

TERRORISM INTENT CONTINUUM

THIS TERRORISM INTENT CONTINUUM IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE UNIFORMITY, THROUGH METHODOLOGICAL THINKING, TO ASSIST ANALYSTS IN THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING THE INTENT OF A THREAT ACTOR TO COMMIT AN ACT OF TERRORISM

The Continuum also seeks to provide CTAG readers with a better understanding of the factors behind an analyst's assessment of intent.

This Intent Continuum compliments and should be read in conjunction with CTAG's Terrorist Attack Capability Continuum [21-80-TI refers].

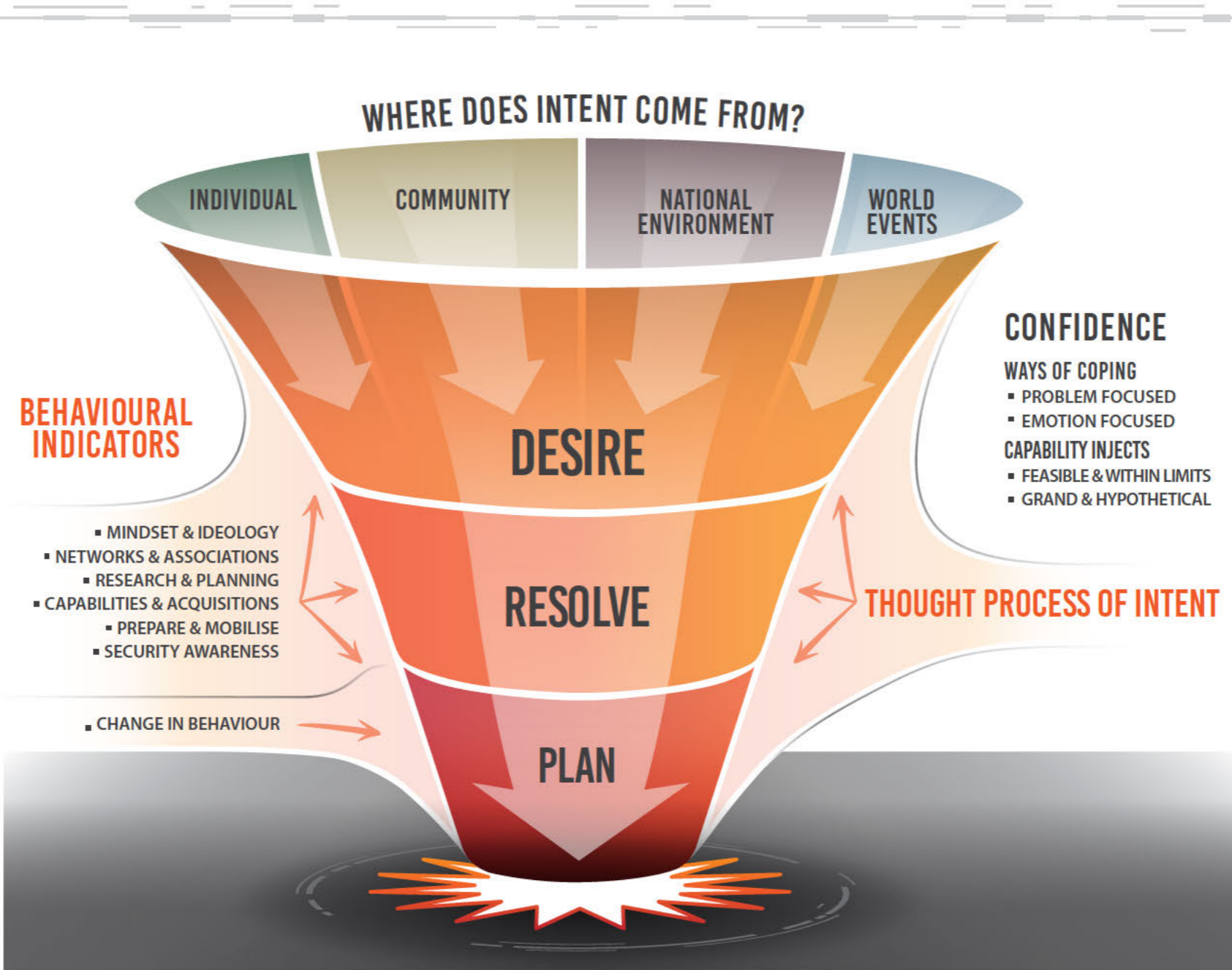
INTENT

From an analytical perspective, 'intent' is the progression of an individual's thought process that leads to a decision to undertake an action. It is inherently subject to the impulse of human nature: an individual's personal and unique push and pull factors, their ideological interpretations, level of risk acceptance, strength of commitment – and the cumulative impact of all these variables. Capturing the unpredictability of human nature is difficult; analysts cannot always rely on simple logic, a standard formula, or personal experience to assess the likelihood an individual will undertake an action.

Assessing 'intent' also includes considering the environment the individual operates in. This is because the environment – whether implicitly or explicitly – can positively or negatively influence an individual's 'intent'.

INTENT IN THREAT ASSESSMENT

Threat assessment is the analytical process focused on assessing the probability of a threat manifesting, in order to inform the 'likelihood' component of a risk assessment framework. When making that assessment, two core elements are considered: a threat actor's 'intent' (i.e. their desire, resolve and planning) to inflict harm, and whether they possess the 'capability' (i.e. the access to knowledge and resources required to conduct harm) to do so. The 'intent plus capability equation' forms the underlying basis for all of CTAG's threat assessments.



KEY NOTES

Previously, 'intent' was the product of an assessment of a threat actor's desire to conduct an attack, and their confidence in their ability to do so. CTAG considers these concepts to be too narrow to capture the complexity of intent.

CTAG's Continuum reflects the need to assess 'intent' holistically, capturing both the individual and their environment, in a way that is both accountable and accessible. While 'intent' accounts for half of the 'intent plus capability' equation, it is a prerequisite condition, without which capability becomes irrelevant to the assessment of threat.

The layers of 'intent' (i.e. desire, resolve and planning) drill down to the individual's personal circumstances. They show the impact on 'intent' from an individual's ability to overcome (or not) a problem, and where capability intersects with 'intent' in terms of what the individual wants to do, versus what they can feasibly achieve.

INTENT VERSUS THREATENING RHETORIC

CTAG has seen an enduring prevalence of possibly New Zealand-based individuals making online threats to conduct violent extremist attacks. The true intent and ideology in each instance is generally difficult to initially establish, particularly when such threats are made in online forums that host a myriad of memes

and in-group signalling to promote extreme messages. The majority of those making threats are assessed as likely having no intent to mobilise to violence, and/or have other non-ideological motivations. Identifying those with legitimate intent online will continue to challenge law enforcement and security agencies.

