

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
Baseline	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	—
Factors influencing the crime-terrorism nexus	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?*

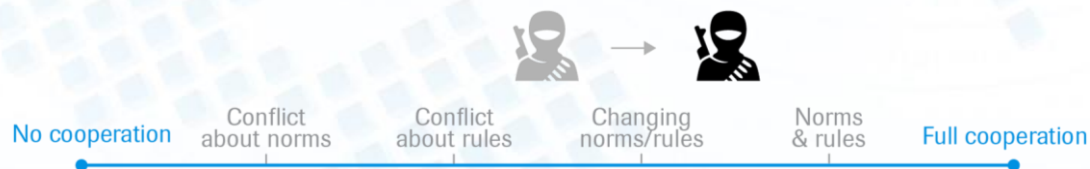
The EU is becoming more adaptive in its regulation of FinTech.

- 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



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