



*ARC Centre of Excellence  
in Policing and Security*

# Is it possible to predict who is likely to engage in violent extremism?

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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY



# Questions?

- Is it possible to identify people at risk of committing acts of violent extremism?
- What potentially meaningful information should be collected to assess the likelihood of an individual being a prospective terrorist?
- What factors that can be tackled at either the individual or community level to reduce risk?
- When are individuals of interest increasing in risk and therefore warrant greater attention or intervention?

# Research work to date

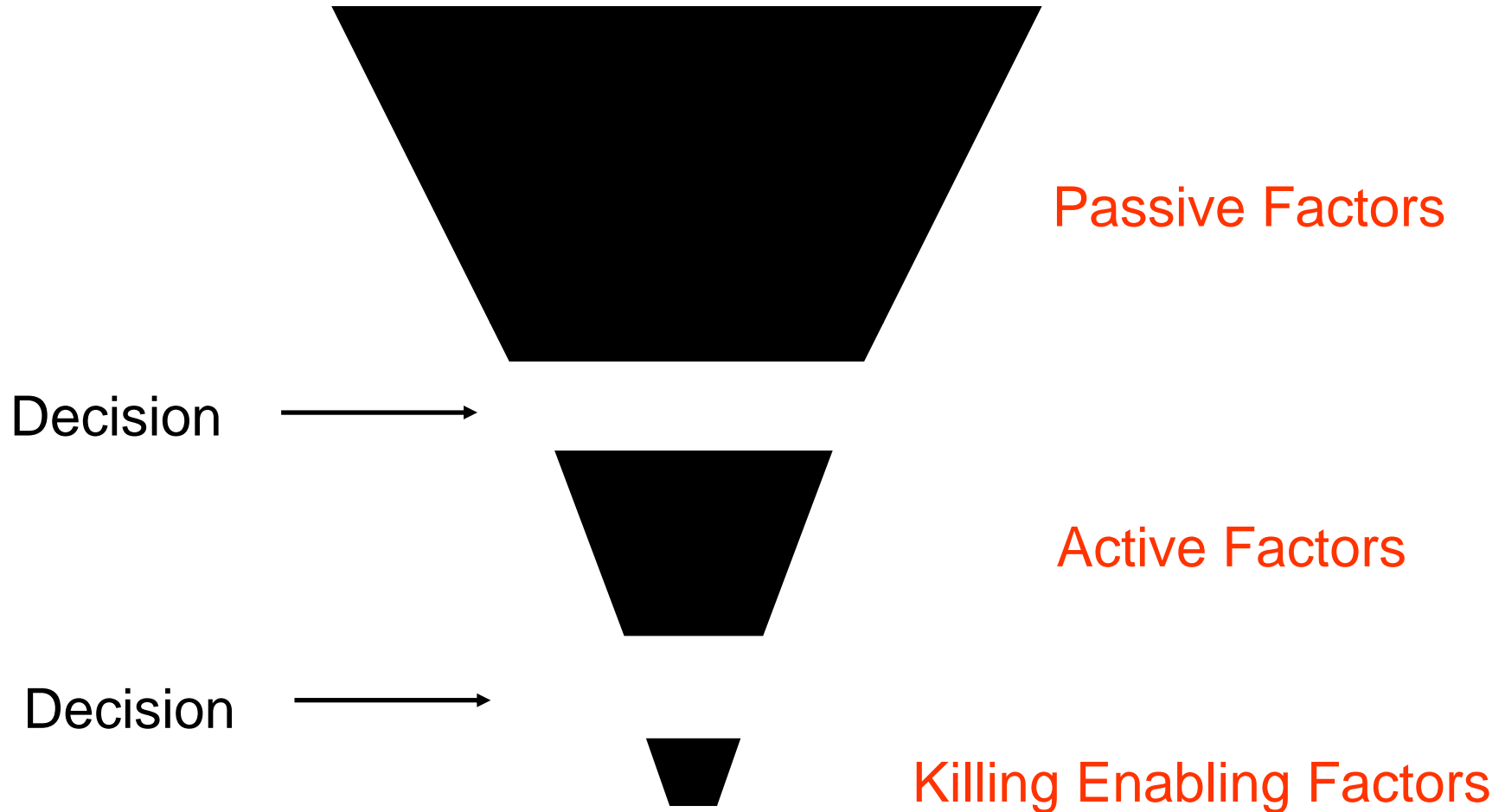
Cole, J., Cole, B., Kebbell, M.R., & Alison, L.J. Work on violent extremism for the National Policing Improvement Agency commissioned by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism.

Review of the open source information on 49 individuals born and/or raised in the UK.

Three main challenges;

1. Describe
2. Predict
3. Prevent

# The Rational Choice Model



# Passive Factors

- Super-ordinate non-Western identity
- Experience of discrimination or perceived discrimination
- Perceptions of Western policies as being belligerent to the super-ordinate non-Western identity
- Isolation from positive Western influence
- Being young and male
- Boredom/need for excitement

# Active Factors

- Religious beliefs that support the use of violence
- Involvement in perceived “community” defence.
- Accessing violent extremism material via the internet or other media
- Demonstrated preparedness to use or advocate violence
- Involvement in charity work
- Membership or participation in radical political organisations
- Engagement in a social network that confers status on those engaged in violent extremism
- Engagement with violent extremists, or those who advocate violent extremism
- Participation, or attempted participation, in overseas conflicts
- Training for violent extremism

# (Killing) enabling factors

- Justification
  - “As you bomb, you will be bombed; as you kill, you will be killed”
- Dehumanisation
  - “when we kill the kuf, this is because we know Allah hates the kufs”
- Violent media
  - 7/7, 21/7, Nitrate Cell
- Martyrdom
  - “Martyrdom operations upon martyrdom operations will keep on raining on these Kuffar until they release you and leave our lands”

# Structured risk assessment

- In order to provide an evidence base and audit trail for this decision making process it is proposed that a number of structured decision making tools are created to support the decision makers.
- Structured decision making tools have the advantage that they can be designed to ensure consistency of judgments and integrity thus reassuring vulnerable communities and complying with Human Rights legislation. Importantly, by guiding the collection and assessment of relevant information these techniques usually outperform unstructured judgement.

# Structured Decision Making

Observation of Problem Behaviour



Screening Tool

Collation of Observations



Assessment Tool

Intervention

# Ethics

Multiple ethical issues including:

Accuracy?

Rebound effects?

Personal liberties?

Incorrect negatives	Correct positives
False negatives	False positives

# Conclusions

It seems possible to identify people at *greater* risk of committing acts of violent extremism?

It seems possible to identify when individuals of interest *increasing* in risk and therefore warrant greater attention or intervention?