

## Crime-Terrorism Nexus



### New and underappreciated signals to watch: threats

#### The shared need for illicit tools and services further fosters the crime-terrorism nexus.

- Criminal connections provide access to the illicit (military-grade) tools and services available on the closed world of the black market. [EU Observer](#); [Crime Terror Nexus](#); [Flemish Peace Institute](#)
- Vice versa, battle-hardened returnees possess a valuable skill-set for criminal organizations, making them interesting recruits. [ICCT](#); [OSCE PA](#); [GLOBSEC](#)
- *How do we disentangle these mutual benefits inherent in the crime-terrorism nexus?*

#### Do criminal organizations increasingly adopt or copy violent tactics normally associated with terrorist organizations?

- Networks and organizations involved in serious crime turn toward public displays of extreme violence, normally associated with terrorism. [ISPI](#); [Perspectives on Terrorism](#)
- The blending of criminal and terrorist milieus lowers the threshold for extreme violence. [Perspectives on Terrorism](#); [Fair Observer](#)
- *Are contemporary law enforcement agencies sufficiently equipped to deal with such new, extreme violence?*

#### Right-wing extremism in Europe is on the rise, as is its link with organized crime.

- In a wave of reciprocal radicalization, right-wing extremism in Europe is on the rise “partly fueled by fears of a perceived Islamization of society and anxiety over migration.” [Europol](#); [RUSI](#); [Duitsland Instituut](#) [NL]
- The return of battle-hardened foreign fighters and mercenaries from the Ukraine conflict provides new impetus to right-wing extremism, furthering the crime-terrorism nexus. [GLOBSEC](#); [Coin Rivet](#); [Washington Post](#)
- *How will EU enlargement affect the crime-terrorism nexus within Europe?*

#### As terrorism internationalizes, so does the crime-terrorism nexus.

- Hardened foreign fighters return with an international terrorist network, using their position as “entrepreneurs or network builders” to form the terrorist networks of the future. [UN CTED](#)
- The social nexus between criminal and terrorist milieus provides criminal networks with access to this international patchwork of contacts. [Crime Terror Nexus](#); [Global Risk Insight](#); [ICSR](#)
- *How will the threat stemming from these future networks evolve, and how will we prepare to tackle this threat?*

## Long-term trends: crime-terrorism nexus (10-year timespan)

Multi-factor assessment

Relation	Crime-Terrorism Nexus	Trend
<b>Baseline</b>	Interaction between criminal and terrorist networks in prisons	▲
	Difficulties for violent extremist offenders to return in (legal) society	▲
	Differences in institutional character and compartmentalized ways of working of agencies and authorities combating crime and terrorism	—
<b>Factors influencing the crime-terrorism nexus</b>	Concentration/segregation of (suspected) violent extremist offenders in prison populations	—
	Number of violent extremist offenders in prison	▲
	Individuals (returned foreign fighters) with skill-sets/contacts useful for criminal organizations.	▲
	Stigma in society against violent extremist offenders, limiting their chances of successful reintegration	▲
	Jihadist narrative generally fits well with personal needs and desires of criminals and can both be used to stimulate as well as limit continued involvement in crime	▲
	Legal, cultural and technical factors causing compartmentalization within and between national crime-fighting and counter-terrorism institutions	—

■ Decreasing threat

■ Increasing threat

▲ Upward

▼ Downward

— Net-zero / Stable

### New and underappreciated signals to watch: international order

#### European policy-makers shift away from repressive measures that do not address the long term.

- The imminent release of most of Europe's imprisoned terrorism convicts has pushed policy-makers to think past incarceration, toward reintegration. [GLOBSEC](#); [Egmont Institute](#); [RUSI](#)
- The effectiveness of transnational efforts to counter crime and terrorism is defined by its weakest link. [ISPI](#); [LU](#); [ICCT](#)
- *How do we repress short-term terrorist threats without creating long-term, transnational risks?*

#### Preventing radicalization in European prisons is of growing importance.

- More European countries are gravitating toward separating convicted terrorists from other inmates to prevent the radicalization of other prisoners. [HJS](#); [Lawfare](#)
- Yet, isolation may reinforce extremist narratives and exceptionalism, thereby hindering deradicalization. [Crime Terror Nexus](#)
- *How can we address long-term risks, if isolation fuels feelings of exceptionalism, anger and distrust in government?*

#### Resources available for pursuing organized crime do not match resources dedicated to countering terrorism.

- While significant resources are allocated to counter-terrorism, resources to combat organized crime seem to be lagging behind. [ICCT \(1\)](#); [CEP](#); [ICCT \(2\)](#); [FP](#)
- The strong financial, legal, operational and cultural compartmentalization of anti-crime and counter-terrorism resources indicates that the nexus is institutionally underappreciated. [Lawfare](#); [EC](#)
- *How do we decompartmentalize national and international resources to combat terrorism threats without sacrificing crime control?*

#### Channels for international cooperation on counter-terrorism may be misused for political purposes.



- The misuse of international counter-terrorism efforts for political purposes by illiberal regimes is a cause for concern. [FP](#); [Newsweek](#); [Stockholm Center for Freedom](#)
- As new counter-terrorism instruments continue to develop, their long-term institutional, societal, and ethical implications are too often neglected. [Council on Foreign Relations](#); [Asser Institute](#)
- *How can we guarantee the adherence to norms and rules while intensifying international cooperation to combat transnational crime and terrorism?*

#### The EU is becoming more adaptive in its regulation of FinTech.

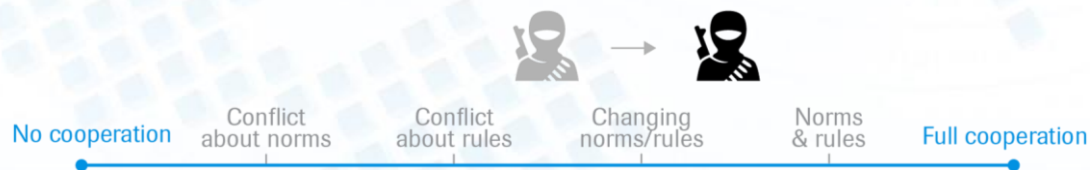
- The EU is strengthening its swift response to developments in FinTech to tackle online illicit activities. [European Council](#); [European Law Monitor](#)
- Private tech companies are playing an increasingly important role, helping financial institutions and law enforcement to weed out suspicious (blockchain) activity and identify illegal entities. [RAND](#); [Forbes](#); [Bipartisan Policy Center](#)
- *How can public-private partnerships contribute to the adaptiveness necessary to combat the crime-terrorism nexus?*



## Long-term trends: International order (10-year timespan)

Norms 	Trend	Rules 	Trend
Concentration/segregation of (suspected) violent extremist offenders (VEOs) in prison populations should be the preferred policy	—	Isolation (solitary confinement) of prisoners for longer periods of time is a violation of the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment. (ECHR Article 3)	—
Convictions should not only be punitive but also restorative	▼	Life-long imprisonment is a violation of the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment, which requires the preparation of convicted prisoners for their return in society. (ECHR Article 3)	—
Prosecutors should aim to try suspected VEOs in a manner duly reflecting the seriousness of the suspected crime. (GCTF Abudja Memorandum)	▼	Prosecutors exercise their autonomy to determine the grounds upon which to aim for convictions in their trials	—
An effective intake, assessment and classification system should be developed and used for new inmates. (GCTF Rome Memorandum Good Practice 3)	▲	Security measures must be applied according to the principles of necessity and proportionality	—
Police investigations should not cross the line into intelligence work, and vice versa	—	Different state bodies that fight terrorism and crime operate according to their own mandate	—
		The use and sharing of certain information is limited to the original purpose for its collection	—

▲ More compliance    ▼ Under pressure    — Same/mild pressure



**Authors:** Reinier Bergema, Esther Chavannes (HCSS), Renske van der Veer & Walle Bos (ICCT). Contributors: Alastair Reed (TU Delft), Kristina Tranakieva, Tim Swejjs, Arlinda Rrustemi (HCSS), Danny Pronk, Aaron Arends (Clingendael). For a general methodological justification of horizon-scanning click [here](#) and for the crime-terrorism nexus click [here](#).

Disclaimer. The Global Security Pulse is part of the PROGRESS Program Lot 5, commissioned by the Netherlands' Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. Responsibility for the content and for the opinions expressed rests solely with the authors; publication does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Defense.