
Realising Violent Extremist Risk Assessments in Indonesia: Simplify and Collaborate

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Abstract

Evaluations aiming to assess the risk posed by individuals suspected or convicted of violent extremist activity have developed rapidly since the late 2000s. Largely based on a process known as structured professional judgement, terrorist risk assessments have drawn upon decades of research on those used for non-ideological violent criminals, and inserted contemporary understandings of what may drive extremist violence. While uncertainty over precise risk factors presents ongoing challenges, the primary problem is that risk assessment instruments tend to be time consuming and complex, thus requiring a level of practitioner expertise not always readily available.

Over the past several years, Indonesia has been experimenting with strategies to evaluate risk among individual extremist prisoners, but disagreements over suitability and human resource constraints have hindered progress. One way forward could be the establishment of a more simplified assessment system shared by relevant government stakeholders, from law enforcement to prison authorities to social service providers. While an abridged judgement process would hold limited capacity for prediction, a collaborative approach would add clarity and much needed inter-agency coordination to the management of convicted extremists in Indonesia.

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Introduction

In early 2019, an Indonesian couple detonated separate explosive devices inside a church in the southern Philippines, killing 23 people and wounding over 100 (Paddock & Gutierrez 2019). The pair had been repatriated by the Turkish government in 2017, after failing to enter ISIS-controlled territory in Syria. On their return to Indonesia, they spent time in a

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government half-way house in Jakarta, as part of an ad hoc programme to help reintegrate waves of deportees who had met a similar fate (Santos 2019).

Three years earlier, a former prisoner took part in a high-profile firearm and suicide bombing attack in central Jakarta, which left eight people dead including the four assailants (Schulze 2016). Later in 2016, another former inmate staged a botched attack on a church in the Indonesian Borneo city of Samarinda, which killed a toddler and injured three others as they played outside (Halim 2016). And in December 2014, a man considered to be a model inmate during his three-year sentence in an East Java prison attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS, soon after his early release for good behaviour (IPAC 2015).

Clearly, each of these accounts involves terrorism or violent endeavour from people who had recently been in state care or custody. While there can be no fool proof means for predicting an individual's future behaviour, risk assessment instruments specifically intended for violent extremists have been designed and scrutinised over the past decade in a range of nations.

For several years, relevant Indonesian government agencies have been searching for one that fits the nation's context, needs and resources. Various players have emerged periodically with their own original tools or modified versions of pre-existing instruments, yet none has taken hold. During this period of relatively productive theoretical development in the field of risk assessments for violent extremists, why is an appropriate tool proving so difficult to implement?

This article will discuss the reasons a workable system for assessing violent extremists in Indonesia remains elusive and offer a suggestion for progress. It argues that a simplified assessment process would bring value if it were a collaborative initiative among different government stakeholders. This would allow for varied input and, crucially, more streamlined coordination between the range of actors required to manage convicted extremists, from their initial arrest to eventual reintegration. For developers and donor organisations, the Indonesian experience represents a pertinent case study of the challenges involved when attempting to institute sustainable individual risk assessment procedures.

Methodology

The present study focuses on a particular issue that emerged recurrently during four separate fieldwork trips conducted over the past four years in Indonesia. These research projects covered the broader topics of coordinating countering violent extremism (CVE) initiatives; and the management, rehabilitation and reintegration of both former prisoners convicted of terrorism offences and individuals repatriated after failing to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Each study was granted social, behavioural and educational research (SBER) ethics permission by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Government officials were approached either through their agency's international cooperation division or through the author's research and media contacts in Jakarta. Civil society practitioners and researchers were identified by their publications or comments in the media, and then contacted online. Developing relationships within this community over the past several years led to engagement with additional people working on preventing and countering violent extremism in Indonesia (either as researchers or practitioners). Meetings were held in the interviewees' offices or a location deemed more suitable. Individual input for this project is referenced in the text below. Two participants wished to remain anonymous given the sensitive nature of the issue. Secondary sources include journal articles, media reports, think-tank policy papers, and publicly available Indonesian government regulations.

Evaluation Strategies, Risk Factors and Uncertain Indicators

Individual risk assessment procedures have played at least some role in the United States criminal justice system since the 1920s, predominantly to inform parole decision processes, but later for other types of characterisation (Barabas et al 2018; Goel et al 2016). In the 1950s, an American clinical psychologist named Paul Meehl divided the various approaches to evaluating individual risk into clinical and actuarial models, a distinction which continues to pervade debates in the present day (Skeem & Monahan 2011). As the name suggests, clinical

assessments involve unstructured evaluations conducted by professionals considered experts in the type of risk involved in a given case. In practice, strictly clinical approaches have largely been limited to assessing psychiatric disorders and they are considered unsuitable for predicting crime or violent behaviour (Abbiati et al 2018).

Actuarial methods, on the other hand, involve the statistical analysis of risk factors and relevant data, such as particular aspects of an individual's criminal history. Today these non-discretionary assessments may involve algorithms attempting to determine the likelihood of a person committing a crime – a calculation comparable to social media platforms crunching user data to predict shopping habits. Yet experts are sceptical accurate predictions can be made using only metrics and warn against reliance on the foresight of so-called big data (Barabas et al 17/7/19). To be sure, when it comes to violent extremism, the low base rate of violence and persistent uncertainty of risk factors make purely statistical approaches impossible to design (Monahan 2012; Sarma 2017).

Consequently, researchers now agree that tools assessing the individual characteristics of people convicted or suspected of terrorist activity require a combination of metrics and 'clinical' evaluation. Consensus has formed over a means known as Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ), which has been a favoured approach to assessing more general cases of violent crime for a number of years (Guy et al 2012; Monahan 2012; Dean & Pettet 2017; Logan & Lloyd 2018). This discretionary method requires the collection and analysis of data, and a subsequent qualitative evaluation conducted by a qualified interlocutor. Central to an SPJ assessment will be a series of questions regarding criteria determined by baseline studies and current research into the drivers of violent extremism, considering both push and pull factors. Supporting information may include, for example, court documents, behavioural observations, and known affiliations of the individual in question (Lloyd 2019).

Two crucial features of the initial design process are establishing a risk assessment instrument's specific objectives and its target population (Monahan 2011; Richards 2018; Sarma 2017). Certain tools have focused on assessing individuals deemed 'vulnerable' to radicalisation but have not committed any crime. Among prison populations, risk assessments

are deployed to gauge an inmate's likely behaviour within the institution, which can then determine placement, plans for potential rehabilitation programmes, and/or the likelihood an individual will reoffend upon release (recidivism). Research has established that different assessment designs are generally required for each specific purpose (Makarios & Latessa 2013). Furthermore, variations should ideally extend to gender and age-group differences to account for potential diversity in motivation, outlook and institutional environment (Logan & Lloyd 2018). One benefit of SPJ assessments in this regard is they tend to be flexible enough to be modified and contextualised to the particular task at hand (Guy et al 2012).

Box 1. Overview of Risk Assessment Tools

Six Prominent Risk Assessment Tools for Violent Extremists

Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG22+) – SPJ instrument created by forensic psychologists Monica Lloyd and Christopher Dean. Designed to assess inmates convicted of violent extremism offences or those who adopted such tendencies in UK prisons, in order to inform risk management. Involves 22+ risk factors and associated protective factors.

RADAR – Based on Kate Barrelle's pro-integration model (2015), this tool built for the Australian context has two stages: An initial screening interview determines the need for a second in-depth SPJ assessment involving 27 indicators. Results are used to determine the most appropriate rehabilitation-type interventions. Applied to individuals considered 'at-risk' of radicalisation.

Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18) – Developed by US forensic psychologist and FBI consultant J. Reid Meloy, to evaluate the risk posed by 'persons of concern' identified by security services and law enforcement (predominantly lone-actors). An SPJ instrument with two sets of indicators, including eight warning behaviours and ten distal characteristics.

Violent Extremism Risk Assessment Version Two Revised (VERA-2R) – Updated version of an early instrument designed by Elaine Pressman and John Flockton. Intended for any and all violent extremists, in custody or before a crime is committed. Involves 34 primary and 11 additional indicators (including six protective) to be rated low, medium or high. Intended to inform security classification, rehabilitation initiatives, prison placement, and parole decisions.

Islamic Radicalization (IR-46) – Devised by specialists within the Dutch National Police, the tool assesses risk posed by Islamist extremists at the time of evaluation (not a future prediction). Intended for use by specifically trained police and probation officers. Favoured because not overly complex and facilitates multiagency coordination for prevention.

Multi-Level Guidelines (MLG Version 2) – An SPJ-based risk assessment for 'group-based' violence, which evolved from PhD research conducted by Alana Cook in Canada. Sixteen basic risk factors encompass four levels: individual, individual-group, group, and group-societal. Protective factors not directly included but assessors are encouraged to devise them for each particular case.

(Lloyd 2019; van der Heide 2019; Pressman & Flockton 2012; RTI International 2018; Cook 2014; Barrelle 2015; Meloy 2018)

Once an assessment's particular goals have been established, the instrument requires a set of criteria, ideally based on both risk factors (increasing the chance of violence/re-engagement) and protective factors (diminishing these chances). One substantial problem when it comes to predicting terrorist recidivism is that driving forces and pathways to ideological violence are still very much contested (Scarcella et al 2016; Sageman 2017). Some argue the field of terrorism studies has largely agreed upon a number of robust, if disparate, evidence-based determinants (Pressman & Flockton 2012). Yet many of the strongest claims regarding 'radicalisation' are unhelpfully negative; for example, assertions that terrorists are not always economically underprivileged, nor are they uneducated, mentally ill, clinically suicidal or generally otherwise criminal (Monahan 2012: 179). Furthermore, individuals can internalise an extremist ideology without resorting to violence, while others may commit violence for a cause they don't really care to understand (Borum 2015: 67).

In a meticulous review of the literature on drivers of terrorism and support for extremist networks, Desmarais *et al* (2017) identified nine broad variables *associated* with terrorism, but stressed that no finding was sufficiently solid to be considered an empirically supported risk factor. While certain combinations of personal characteristics, experience and context may go some way to predicting the likelihood of membership in a terrorist organisation, the authors saw "much less evidence regarding factors associated with the perpetration of terrorist attacks" (Desmarais et al 2017: 199). Clemmow *et al* (2020) point out that shortcomings are largely due to a lack of risk and protective-factor base rates, and recently offered useful guidance on the formulation of control groups to bolster research design. Despite the deficiencies uncovered when zooming in on the literature to date, current assessment instruments employ a range of possible factors.

Andrew Silke reviewed a number of active risk assessment approaches in 2014 and found that comprehensive models included between 17 and 31 different variables (2014: 113). Themes could be categorised into eight key areas: ideology, capability, political and social environment, affiliations, emotional factors, behaviour in custody, and disengagement factors (Silke 2014: 113-115). The only protective measure given was the last, albeit one with

possibly endless sub-categories. More recently, Monica Lloyd reviewed six of the major risk assessment frameworks used by practitioners today; half were designed for individuals convicted of terrorism offences and half deployed in the ‘pre-crime’ space. Each were found to differ in terms of the relative weight placed on a subject’s engagement with ideology, signals of violent intent, and capacity to commit a terrorist act, depending on an individual’s progression toward or away from their initial intention (Lloyd 2019: 6).

This point about different stages of a given trajectory is important and complicates assessment design. As Randy Borum highlights, individuals “may pose different levels of risk for different roles/activities at different points in time”; risk factors may vary depending on an individual’s role in a violent extremist movement, and they may change their respective roles over time (2015: 64). Frequent behavioural observations, where possible, and the inclusion of secondary sources of data such as court documents, police reports and further background information can provide a more complete picture, which may mitigate these concerns. But ultimately, the predictive abilities of any risk assessment for violent extremism should not be overstated, particularly when attempting to measure the likelihood of recidivism (RTI International 2018; Borum 2015; van der Heide et al 2019). Instruments designed to inform prison placement, rehabilitation strategies and/or reintegration pathways may be more reliable.

While risk assessments broadly following the structured professional judgement approach are now considered best practice, they require varied but generally high levels of expertise to administer. The qualitative nature of SPJ means there may be considerable subjectivity involved in evaluating answers, even to seemingly straightforward questions. Evaluators will be influenced by his or her personal background, gut feelings, and cognitive biases (Dean & Pettet 2016), and may well tend towards overly cautious assessments given the possible adverse consequences of false negatives (Richards 2018).

Geoff Dean and Graeme Pettet argue this human subjectivity can be effectively “controlled in” to the process, however, as practitioners may draw upon their knowledge and professional experience to strengthen the assessment’s outcome (2016: 95). Conversely, if the

tool's implementation is inadequate, results will be compromised, leading to ineffective correctional programmes and possibly flawed decisions (Flores et al 2006). Indeed, the use of some risk assessments for violent extremists, such as the ERG 22+, is restricted to forensic psychologists and highly trained probation officers (Scarcella et al 2016). In the Netherlands, parole officers were said to be initially positive about the introduction of the VERA-2R instrument, but eventually stopped using it due to "capacity issues and a lack of information" (van der Heide 2019: 20). Instruments may be robust and nuanced on paper, but ultimately, they are only effective if understood and wholly embraced by those tasked with conducting the assessment.

One benefit of risk assessment tools for preventing violent extremism is the inherent multi-disciplinary nature of the associated processes. As mentioned, information can (and should) be contributed from different sources, including court documents, police investigation interviews, prison behaviour observations and practitioner interactions during rehabilitation-type initiatives (Cornwall & Molenkamp 2018: 7). Some valuable input may be deemed too confidential to share with other agencies – particularly in countries where inter-institutional trust remains low. But the formulation of a workable risk assessment process may actually help to encourage greater coordination between stakeholders. Such incentive would be useful in Indonesia, which has arguably suffered from disjointed P/CVE policy and practice in recent years. While agencies involved in counterterrorism in Indonesia have experimented with different risk assessment strategies over the past decade, a unified approach is yet to be found.

Indonesian Prisons: Extremists, Regulations and Assessments

At the time of writing, there were 429 prisoners convicted of terrorism offences behind bars in Indonesia, with a further 175 suspected terrorists imprisoned on remand awaiting trial.² While official data prior to the late 2000s is difficult to find, over one thousand individuals are thought to have been released after serving sentences for various terrorism convictions since

² Data provided to the author by Indonesia's Directorate General of Corrections.

the first Bali bombing attack in 2002. On top of these figures, 200-300 Indonesian nationals have been forcibly repatriated by foreign governments since early 2017, mostly from Turkey after failing to enter ISIS-controlled territory, but also from nations in East and Southeast Asia due to concerns over extremist activity or engagement (Sumpter 2018). The majority of these ‘deportees’ were placed in a one-month programme aimed at rehabilitating them before being reintegrated back into communities throughout the country (Anindya 2019).

Risk and needs assessments for all prisoners are currently governed by regulation 12/2013, which was issued by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in 2013. Evaluations are intended to both establish the level of risk of reoffending among those seeking parole and to direct inmates into the most appropriate rehabilitation initiatives. Though in reality, such programmes depend more on institutional resources at a given prison facility than individual participant profiles. Trained prison and probation officers are responsible for conducting the assessments when prisoners first enter the correctional institution, and then once per year until the inmate is released on parole or after completion of his/her sentence (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 2013). The regulation provides a general outline of the training assessors and supervisors require, which involves interviewing techniques and case management strategy. Data recorded during assessments form a dossier known as *Penelitian Kemasyarakatan* (LITMAS), which informs the majority of decisions regarding individual inmates throughout the system.³

In 2018, a regulation (35/2018) issued by the Ministry aimed to revitalise the implementation of correctional processes and functions, including that of risk assessments. One goal was to improve the objectivity of evaluations attempting to gauge behavioural change, but the document does not expand on the assessor training stipulations from regulation 12/2013. The prison system’s detention service programme includes two tracks: one providing legal advice, and the other focusing on religious education, understanding national values, and (potentially) psychological counselling (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 2018). LITMAS data is used to categorise inmates as low, medium or high

³ Interview with Edward Pagar Alam, Head of International Partnership, Directorate General of Corrections, Jakarta, April 2018

risk, and then place them in one of four categories of facility: minimum, medium, maximum, and super-maximum security. Pursuant to recent reform, high risk prisoners are now placed in solitary cells but may be transferred to less constraining facilities following favourable assessment results and good behaviour.⁴

A further regulation relevant to the management of prisoners in Indonesia is Reg. 99/2012, which restricts access to remissions among serious offenders, including those convicted of terrorism offences, drug trafficking, corruption, transnational crime and gross human rights violations. Article 34 compels those serving sentences for terrorism charges to cooperate with law enforcement investigations, attend prison-based de-radicalisation programmes, and sign and read aloud a pledge of loyalty to the Republic of Indonesia (for citizens) or pledge never to repeat such acts (for foreigners) (*Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia 99/2012*). Following implementation, the regulation's requirements quickly caused considerable resentment among all of the prisoners affected, which led to disturbances and even the occasional prison riot.⁵

Among terrorist prisoners, 99/2012 also highlighted the distinction between what Jakarta-based experts have called the 'pragmatists', often followers of al-Qaeda linked groups who play along with authorities in prison to reap the benefits; and the 'rejectionists', who spurn most (if not all) attempts to engage (IPAC 2013: 8). In recent years, this latter category largely comprises supporters and followers of ISIS, and its associated networks in Indonesia, who now make up the vast majority of violent extremists in the Indonesian prison system.

Despite cases in which extremist prisoners fool prison and security officials by displaying openness and good behaviour, some observers view Regulation 99 as a useful gauge to distinguish the most extreme from the more approachable. While this may well be a helpful stopgap, the regulation's requirements also tend to exacerbate grievances and possibly shut down opportunities for potentially constructive piecemeal interactions. Many of the prisoners concerned may refuse to cooperate regardless, but when the regulation's only

⁴ Interview with Gatot Goei, Deputy Director, Centre for Detention Studies, Jakarta, October 2019

⁵ Interview with Adhi Kustiadi, former UNICRI consultant, Jakarta, April 2018

tangible benefit appears to be assessing individual risk, perhaps there could be a less divisive way to determine remission applications and encourage assistance with investigations.

Security and Law Enforcement Assessments

Indonesia's national counterterrorism agency, *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme* (BNPT), was established in its current form in 2010, following devastating suicide bombings at two upmarket Jakarta hotels in 2009, and a subsequent jihadi threat to assassinate then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Glendinning & Weaver 2009). The agency's prevention deputy published its *Deradicalisation Blueprint* in 2013, which laid out a broad approach to reforming convicted extremists in prison and following release. The first step of the four-stage process was called *Identification*, which intended to collect data on the individual in question and assess his or her level of extremism (BNPT 2013: 39). Over the past few years, BNPT has run programmes with convicted extremists, separate to the more general treatment services delivered by prison authorities. The Identification assessments ostensibly inform these BNPT initiatives, and sometimes transfer recommendations regarding certain prisoners, but evaluation findings are not directly shared with prison authorities.

The other major counterterrorism agency in Indonesia is an elite unit of the National Police called Special Detachment 88 (*Densus 88*). Set up in the years following the first Bali bombing attack in 2002, Densus soon developed into a highly effective operational force in the nation's struggle against an often ragtag yet persistent militant jihadi movement (Allard & Kapoor 2016). While the unit is primarily tasked with disrupting plots and dismantling terrorist networks, Densus 88 personnel also conduct prison visits to maintain contact with those willing to engage and observe dynamics among those who continue to refuse interaction. When certain prisoners convicted of terrorism offences are due for release, a Densus officer conducts an exit interview to estimate the risk of their reoffending and inform the level of need regarding resource-intensive post-release monitoring.⁶ It is not clear what

⁶ Interview with Densus 88 officer, Jakarta, April 2018

types of questions are asked, but the session involves roughly 24 pages and takes 4-5 hours to complete. This data is also considered too sensitive to share with other state agencies such as probation services.

An Incomplete Puzzle

Beyond state institutions, a range of foreign and domestic stakeholders have offered contributions to the formation and/or progression of risk assessment instruments in Indonesia. An early candidate was Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW), the prison authority of Australia's most populous state. Following a successful visit by Indonesian prison officials to Australian correctional institutions in 2008, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) organised for two CSNSW senior staff to consult with counterparts in Jakarta to help build capacity throughout the Indonesian prison system (Bonnett 2011).⁷ A key priority was to develop systems to identify prisoners considered at high risk of reoffending, which included data collection through interview techniques, prison intelligence strategies, and the recognition of risk assessment concepts (Cox et al 2012; Bonnett 2011).

By 2011, the partnership began to consider risk assessments aimed at extremist inmates, more specifically. As mentioned, the VERA(-2) instrument was created in Canada by Dr Elaine Pressman in collaboration with Australian psychologist John Flockton, who is clinical director and senior specialist at CSNSW. Flockton visited Indonesia in March 2011 to help implement VERA-2 and to train prison, police and intelligence officers to administer the SPJ assessment (Flockton 2011). However, the project eventually began to disintegrate and ended up collapsing "for a variety of reasons" (IPAC 2014: 16).

According to a senior DGC official interviewed in 2016, the VERA-2 instrument, which had allegedly been adapted to fit local conditions, was still not considered suitable for the Indonesian context, and assessors "did not know if the prisoner was actually improving or

⁷ Another stream of this initiative was the provision of funds to the Asia Foundation, which helped the Directorate General of Corrections (DGC) establish a blueprint for prison reform, and the development of an online database on prisoners, which has streamlined the prison system's workflow (Cox et al 2012).

just pretending to become a better person. VERA could not make this distinction”.⁸ Civil society practitioners knowledgeable of the experiment say the instrument was deemed too complicated for the modest resources available.⁹ The original authors of VERA-2, who own the copyright, allegedly offered to simplify the tool and provide training.¹⁰ However, Indonesian prison officials maintain that a lack of training and capacity building contributed to the programme’s demise.¹¹

The next prominent pursuit came from a small Jakarta-based team from the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute (UNICRI). In 2014, attempts were made to establish a modified risk assessment instrument for violent extremist prisoners in Indonesia, but again the project wallowed in the pilot stage. UNICRI representatives struggled to secure buy-in from Indonesia’s corrections directorate, who again thought the tool was not suitable for the Indonesian context. From 2016, a newly appointed UNICRI consultant sought to start afresh – this time focusing on a *Grand Design and Road Map* for the management of high risk prisoners, including but not limited to violent extremists (UNICRI 2018: 41). A risk assessment was built into this framework by adding questions and criteria to the pre-existing LITMAS tool, which was easier for DGC officials to accept. Ultimately, prison and probation officers have only employed these additions on an *ad hoc* basis to bolster their general assessments, if and when they see fit.¹²

Non-governmental organisations working on prevention initiatives, Indonesian research institutes and academics have also worked towards data collection and tools for assessing individual risk among violent extremists. The Indonesia chapter of the US-based organisation Search for Common Ground signed an agreement with DGC in 2010 and began conducting workshop-type programmes in prisons involving themes such as conflict management (SFCG 2011). Common Ground staff attempted to develop profiles of prisoners

⁸ Interview with senior DGC official, Jakarta, September 2016.

⁹ Interview with Adhi Kustiadi, former UNICRI consultant, Jakarta, April 2018

¹⁰ Interview with civil society practitioner, Jakarta, September 2016

¹¹ Interview with Edward Pagar Alam, Head of International Partnership, Directorate General of Corrections, Jakarta, April 2018

¹² Interview with Edward Pagar Alam, Head of International Partnership, Directorate General of Corrections, Jakarta, April 2018

but eventually ran into problems from state security agencies, possibly due to suspicions regarding the activities and/or intentions of foreign-linked organisations.¹³

Indonesian NGO *Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian* (YPP) has attempted similar initiatives in recent years, while working to build capacity among prison and parole staff. In 2014, YPP proposed a system whereby certain prisoners would be given personal progress books containing various indicators, which prison officers would help them fill in periodically.¹⁴ However, the scheme never took hold. Another tool developed by the Indonesia Strategic Policy Institute (ISPI) involved 20 questions aimed at determining a prisoner's ideological commitment and level of support for violence (IPAC 2016: 17). Inmates convicted of terrorism offences are spread throughout roughly 100 different prisons in Indonesia. While some of these assessment experiments may have been trialled or even continued in some form at certain facilities, depending on the warden, none has so far managed to convince executive level officials they could or should be standardised or further developed.

Pre-release Programmes and Repatriation Engagements

One risk assessment instrument that has been operationalised over the past two years was developed by psychologists at the University of Indonesia (UI). In early 2017, BNPT opened a facility near its headquarters (south of Jakarta) to accommodate cooperative prisoners convicted of terrorism offences who are nearing the end of their sentence, or due for parole. The idea was to place inmates in closer proximity to BNPT staff to facilitate more frequent engagements, separate them from negative influence, and prepare them for life on the outside (IPAC 2016: 18). While the centre suffered from growing pains, mainly due to a dearth of facilities and activities (IPAC 2018: 4), an interesting experimental course run by UI psychology scholars Mirra Noor Milla and Hamdi Muluk focuses on eliciting individual identities (as opposed to group identification) and evoking feelings of self-worth. Selection

¹³ Interview with civil society practitioner, Jakarta, September 2016

¹⁴ Interview with Taufik Andrie, Director, Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian, Jakarta, April 2018

for this ‘deradicalisation finishing school’ is based on a risk assessment developed by the two psychologists during previous work in the broader prison population. Inmates complete information about themselves based on eight variables. This is then followed by an interview and a triangulation of information with data from Densus 88 and prison LITMAS files.¹⁵

The only comparable risk assessments currently employed outside the prison system in Indonesia are for the individuals who have been forcibly repatriated by foreign governments for involvement in violent extremist activity or support. During the 30-day rehabilitation period, residents interact with social workers and psychologists, and attend seminars run by BNPT aimed (ambitiously) at deradicalisation, or tempering their hard-line views (Anindya 2019). At least three different risk assessments have reportedly been used. One from BNPT, the contents of which are unclear; one from ISPI, which was adapted from its prison model; and a third developed by an organisation called Civil Society Against Violent Extremism (C-SAVE).¹⁶

The C-SAVE instrument, which was still under development at the time of writing, involves an interview comprising 12 primary questions, conducted by a clinical psychologist, and behavioural observations of day-to-day activities in the shelter. The goal is to place individuals into one of four categories: ideologues (thought leaders/influencers); militants (strategists/recruiters); supporters (who may provide operational assistance); and sympathisers. Each are also deemed low, medium or high risk – a general division which appears to be one of the few constants among the myriad risk instruments having emerged in recent years. C-SAVE’s assessments provide information for ongoing work conducted by social workers, whom the organisation is training to engage with potential/suspected/former violent extremists.¹⁷

¹⁵ Interview with Mirra Noor Milla, Associate Professor, Universitas Indonesia, October 2019

¹⁶ Interview with Diovio Alfath, Programme Officer, Civil Society Against Violent Extremism (C-SAVE), Jakarta, October 2019

¹⁷ Ibid.

Headway or history repeating?

In 2017, the small UNICRI team in Jakarta lost its funding stream, and its work on high-risk prisoners and assessments was taken up by a local institute called the Centre for Detention Studies (CDS). Supported by the Asia Foundation and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice (AIPJ), CDS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Indonesia's corrections directorate (DGC) in 2018.¹⁸ While still in its late stages of development, The CDS strategy concerning prisoners convicted of terrorism offences consists of three products: an initial screening instrument for prison placement; an evaluation process based on prison guard observations; and a comprehensive criminogenic risk assessment approach, which aims to individually tailor rehabilitation programmes more effectively and support decisions regarding parole and remissions.¹⁹

In accordance with the 2018 'revitalization' regulation issued by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, which clarified inmate placement based on risk, CDS redeveloped an assessment tool first conceptualised by a consultant at UNICRI. Four risk variables attempt to determine the likelihood of attempted escape; the risk of violence toward fellow inmates; the chance of violating prison rules or ignoring orders; and the possibility of a prisoner continuing his or her criminal activities from behind bars, or attempting to prejudice investigations (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 2019). The assessment also takes into account the crime committed by the inmate, their length of sentence, and the extent to which a prisoner has conformed with rehabilitation initiatives.

More specifically for high-risk prisoners, and particularly for those convicted of terrorism offences, the CDS team has developed a system for evaluating behaviour based on prison officer observations. The scheme has been on trial for about a year in high security facilities on the prison island of Nusakambangan off the south coast of Java.²⁰ Comprising a

¹⁸ Interview with Gatot Goei, Deputy Director, Centre for Detention Studies, Jakarta, October 2019

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sometimes referred to as Indonesia's 'Alcatraz', Nusakambangan was developed as a penal island under Dutch colonial rule in the early 20th Century.

checklist with a number of different indicators, prison officers reportedly used the instrument for a period of time before abandoning the system, again, for a variety of reasons.²¹ Some appear to have considered the evaluation overly impersonal and mechanical, forcing them to treat inmates as scientific subjects and undermining their ability to connect on a human level.²² The observation checklists are also neither obligatory nor incentivised, so expecting modestly paid prison officers to substantially increase their daily work load with an administrative task may be ambitious.

The most extensive tool currently in the works is another specific risk assessment process for prisoners convicted of terrorism offences, which is intended to bolster individual LITMAS files. A Ministry of Law and Human Rights decree issued in early 2019 stated the latest system developed by CDS researchers would be employed to identify appropriate types of reform interventions, and attempt to determine the likelihood an individual prisoner would reoffend post release (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 2019). The process ideally involves a variety of input, from court documents, police interrogation reports, data from other relevant agencies, and interviews with relatives; to the observation evaluations outlined above, results from a separate ‘self-identification’ test, and an intensive interview conducted by correctional officers, or consultant psychologists.²³ This interview involves five factors: conceptions of violence and its legitimacy in religious teachings; the extent to which an extremist ideology has been internalised; the involvement of family members in the extremist movement; attitude toward the crime committed and any associated victims; and feelings toward the Republic of Indonesia (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 2019).

The ministerial decree includes detailed standard operating procedures for implementing the assessment interview, including the required equipment and resources, and the likely duration of the process. The interview itself is expected to take two hours; but when considering input, analysis, and the recommended period of familiarising each prisoner with

²¹ Interview with the Centre for Detention Studies, Jakarta, October 2019

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

the process so they agree to participate, the total duration is over five hours. CDS staff have conducted two-day training sessions with prison officers in high security facilities on Nusakambangan island and returned 2-3 months later to evaluate understanding and provide further training where necessary.²⁴ The first day of training was held in a classroom environment, taking officers through the criminogenic factors, associated concepts and input methods, while the second day involved role plays and practical exercises with cooperative prisoners.

This latest attempt at establishing a robust assessment for convicted extremists is well researched by Indonesian analysts with local knowledge of the relevant dynamics, both within the prison system and among the nation's homegrown extremists. But while the initiative appears to have buy-in from the corrections authority, which has issued a decree outlining the intended approach, the only way the assessment process will be actually established is if it is used keenly and consistently by prison and probation officers tasked with its implementation. It remains unclear if this time-consuming evaluation will be embraced. Recollection of past efforts does not inspire much confidence.

Conclusion

As with many programmes and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism, risk assessments are multidisciplinary, resource intensive and relatively complex, but plagued with uncertain outcomes. It is difficult to invest heavily in a project with unavoidable cracks, which exist among even the most sophisticated systems delivered by clinical psychologists and experts in the field. The problem in Indonesia has not been a lack of viable options over the years, but rather the final few yards that see a particular instrument agreed upon, implemented and institutionalised. Some NGO observers in Jakarta argue that few of the emerging instruments have been properly tested, and that senior prison officials (some of whom may view their position as a career steppingstone) are not sufficiently invested in long-

²⁴ Ibid.

term solutions. Conversely, prison officials committed to their under-resourced (and arguably under-appreciated) government department believe the problem is largely one of capacity, and that sustained training programmes are required to establish any sophisticated new method.

Roughly ten per cent of those convicted of terrorism in Indonesia over the past 15 years have reoffended following release, which seems high but is actually substantially lower than global recidivism rates among general prison populations – currently estimated at between 26 and 60 per cent (Yukhnenko et al 2019). In December 2019, Indonesian prisons were accommodating over 268,000 prisoners, which is double what they're designed to hold.²⁵ Reforms in recent years have updated administrative processes (including that which makes inmate numbers publicly available), added technology and improved the management of high-risk prisoners. Yet the Indonesian prison system is still grappling with tremendous problems, from dilapidating infrastructure and over capacity to human resource shortfalls and stubborn corruption. Complicated, fallible evaluations of its few hundred troublesome violent extremists may not be high on the list of priorities.

The latest version has placed emphasis on using findings to inform prison-based rehabilitation initiatives based on particular need, which must be seen as promising. However, existing programmes are likely insufficient to meet the identified requirements. BNPT have taken the lead with de-radicalisation efforts over the past five or so years, presumably based on their own *identification* assessments, at least in theory. However, the agency has tended to operate independently of the corrections directorate in this regard, bringing in consultants deemed to be effective interlocutors for particular individuals. Data collected on prisoners convicted of terrorism is understandably sensitive, but while protecting it from misuse by other agencies may well be required in certain circumstances, sharing information with counterparts within the government system to work towards collective solutions is surely a greater goal.

A risk assessment for violent extremists in Indonesia would be hindered by suboptimal coordination in Indonesia, but the right instrument may also encourage its development. If a

²⁵ See *Sistem Database Masyarakat*, available at <http://smslap.ditjenpas.go.id/public/grl/current/monthly> (accessed 21/12/19)

standardised assessment protocol was established with various stakeholders contributing relevant information, it could provide a strong basis for ongoing collaboration between police, security services, prison authorities, parole officers and social service providers. Certain details in an individual's file could be redacted where necessary, but a single evolving document on each individual in question could be used by different stakeholders as decisions are made from prosecution to post-release reintegration programmes. Key will be finding an effective but relatively straightforward approach. Instead of continually experimenting with modified versions of complex assessments developed overseas, it may be more productive to acknowledge human resource limitations and proceed with a simplified assessment aimed to be shared appropriately among government agencies.

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