sense that the prison environment has not yet influenced the inmate. The RRAP was also created for use within a prison setting, but no information is available as to whether it is used structurally or on a more ad-hoc basis. The IR46, the VAF, and the Radar can be used on a more ad-hoc basis when a professional deems it necessary to assess the level of radicalisation of an individual or to make decisions about appropriate management and interventions.

Required Information

The information that is required to complete an assessment varies across the risk assessment tools. The SQAT, which is a self-questionnaire, only requires information provided by the individual that is assessed. In contrast, all other tools are filled out by the professional rather than the subject him or herself. The Radar focuses on observable behavioural indicators related to an individual's identity (social context, ideology and criminal action orientation) and their potential for coping. This information can be sourced from the observations of the users themselves, court reports, other professionals that can provide information regarding the individual, or from other individuals in the person's social environment. Similarly, the VERA-methodology *"relies on the evidence-base obtained from court records, other professional reports, documents relating to the individual in prison, observations and other information from other prisons and agencies and reports and observations concerning the individual of interest by persons who come into interaction with her or him."*[105] Herzog-Evans, in his article 'A comparison of two structured professional judgment tools for violent extremism and their relevance in the French context', evaluated the VERA-2 and the ERG22+, and he concludes that the ERG22+ has a simpler structure and requires less classified information to complete

102 Ibid.
103 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," p. 17, p. 19.
104 Lloyd and Dean, ""The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 40.
105 Pressman et al., "VERA-2R: A Structured Professional Judgment Approach."

the tool.[106] In line with this, Van der Heide and Schuurman concluded in their evaluation of the Dutch approach to reintegrating jihadists, that practitioners from Dutch Probation were enthusiastic about the VERA-2R, but most probationers hardly used the tool due to capacity issues and a lack of information.[107] Also, the IR46 seems to rely among others on observations of the professional that is using the tool and on contact with the individual in question. For the RRAP it is not clear which information is required to use the tool in a proper and adequate way.

According to the developers of IR46 it is case dependent how much information is required to have a valid assessment. There is no minimum level of information that is required for using the tool. The developers of IR46 argue based on user experience of the IR46 that the IR46 can provide a valid assessment even with 95% unknown information. At the same time, they acknowledge that the validity is also dependent on how often re-assessment takes place and on the treatment of the individual. Regarding the VAF and the Radar there is no information available on how much information is required to have a valid assessment.

Practical Implications

The practical implications for the use of the tools vary across the risk assessment tools. In this paragraph we will give information on the use of the tool in practice. The VERA-2R and the ERG22+ also provide clear guidance regarding the use the tool, including for example a proper explanation of the indicators used in these tools.[108] Additionally, record-forms (on paper) for the implementation of the tools are provided. All three assessments can be used with the input of interviews with the individual, but both the Radar and the VERA-2R can also be used without an interview with

the individual in question. The findings of both tools to be integrated into a final report by the user, which sets out the overall risk assessment (low, moderate or high) together with the significant risk domains, risk indicators, and protective indicators. For the VERA-2R, the assessor has to make two types of judgements. First, the assessor has to decide whether or not an item (or indicator) is present in relation to the individual in question and rate this item for severity (low, medium or high). Second, the responses need to be integrated into a final judgement, which gives insight into the risk for violence of the examined individual. For this final judgement, the assessor needs to include the context for the evaluation.[109]

According to the developers of the ERG22+, assessors can structure their interviews using four main questions instead of working through a list of (22+) factors. Furthermore, the assessors are advised to use their judgement regarding the factors (i.e. they need to consider during the completion of the assessment which role the factors played in the offense as well as what role the factors could play in the future). Finally, a written report has to be created based on the analysis to inform decisions and risk management strategies.[110] Furthermore, the developers of the ERG22+ recommend their tool to be used by multiple assessors instead of just one because it is unlikely that one assessor can complete the tool based on skills, knowledge and information. Also, it reduces the risk that the assessment can be influenced by manipulation or intimidation.[111]

For the SQAT, the inmate needs to fill out the questionnaire individually, ideally within an environment where the inmate cannot be disturbed by others. Furthermore, a trained and certified user should be present in case any questions arise.[112] To finalise the assessment and generate an overall risk

106 Herzog-Evans, "A Comparison of Two Structured Professional Judgment Tools for Violent Extremism and Their Relevance in the French Context," pp. 3-27.

107 Liesbeth J. Heide and Bart W. Schuurman, Re-Integratie van Delinquenten met een Extremistische Achtergrond: Evaluatie van de Nederlandse Aanpak (The Hague: Institute of Security and Global Affairs, 2018).

108 Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 47; Pressman et al., "VERA-2R: A Structured Professional Judgment Approach."

109 Pressman, "Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism," p. 31.

110 Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 47.

111 Herzog-Evans, "A Comparison of Two Structured Professional Judgment Tools for Violent Extremism and Their Relevance in the French Context."

112 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," ICCT, p. 21.

outcome, the scores for each of the questions need to be calculated using a formula, by a trained assessor.[113] Compared to the VERA-2R, the ERG22+ and the SQAT have no specific (quantified) end-score as an outcome. Regarding the other tools (the RRAP, the Radar, VAF and the IR46), no information is available on how the tool should be used in practice.

A common criticism related to the practical use of all SPJ tools (the Radar, the ERG22+, the VERA-2R, the VAF and the IR46) is that it requires both much information and it can take a long time to complete a single assessment, thus making the use of SPJ resource-intensive.[114] Comparatively, this makes the one self-questionnaire tool, the SQAT, much easier to implement as it requires neither much time nor information on account of the professionals. At the same time, the self-questionnaire methodology is more at risk of 'socially desirable' answers by the inmates filling them out. Nonetheless, the developers of the SQAT have concluded that in many penitentiary environments, especially when detainees are already sentenced, are highly ideologically committed and/or in context where participation in terrorist groups is much more accepted, there is both willingness and openness to fill out the questionnaire honestly.

Conclusion

The threat of radicalisation towards violent extremism, in and outside of prison settings, has increased in Europe over the past years in the context of the FTF phenomenon and the rise in the criminalisation of preparatory offenses. In line with this, the interest in—and demand for—risk assessment of the degree of radicalisation of either suspected or sentenced violent extremists has grown, in academia but even more so from a policymakers. In response, many risk assessment tools have been developed world wide in recent years by different experts (psychologists, academics, criminologists, practitioners), in different institutional contexts (prison, police work, local level, mental health care sector), tailoring to different target audiences (jihadist, left-

wing, right wing) and with different objectives (determining risk of reoffending, risk of radicalising others, degree of radicalisation, or likeliness to use violence). However, because terrorism remains a threat with low prevalence rates, the existing evidence base is too small to scientifically validate any of these tools.

Due to the lack of evaluations of these tools, an oft-voiced criticism is that all these tools remain at the level of structuring and categorising information, providing a rationale for action plans and interventions, but none of them have predictive abilities. Thus, the term 'tool' can come across as misleading as when not properly informed, users run the risk of expecting a silver bullet that will allow them to assess future behaviour or recidivism, which is not the case for all these tools. Nonetheless, it is essential that professionals in the field, who work on a daily basis with these individuals, be enabled to structurally gather information to identify indicators relevant to their specific objective. Thus, it is important to demystify some of the language used in this field and to take a pragmatic approach, including for example acknowledging that an approach like Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) really does not mean much more than structuring the common sense and intuition of professionals to support their judgments. While the holy grail of risk assessment—predictive tooling—is a far off point on the horizon as it is simply too early stages to be able to develop it, the currently available methods and tools are often quite clear in their scope and do not necessarily pretend to be much more than an aid or a basis for decision-making either. And that is exactly where their main value lies in the field of terrorism.

In a field where the most often used terms like radicalisation and terrorism are not just not agreed upon, but even more so, have an inherently political nature with severe and far-reaching consequences for the individuals labelled as such, the importance of explicating what one means and what one agrees on in daily practices cannot be underestimated. It is essential to create as much clarity as

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113 Ibid, 22.

114 Liesbeth J. van der Heide and Bart W. Schuurman, "Reintegrating Terrorists in the Netherlands: Evaluating the Dutch Approach," Journal for Deradicalisation, 17 (2018): pp. 196-239.

possible about why individuals are labelled as radicalised, extremist or terrorist and the relation with the underlying indicators that provide the evidence for those labels. Thus, despite lack of evaluations[115] and the ability to predict future behaviour, the current suite of tools available provide a very valuable starting point to enable professionals to determine the individual's suitability for interventions and treatment including prevention or rehabilitation programs.

This article sought to provide a comprehensive and comparative overview of the main tools, protocols, guidelines, or approaches used in the field across three dimensions: (1) the objective of the tools; (2) the underlying methodology and structure of the tools; and (3) the practical implications for using these tools. With this, the authors hope to both allow practitioners and policymakers to better navigate the often muddy, copy-righted, and often expensive waters of the world of risk assessment of violent extremism—as well as to facilitate their decision-making process when it comes to determining what approach is best suited to their needs.

Finally, below, a few considerations—in no necessary order of priority—are provided that the authors deem essential to take into account when starting to think about using risk assessment in their own professional circles.

Given the different methodologies used, most value lies in combining the use of quantitative and qualitative tools in order to offset the pros and cons of both approaches. In other words, while quantitative tools like the SQAT have the upside of being easy to use and do not require many resources, they have the downside of being vulnerable to social desirability bias on account of the individual filling out the questionnaires. However, they can be used as a valuable source of information for more qualitatively oriented tools (all SPJ tools), which are generally more resource-intensive both in terms of information and time requirements. Combing the two, allows professionals to start measuring change while also making sense of change qualitatively.
Practical use > need for standardisation for

practical purposes (info exchange etc.); need for differentiation of different typologies; main conclusion: it's both very important and requires extensive knowledge while at the same time it is time-resource intensive; so no use training everyone, better to have small teams with experts fed by info from larger professional groups.

Always start with clear objective: When thinking about implementing risk assessment for violent extremism, the most important consideration that needs to be made at the outside is to determine the objective of the risk assessment. A clear distinction should be made, for example, between assessing the risk of recruiting other detainees into a radical network or the risk of re-offending after prison. Given the level of knowledge and expertise (and often training and certification) required to conduct risk assessment of violent extremism in an appropriate manner, it is more commendable to centralise expertise: training a small team of experts within a given organisation extensively and providing a more generic, broad type of training focused on awareness and identifying potential risks.

Risk assessment of VEO's is an elaborate undertaking. It requires much information to be processed. Most professionals establishing such assessments are relatively new in this specific field of expertise. Evidence based tools can assist them in their assessments;

Many SPJ instruments can be implemented for various objectives. This supports countries and organisations in their search for an appropriate tool. However, it does require that decision-makers are aware that not all tools can be applied for all VEO-objectives.

In addition to informing and facilitating users, it is essential that top management is involved in the implementation of a tool as well. Top management does not only have to decide on the goals of the implementation, but also on the availability of the required information to conduct an assessment.

About the Authors

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115 Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory*, p. 18, p. 46.

prison, a project that focuses on prisons in North-Africa and South East Asia and includes implementing threat and risk assessment measures to identify and assess violent extremism. She also works as a Researcher and Lecturer at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA), Leiden University since 2011 and as a Research Fellow at George Washington University's Program on Extremism.

Marieke van der Zwan holds a master's degree in Crisis and Security Management from Leiden University, where she focused on the role of front line workers in the detection and prevention of radicalisation. Currently, Marieke is a Senior Inspector at the Inspectorate of Justice and Security. Before, she worked for several years as a Researcher and Program Leader at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) and the Centre for Professional Learning (CPL) at Leiden University. Furthermore, she researched the role families play during the processes of dealing with persons who travel to, or return from conflict areas, commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC).

Maarten van Leyenhorst works as a trainer for the Netherlands Institute of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology (NIFP) and is currently working as Senior Progam Official for the Approach on Radicalization and Extremism within the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency. In this function, he coordinates all national resocialization trajectories of prisoners related to terrorism. Maarten holds masters in both Forensic and International Criminology and has several years of experience in working with violent extremist offenders for the specialized TER-Unit of Dutch Probation (Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalization).

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Re-Offending by Released Terrorist Prisoners: Separating Hype from Reality

Andrew Silke and John Morrison

Foreword by Alexander von Rosenbach (Director, 2020 - Present)

The recent terror attack in Vienna – perpetrated by an individual with a previous conviction for attempting to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State – brought the issue of terrorist recidivism back into the public debate. However, policymakers and practitioners around the world have been grappling with the underlying challenges for some time. These include the utility of risk assessment tools for violent extremist offenders, the efficacy of de-radicalisation and disengagement programming for terrorist prisoners, and the task of crafting sensitive legislation related to sentencing and early release for convicted terrorists.

I selected the article "Re-Offending by Released Terrorist Prisoners: Separating Hype from Reality" for consideration in this special edition of the journal because of its timeliness, but also because it forces us to re-examine what motivates our actions and reactions on this issue. Writing on a subject that is often distorted by political, national security or societal pressures, the authors bravely ask the question: "what does the evidence tell us about the risk of re-offending?" At ICCT, we strongly believe in using the evidence-base as a starting place for discussion, policy and intervention. Given hundreds of convicted terrorists are set for release across Europe in the coming years, I think this article makes an important contribution to what will be a lasting challenge.

Abstract

Recent cases of attacks by released terrorist prisoners highlight issues around the risk of re-offending posed by former terrorist prisoners. What are the appropriate processes and systems for managing and risk assessing such individuals, and to what extent is rehabilitation possible in the context of terrorist offending? This Policy Brief will explore these and related issues to help inform wider discussion and debates on appropriate policy in this area.

In this Policy Brief, the authors critically analyse the definition of 'recidivism', and demonstrate the need for a concrete operational definition before one is able to truly analyse recidivist activity. Following this, the authors discuss terrorist recidivism in a range of international contexts, ranging from Northern Ireland to Sri Lanka, the United States to Israel. By taking this broader perspective it allows the reader to gain a greater understanding of what factors related to recidivism rates may be context-specific, and which are universal.

Introduction

The end of 2019 and beginning of 2020 witnessed two terrorist attacks in London carried out by released terrorist prisoners. In November 2019, Usman Khan attacked and killed two people and injured three others before being shot dead by police officers. Khan had spent eight years in prison after being convicted for planning terrorist attacks and had been released in December 2018. Just over two months later in February 2020, another released prisoner, Sudesh Amman, injured two people in an attack in south London, before he too was shot dead by police officers who had him under close surveillance. Amman had been released from prison just ten days before he carried out the attack.

The two attacks starkly illustrate the potential dangers posed by released terrorist prisoners. In the UK, the attacks fuelled a wider debate about risk assessment, de-radicalisation and the impact of prison on terrorists. The UK government response to the killings was to rush through the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act which was made law in February 2020. This increased the amount of time such prisoners would be kept in prison compared to other offenders. Both Khan and Amman had been automatically released at the half-way stage of their sentences. The new legislation means that other terrorist prisoners will not now be considered for release until the two-third point of their sentence at the earliest, and release at that stage would be dependent on the decision of a parole board.

The cases highlighted issues around the risk of re-offending posed by former terrorist prisoners, what are appropriate processes and systems for managing and risk assessing such individuals, and to what extent is rehabilitation possible in the context of terrorist offending? This paper will explore these and related issues to help inform wider discussion and debates on appropriate policy in this area. In order to gain a balanced understanding of terrorist recidivism the paper starts by critically analysing what we actually mean when we talk about 'recidivism.' This discussion will demonstrate the need for a concrete operational definition before

one is able to truly analyse recidivist activity. This is followed by the discussion of terrorist recidivism in a range of international contexts, ranging from Northern Ireland to Sri Lanka, the United States to Israel. By taking this broader perspective it allows the reader to gain a greater understanding of what factors related to recidivism rates may be context-specific, and which are universal.

What is recidivism? And what is it not?

Before any critical analysis of recidivism research can take place, it needs to first clearly outline what the concept of recidivism refers to, and perhaps more importantly, what it does not. This is an issue which is at times ignored by those utilising recidivism statistics, especially those doing so to promote the successes of their own rehabilitation programmes. It is clear from the literature that, as with terrorism, there is no universally accepted or utilised operational definition of recidivism. At a fundamental level, recidivism constitutes the continuation of, or return to, a previous pattern of criminal behaviour. Specifically, this refers to new criminal activity by an individual after a previous criminal conviction which resulted in imprisonment or another form of legal sanction. However, there is not a universal acceptance as to what sanctions are included when measuring recidivism, both for the first and the subsequent offences. Some recidivism studies and reports only refer to criminal convictions which involve a prison sentence, whereas others also include technical violations such as an individual's failure to report to a parole officer.

Across academic studies and penal reports, there is a noted variation in the timeline by which recidivism is measured. Generally speaking, recidivism studies focus on re-arrest, between three and five years after the release from custody or the date of sanction. However, there are studies whose focus is on a shorter time period. For example, Howard and Dixon looked at re-offending within a 24-month follow-up period from the date of index community sentencing or release from custody resulting in a caution or conviction within this time-frame

or an additional twelve months.[1] The study of recidivism often has less to do with an analysis of an individual's tendency to re-offend, but is utilised more as an assessment of the suitability and success of specific forms of punishment or intervention in terms of rehabilitation. As a result of this focus on penology, or the study of criminal punishments and prison management, these set time-lines have restricted the full scope of the findings. Consequently, there has traditionally been a disregard of the roles which society and the external community can and do play in recidivism. Therefore, prior to comparing recidivism rates one must first be aware of the possible discrepancies in measurement across studies.

If one is to take China and the US as two comparative case studies, the variations in definition become apparent. The Chinese judiciary have two separate forms of recidivism, and consequently two separate ways of dealing with recidivist behaviour. These are 'general recidivism' and 'recidivism of crimes endangering national security.' This is covered under Article 65 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China. With respect to 'general recidivism' there are three criteria which must be met. These are:

1. The intentionality of the first and subsequent crimes.
2. The punishments for the first and subsequent crimes must be fixed-term imprisonment or a heavier penalty.
3. The subsequent crime must be committed within five years of serving the first sentence or receiving a pardon.

For 'recidivism of crimes endangering national security,' there are significant differences to 'general recidivism.' Both the initial and subsequent crimes must be judicially defined as a crime which endangers national security. There is not the same necessity to prove intentionality as there is with respect to 'general recidivism.' In relation to the timeframe of re-conviction the subsequent offences can occur any time after the initial conviction, and therefore is not restricted by the same five-year time limit as general recidivism.

However, while these are the legal definitions of Chinese recidivism, in practice it is admitted that recidivism refers to 'committing crimes frequently' and it does not require specific forms of crime, types of punishment, or length of time between illegal actions to be defined as such.

Within the US, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which measures recidivism rates nationally and publishes a series of reports, has only one definition of recidivism. They measure recidivism "...by criminal acts that resulted in the rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release."

When compared to the two separate Chinese definitions, there are obvious differences, which in turn affects measurement and the resultant recidivism statistics. Within the Chinese definitions, recidivism must include at minimum a fixed term prison sentence. However, the US interpretation includes 'rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence'. This broadens the scope of what is measured within the US and therefore one would expect there to be higher rates of recidivism in comparison to the Chinese figures. The time periods in the Chinese definitions are longer compared to the US, up to five years after the completion of the initial prison sentence for general offences, and open-ended for national security recidivism which could potentially increase the Chinese statistics. Further, the Chinese definition refers to the issue of intent, whereas the US operational definition does not acknowledge intent at any stage. Consequently, the US recidivism rates will be expected to include those crimes which can be defined as unintentional illegal actions.

When making cross-national statistical comparisons it is also important to be aware of the social construction of crime. Criminal law is reliant on political, cultural and social society in which it is developed. Therefore, when assessing, and comparing criminal statistics one must be aware of exactly what is defined as a crime in each particular case. This is not only relevant in geographical comparisons but

1 Howard, P. and Dixon, L. (2011). Developing an Empirical Classification of Violent Offences for Use in the Prediction of Recidivism in England and Wales. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, pp. 141-154.

also within an individual geographical area when statistics are being compared across time. With the constant evolution of criminal law, what constitutes a crime today was not necessarily always considered as such. This places further emphasis on the importance of a clear definition of the specific acts or omissions which are to be included in any analysis of criminal recidivism.

With all these issues considered, it becomes apparent that while the conceptual definition may be quite straightforward, the operational definition (the one which directs measurement) is not as clear. These issues highlight that it is the operational, rather than the conceptual, definition of recidivism which one must be aware of when analysing, interpreting and comparing recidivism findings.

Terrorist recidivism

Following the two attacks by former prisoners in London, the UK government subsequently released statistics on re-offending by terrorist prisoners. In England and Wales, for the period between January 2013 and December 2019, 196 terrorist prisoners were released. In the same time period, six of these were subsequently convicted for another terrorism-related offence giving a re-offending rate of 3 percent.[2] This re-offending figure rises to 3.6 percent if we include Usman Khan, who was killed by police officers during his attack. These statistics do not include prisoners who were convicted of non-terrorism-related offences subsequent to release, though this figure is also believed to be low.

The low rate of reconviction may come as a surprise to many, but statistics on re-offending by released terrorist prisoners have in general found that they have low rates and indeed are typically far lower than the reconviction rates seen with other types of offenders. This applies both to general re-offending (i.e. not politically motivated) as well as terrorism-related offending. Most earlier reviews report

re-offending rates of between 2 - 15 percent depending on the samples and contexts,[3] levels which are far lower than those seen for "ordinary" non-political offenders.

It is worth looking at a number of case studies in more detail to provide context to these figures. For example, **i**n Northern Ireland, as part of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998, 453 paramilitary prisoners were released. By 2011, just 23 of these prisoners had been recalled to custody (5 percent). Of these 23, just ten were recalled for alleged involvement in further terrorism-related offences (2.2 percent) with the remainder being recalled for other criminal activity.

Northern Ireland Paramilitary Prisoners
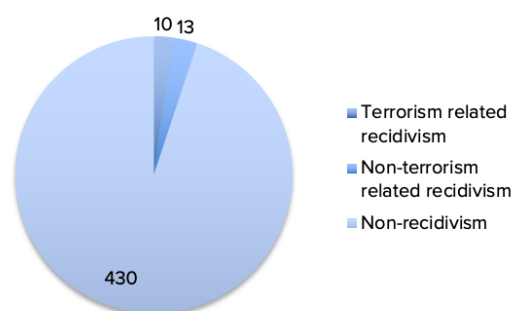
Another example worth considering is provided by Sri Lanka, where a significant terrorist threat was posed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). After decades of conflict, the LTTE were comprehensively defeated in 2009. Following this, the government maintained a very strong military presence in areas previously under LTTE control with a focus on preventing the re-emergence of pro-LTTE groups. Approximately 12,000 LTTE members were captured in 2009. The Sri Lankan government introduced a large-scale programme to rehabilitate these prisoners. 11,000 of these prisoners were released by the end of 2011 and most of the rest by 2014. In 2015, there were approximately 270 prisoners being held in Sri Lankan prisons mainly under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) for alleged links to the LTTE, and about 100 of

2 https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL782/
3 For example see: Horgan, J. and Braddock, K., 2010. Rehabilitating the terrorists? Challenges in assessing the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs. Terrorism and Political Violence, 22(2), pp. 267-291; Silke, A. (2011). 'Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists.' CTC Sentinel, 4/1, pp.18-21; Silke, A. (2014) Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform. London: Routledge.

these prisoners had been part of the original 12,000, indicating a potentially less than 1 percent re-offending rate.[4]

Taken together, both the Northern Ireland and the Sri Lankan cases indicate that re-offending in a context where the linked conflict has largely ended is very low. Northern Ireland provides evidence that re-offending by terror convicts is very low not just for politically-motivated crimes, but also for "ordinary" general crimes.

What then does the evidence say about re-offending rates for prisoners where the linked conflict to their cause is still on-going and may even be intensifying? There is evidence available on a range of relevant conflicts to help shed light on this. For example, the re-offending rates of released terrorist prisoners in Saudi Arabia has attracted particular attention over the last fifteen years. In December 2011, Saudi officials overseeing the country's prison-based de-radicalisation programmes reported that of more than 5,000 terrorist prisoners who had participated in some aspect of the program and been released, an estimated 2 – 20 percent had re-offended after release.[5] There have been long-running issues over the reliability of the Saudi figures – particularly with regard to initial claims of a 0 percent re-offending rate, but the more recent figures are considered more realistic.
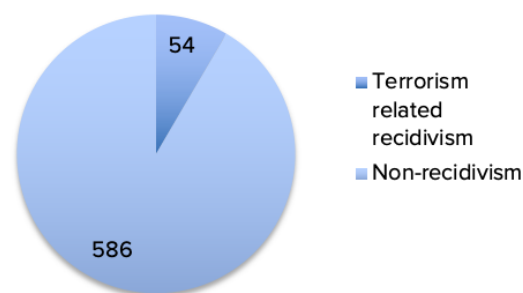
The Saudi figures are also comparable with the re-offending rates reported for released Guantanamo Bay detainees. As of January 2017, of the 714 Guantanamo detainees who had been released since the prison opened in 2002, 121 had been confirmed as having re-engaged in violent extremism (16.9 percent).[6] 12.2 percent were suspected of having reengaged, though the category of "suspected" could be reached on the basis

of superficial evidence, such as unverified information or potentially just one source claiming the individual had reengaged. Indeed, a separate independent review of the released detainees in June 2014, when there had been 640 released detainees, used stricter criteria to assess if individuals had re-engaged or not, and assessed that only 54 detainees were confirmed or suspected of having re-engaged, a maximum re-offending rate of 8.4 percent.[7] This second figure is also consistent with the re-engaged rate for released British detainees at Guantanamo. Of the 17 British detainees, just one re-engaged in violent extremism.[8]

Guantanamo (Office of the Director of National Intelligence)

- Terrorism related recidivism: 121
- Non-recidivism: 593
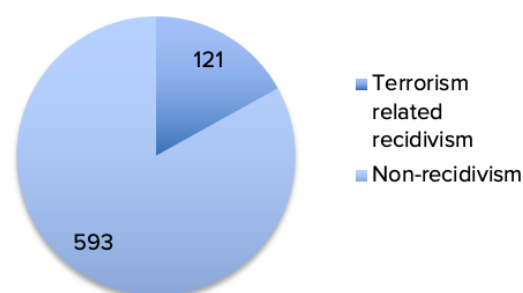
Guantanamo (New America Foundation)

- Terrorism related recidivism: 54
- Non-recidivism: 586

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4 A. Kruglanski, M. Gelfand, J. Bélanger, R. Gunaratna and M. Hetiarachchi, (2014). 'De-radicalising the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)', in A. Silke (ed.) *Prisons, Terrorism & Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*. Oxon: Routledge
5 The variation in these numbers is due to fluctuating assessments provided by the Saudi authorities themselves and the rationale and metrics behind those assessments are often not clear. For a good discussion on the context of the Saudi case and the various estimates see Porges, M. (2014). 'Saudi Arabia's "Soft" Approach to Terrorist Prisoners: A Model for Others?' in A. Silke (ed.) *Prisons, Terrorism & Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*. Oxon: Routledge.
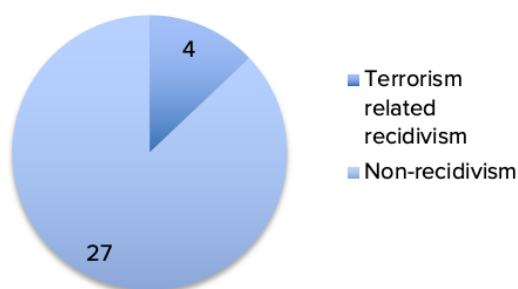6 Office of the Director of National Intelligence (2017). *Summary of the Reengagement of Detainees Formerly Held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba*.
7 New America Foundation (2014), *Appendix: How Dangerous are Freed Guantanamo Prisoners?*, by Peter Bergen and Bailey Cahall, June 5, 2014. Available at: http://newamerica.net/publications/resources/2014/how_many_guantanamo_detainees_return_to_the_battlefield
8 Swann, S. (2017). *Who are the Guantanamo Brits?* BBC News Online.

Two recent studies have looked at re-offending rates for terrorist prisoners in the US. In a study focused on prisoners connected to Islamist terrorism, Wright (2019) identified 31 prisoners who had been released between January 1990 and the end of May 2019.[9] Four of these prisoners re-offended (13 percent) during this time period. Drawing on a larger sample of released terrorism prisoners released in the US between 2001 and 2018, Hodwitz (2019) reported that just four of the 247 released prisoners recidivated during that time period, a recidivism rate of just 1.6 percent.[10] This sample included prisoners with a wide mix of affiliations and ideological backgrounds, and not just those connected to Islamist extremism.[11] The recidivism events all occurred within three years of release and were a mix of offences ranging from drug possession, fraud, forgery and using the internet (which was a plea agreement violation in that case). In two cases, the sanctions applied in response were minor (90 days detention or less), suggesting the offences in those cases were not seen as serious.

USA Terrorism Prisoners (Hodwitz, 2019)

USA Islamist Terrorism Prisoners (Wright, 2019)
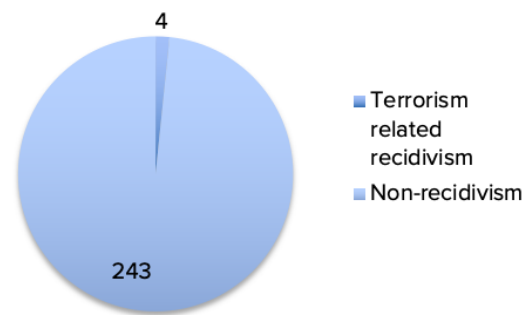
Returning to a European context, a recent Dutch study examined the outcomes for 189 individuals supervised by 'team TER' (Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalization) within the Dutch Probation Service between 2012 and 2018.[12] This study found that just eleven re-offended, eight for terrorism-related offences and three for non-terrorism re-offending. This gave a re-offending rate of 5.8 percent in total over the time period, compared to the 45-56 percent rates which were average for other types of offenders dealt with by the probation service.

Recent research on released prisoners in Belgium also paints a similar picture, finding that of 557 jihadi-related prisoners between 1990 and 2019 just thirteen (2.3 percent) recidivated.[13] This figure rose to 4.8 percent when suspected re-engagement in terrorist activity was included. Interestingly, the Belgium research found that the majority of the re-offending happened within the first nine months of release, with only three released prisoners re-offending at a later stage.

9 Wright, C. (2019). 'An Examination of Jihadi Recidivism Rates in the United States.' *CTC Sentinel*, 12/10, pp.26-31.
10 Hodwitz, O., 2019. The Terrorism Recidivism Study (TRS). *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 13(2), pp.54-64.
11 Based on descriptions of the cases provided in the two articles it is worth noting that the four who re-offended in Hodwitz's sample do not seem to be an exact match for the four who re-offended in Wright's sample.
12 van der Heide, L. and Schuurman, B. (2018). 'Reintegrating Terrorists in the Netherlands: Evaluating the Dutch approach.' *Journal for Deradicalization*, 19, pp.196-239.
13 Renard, T. (2020). 'Overblown: Exploring the Gap Between the Fear of Terrorist Recidivism and the Evidence.' *CTC Sentinel*, April, 1-11.

Netherlands individuals supervised by 'Team TER' (Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalization)
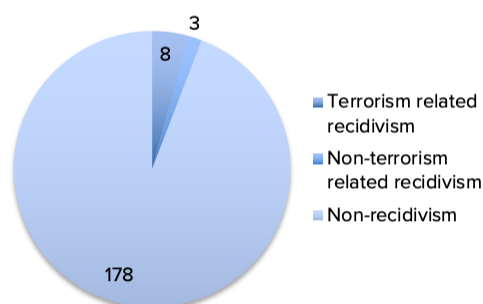
Belgium, Jihadi-related Prisoners
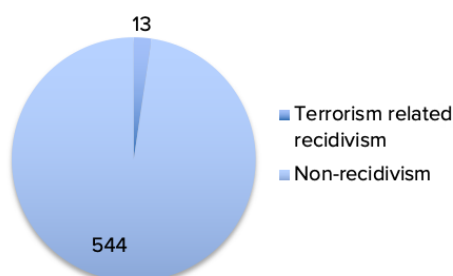
The one notable exception to the general finding that terrorist prisoners appear to have lower than average re-offending rates comes from Israel. A recent study there found that 'security prisoners' — as terrorism and political violence-related prisoners are referred to within the Israeli prison system — had a very high five year recidivism rate of 60.2 percent.[14] This is considerably higher than the rate of 41.3 percent for other types of Israeli prisoners, and far higher than the rates we have seen for all of the other countries considered. The Israeli study used data on 1517 security prisoners who had been held by the Israeli Prison Service at some stage between 2004 and 2017.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are questions over how comparable this Israeli sample is with the standard terrorism-related prisoner populations typically found in the West. For example, the

mean sentence length served by the Israeli sample was just 32 weeks before release, and a proportion of the sample (not specified by the researchers) had an incarceration length of less than a week. Further some of the sample (again not specified) had not been convicted of an offence at the time of release. The study also reported that re-incarcerated prisoners also served a mean of just 32 weeks before release, with again an unspecified proportion having a re-incarceration period of less than a week.

The very short mean length of time in prison for both first-time and then again for the re-offenders, combined with uncertainty over exactly how many had actually been convicted, suggests that some very unusual dynamics are happening with this prisoner population. It is possible, for example, that a substantial proportion of the sample may have been rioters or street protestors. Very few terrorism-related prisoners in the West serve sentences of 32 weeks or less before release. No country in the West has a criminal justice profile showing 50 percent of their terrorist prisoners being released after such short sentences. It is questionable whether any individuals in the West who spent less than a week in prison before release would, under a realistic measure, be considered a released terrorist prisoner. As a result, it would be quite unwise to place too much reliance on the Israeli findings until there is greater clarity around the prisoner population involved, the nature of their offences and convictions, and why such a high proportion appear to have served very short sentences.

Why is re-offending lower for released terrorist prisoners?

This is a question that would benefit from more research.[15] A variety of factors probably combine to explain why re-offending rates for released terrorists are lower than for other violent offenders. At an initial level, lower

14 Hasisi, B., Carmel, T., Weisburd, D. and Wolfowicz, M. (2019). 'Crime and Terror: Examining Criminal Risk Factors for Terrorist Recidivism.' *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*
15 Silke, A., & Veldhuis, T. (2017). Countering violent extremism in prisons: A review of key recent research and critical research gaps. *Perspectives on terrorism*, 11(5), 2-11.

re-offending rates could be partly linked to closer monitoring and supervision of terrorist offenders on release from prison compared to the attention focused on non-terrorist prisoners. In the context of England, Wales and Scotland, terrorist prisoners are managed under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).[16] MAPPAs were established in 2001 and were initially focused on improving the monitoring and management of convicted sexual and violent offenders. Such offenders continue to be the dominant population dealt with by MAPPA, but terrorism-related prisoners are also handled under the programme. MAPPA involves probation offices, prison services, police, and other stakeholders working closely together to assess and manage the released prisoner. Released prisoners will have licence conditions set which typically can include wearing a tag, curfews, restrictions on where they can go, who they can meet with, on internet use, on mobile phone use, or other similar restrictions. Breaching conditions can lead to being recalled to prison. The conditions are monitored and can be relaxed or made stricter depending on the assessments of the staff involved. In the context of terrorist offenders, some released prisoners will also be required/encouraged to take part in disengagement and de-radicalisation work. This can take a range of approaches, including participation in a formal programme and/or working with a specialist mentor. Thus, lower re-offending rates may be partly down to the positive effects of MAPPA and similar arrangements in other jurisdictions.

Certainly, there is evidence that MAPPA is associated with reduced levels of re-offending for sexual offenders and non-terrorist violent offenders. However, the re-offending levels reported are still significantly higher than the levels seen for terrorism-related offenders (e.g. a re-offending rate of 13 percent for serious sex offenders within one year of release compared to just 3 percent for terrorists over a much longer time-frame).[17] This suggests that other factors beyond specialist management play a role in the lower re-offending rates seen with terrorist prisoners.

One of these other factors is the role of political motivation in the offences. This is a distinctive feature of terrorist offending and differentiates it from other violent offences. A wide body of research has highlighted that for many perpetrators, terrorism is seen as a means to achieving broader political goals, unlike the goals of many other crimes.[18] This is not to disregard those who partake in terrorism for reasons other than political ideas.[19] Those partaking in terrorism are more likely to have a self-perception of altruism than criminals. Risk assessment tools designed specifically for use with terrorism-related offenders usually consider this as a factor. For example, the Extremism Risk Guidance (ERG) risk assessment tool developed for use in prisons in England and Wales specifically recognises that political context is "a unique feature of extremist offending."[20] This unique feature helps explain why involvement in crime or violence is not then a feature of post-release life for most former terrorist prisoners.

The final factor could be that terrorists are generally psychologically and socially different from other offenders and that these differences reduce the likelihood of re-offending on release. For example, psychiatric factors are less common in terrorists than in other violent criminals. Despite the indiscriminate and extreme violence of many terrorist attacks, the vast majority of psychiatric research on terrorists has concluded that the majority are not psychologically abnormal and that there is no distinct terrorist personality.[21] On the contrary,

16 Wilkinson, B. (2014). "Do Leopards Change Their Spots?: Probation, risk assessment and management of terrorism-related offenders on licence in the UK." In A. Silke (ed.), *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism*. Routledge, 259-269; Marsden, S. V. (2016). *Reintegrating extremists: Deradicalisation and desistance*. Springer.

17 Bryant, S., Peck, M. & Lovbakke, J. (2015). *Reoffending Analysis of MAPPA Eligible Offenders*. Ministry of Justice.

18 See for example Alonso, R. (2006). 'Individual Motivations for Joining Terrorist Organizations: a Comparative Qualitative Studies on Members of ETA and IRA.' In Victorff, J. (Ed.) *Tangled Roots: Social and Psychological Factors in the Genesis of Terrorism*, 187-202. (Amsterdam: IOS Press)

19 McCauley, C. & Moskalenko, S. (2008). 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism' *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20(3), 415-433; Khalil, J., Horgan, J., & Zeuthen, M. (2019). 'The Attitudes-Behaviors Corrective (ABC) Model of Violent Extremism.' *Terrorism and Political Violence*.

20 Lloyd, M., & Dean, C. (2015). The development of structured guidelines for assessing risk in extremist offenders. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management,* 2(1), 40-52.

21 See for example Borum, R. (2014). 'Psychological vulnerabilities and propensities for involvement in violent extremism', *Behavioral*

many studies have found that terrorists are psychologically healthier and more stable than other violent criminals. This finding applies particularly strongly to group-based terrorists, such as members of the IRA and ETA. In contrast, there is a higher incidence of mental health issues among lone-actor terrorists, though even in the case of lone actors, this does not apply to the majority.[22] Particularly relevant evidence in this regard comes from Lyons and Harbinson's review of the Northern Ireland prison population in the 1980s.[23] They compared terrorist murderers with non-political murderers. The authors found that the politically motivated killers were generally more stable, showed a lower incidence of mental illness, and came from more stable family backgrounds than their non-political counterparts. This work gains in significance when one realises the bias which existed in the sample. While representative of the non-political murderers, the sample was skewed for the political murderers. In Northern Ireland, murderers are routinely sent for psychiatric assessment, unless the killers are terrorists. Consequently, the vast majority of terrorists were never psychiatrically assessed. The only ones included in Lyons and Harbinson's study are those terrorists whose behaviour in custody was so abnormal that the authorities felt motivated to have them assessed. The majority of 'normal' terrorists were thus never included. Even so, the 'abnormal' terrorists still emerged as more normal and more mentally stable than the average non-political murderer.

The study found that 16 percent of the terrorists were mentally ill, but the researchers noted that this 16 percent was composed mainly of individuals:

"who seemed to be operating on the fringe of a para-military organisation and who were devoid of discipline. They killed in a most sadistic way while heavily intoxicated. This small group was by no means typical of the rest and raised the figures for those [political murderers] under the influence of alcohol. It included three who used a knife, which is a very rare method of political killing."[24]

Even so, an incidence among this sub-group of only 16 percent is incredibly low, especially when compared with an incidence of 58 percent seen among the non-political offenders.

Conclusions

Overall, the available evidence strongly suggests that re-offending rates for released terrorist prisoners is surprisingly low. In most countries, terrorist re-offending rates are much lower than the levels typically seen with ordinary, non-terrorist prisoners. This trend applies both in the context of releases where the related conflict is still ongoing, and where the conflict has ended or entered a significant peace process.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that some re-offending does occur, though the level of re-offending is typically much lower than we would normally expect with most released prisoners. Monitoring and management systems should be in place for released prisoners. For those looking for inspiration, the MAPPA system developed in the UK represents one good model to examine which offers some innovative features.

In thinking about further steps, one obvious area for attention is to try to better educate and inform both the policy worlds and the wider public about the general risk posed by released terrorist prisoners. This risk is not zero, but contrary to expectation, most released terrorists disengage from violent extremism. Those who re-offend are a minority. Any future analysis attempting to assess the risk factors of recidivism in terrorist offenders needs to be very cautious in its analysis and any implications drawn from this. This is due the relatively small sample from which this analysis could be developed, and the discrepancy in

Sciences & the Law, Vol.32, No.3, pp.286-305.

22 See in particular Corner, E. and Gill, P. (2015) "A False Dichotomy? Lone Actor Terrorism and Mental Illness". *Law and Human Behavior* 39(1):23-34; and, Corner, E., Gill, P. and Mason, O. (2016) "Mental Health Disorders and the Terrorist: A Research Note Probing Selection Effects and Disorder Prevalence". *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 39(6): 560-568

23 Lyons, H.A. and Harbinson, H.J. (1986). A comparison of political and non-political murderers in Northern Ireland, 1974-84. Medicine, Science and the Law 26, 193-198.

24 Ibid., p.197

relation to the operational definitions on which different data sources are based. Similarly if research is to assess re-offending of returning foreign terrorist fighters we would advise caution in comparing to released terrorist prisoners, as different dynamics are in play in these contrasting populations.

Going forward, in general we need to be more sophisticated and more critical in our thinking about prisons as hot-beds for radicalisation. Compared to other types of offenders, prison seems generally to "work" for disengaging most terrorists from their past criminal activities. While countries are increasingly recognising disengagement is not the same as de-radicalisation, it is arguably an important and a more useful measure.

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