

# THE PRISON CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of Staffordshire University for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2025

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the following individuals and organisations, without whom this journey would not have been possible. First, I want to convey my appreciation to Dr Helen Poole, Nils Duquet and Dr Rajan Basra for their assistance during my initial explorations, as I sought to establish my footing. I thank Professor James Treadwell and Dr Ian Acheson, for their support and guidance throughout my research journey. Despite their demanding schedules, they took the time to provide valuable contacts and advice on the subject matter of this research. I am also grateful to my PhD examiners, Dr John Lamb and Dr Kate Gooch, whose scrutiny and expert advice have been instrumental in strengthening my thesis. Their thoughtful engagement with my work has not only refined my arguments but also encouraged me to have greater confidence in my writing and contributions to knowledge. Their rigorous examination has made this thesis stronger, and for that, I am sincerely thankful.

I am grateful to Staffordshire University for supporting me during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling my research to go ahead despite challenging circumstances. The pandemic posed significant obstacles, including lockdowns, social distancing, and facility closures. However, it had a silver lining—interviewees had more time for in-depth discussions. Speaking virtually became the standard; thus, online interviews broke down geographical barriers and broadened the pool of perspectives. I am deeply thankful to the interviewees for sharing their time, insights, and experiences, which enriched this research; their openness and honesty were invaluable. I am also grateful to the College of Policing for funding my write up year.

I also want to thank Dr Janine Eldred, whose constant presence felt like a comforting hand to hold. Jan, you were not just a friend, but a true motivator who kept me going even during the toughest times. Your encouragement was a guiding light that helped me overcome challenges—including ‘how to eat an elephant’. My mother, who has always been my rock and pillar of strength. Your firm belief in me and your constant support have been my driving force. Your presence, even from afar, has been a source of solace and inspiration. My mentor, Hannah, your support and encouragement were crucial. To all my friends (if I have any left) and family, thank you for your patience and understanding. Your willingness to stand by me, to allow me the time and space to study, meant the world to me.

Finally, but most importantly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor: Dr Em Temple-Malt. Your guidance, understanding, and patience were truly exceptional. Your dedication to my growth as a researcher and your willingness to invest your time and effort in my work are deeply appreciated. I am delighted to be the first PhD student under your guidance and mentorship to successfully reach completion.

This thesis is not only the culmination of my academic journey but also a reflection of the collective support, encouragement, and belief of these individuals and organisations. Thank you for being the pillars upon which I could build this achievement.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the wake of a series of terrorist attacks in Europe over the past two decades, it has become evident that individuals responsible for these acts often have a history of imprisonment. During their imprisonment, they forged critical relationships, acquired skills, and built strategic alliances essential for executing their crimes. Notably, illicit activities have been instrumental in facilitating the financial and logistical aspects of impactful acts of terrorism. This was evident in incidents such as the November 2015 Paris attack and the March 2016 Brussels attack, in which criminal syndicates contributed to recruitment efforts and, in some cases, provided operational support for the execution of these heinous acts. Research conducted in various parts of the world has suggested that prisons can serve as breeding grounds for criminal education and radicalisation, and the United Kingdom is no exception. This pivotal study seeks to research the crime-terror nexus within the prison environment. At a time when a substantial number of resourceful criminals coexist with ideologically motivated offenders in custody, it is imperative to conduct research to clarify what factors influence the prison crime-terror nexus.

Drawing on data collected through semi-structured interviews with professionals and frontline practitioners, as well as textual data from questionnaires and letters from prisoners, this study concludes with five central arguments. (1) The Prison Crime-Terror Nexus (PCTN) is contextual and individualistic in nature. (2) PCTN interactions are driven by necessity and opportunity. (3) The crime-terror nexus is absent in some prisons, but some exhibit 'black hole' characteristics—where corruption, violence, and instability create fertile ground for its emergence. (4) A two-axis matrix integrating prison security categorisation with 'black hole' characteristics offers a structured method to assess environments most conducive to the PCTN. (5) The 'intelligence capability gap' framework identifies systemic, operational, and conceptual barriers, such as definitional ambiguities and misaligned priorities, which hinder the detection and understanding of the PCTN. Without a precise recognition of the crime-terror nexus, even the most adept intelligence professionals may struggle to recognise its existence. In light of these findings, this research provides a data-driven definition of the PCTN. It also presents a series of recommendations aimed at guiding future strategies and interventions designed to mitigate the risks associated with the PCTN in England and Wales.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ALM	Al-Muhajiroun
CHIS	Covert Human Intelligence Source
CONTEST	The United Kingdom's Counter-Terrorism Strategy
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CT	Counterterrorism
CTP	Counterterrorism Policing
FARC	The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GOAD	Good Order and Discipline
HM	His Majesty's
HMP	His Majesty's Prison
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
IRA	Irish Republican Army
JIS	Jamaat al-Islamiyya al-Shaheed
JCTPPH	National Joint CT Prisons and Probation Hub
KC	King's Council
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MS	Microsoft
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCTPN	National Counter Terrorism Policing Network
NI	Northern Ireland
NPICC	National Prisons Intelligence Coordination Centre
NRC	National Research Committee
OC	Organised Crime
OCG	Organised Crime Group
OIR	Operational Improvement Review
PIO	Prison Intelligence Officer
PPL	Prison Prevent Lead
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
ROCU	Regional Organised Crime Units

RSS	Really Simple Syndication
SAH	Similarity-Attraction Hypothesis
SOC	Serious and Organised Crime
TA	Thematic Analysis
TACT offender	Person convicted of an offence under the Terrorism Act 2000, or an offence found to be terrorism-connected under the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. (Terrorists)
TOC	Transnational Organised Crime
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
XRW	Extreme Right Wing
YOI	Young Offender Institution

# Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Prisons have historically been overlooked in discussions on the intersection of organised crime (OC) and terrorism. However, increasing evidence shows that imprisonment is instrumental in facilitating terrorist recruitment, radicalisation, and operational collaboration. While early discussions on narco-terrorism and the crime-terror nexus emerged in the 1990s, the events of 9/11 heightened the concern to unprecedented levels. Since then, researchers and security practitioners have intensified their focus on the crime-terror nexus, highlighting the evolving and symbiotic relationships between criminal organisations and terrorist groups.

Early scholars, such as Schmidt (1998; 2004), Makarenko (2004), Shelley and Picarelli (2002), and Sanderson (2004), were among the first to highlight how criminal networks provided terrorists with funding, logistical support, and operational expertise. This research trajectory gained further momentum following a wave of high-profile terrorist attacks in Europe over the past two decades, many of which involved perpetrators with extensive criminal backgrounds (Basra et al. 2016; Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019). Many individuals responsible for terrorist attacks (i.e. Paris, 2015 and Brussels, 2016) served prison sentences where they forged critical relationships, acquired skills, and built strategic alliances essential for executing their crimes (Rekawek, 2018; Stockhammer, 2023). In the UK, the case of convicted terrorist Brusthom Ziamani, who radicalised fellow inmate Baz Hockton at HMP Whitemoor before they carried out an attack on a prison officer in 2020, highlights the potential for prisons to serve as incubators for criminal-terrorist networks.

The role of prisons within the nexus, however, remains critically under-studied. While there is growing recognition that custody serves as a key site for radicalisation, recruitment, and collaboration between criminals and terrorists, the full extent and nature of these interactions remain poorly understood. This knowledge gap is particularly pressing given the increasing co-location of high-risk offenders. In the UK, for example, the arrest of hundreds of sophisticated criminals under Operation Venetic (Dearden, 2020; National Crime Agency [NCA], 2020) has resulted in their imprisonment alongside convicted terrorists. Simultaneously, CT programmes within the prison system face growing scrutiny, with some critics questioning their efficacy in mitigating the risks posed by extremist (Acheson, 2021). Despite these developments, there has been little empirical research into how prison environments facilitate—or hinder—the crime-terror nexus, leaving policymakers and practitioners without a clear framework for assessment and intervention.

However, the crime-terror nexus lacks conceptual precision, often examined through narrow perspectives rather than the comprehensive approach it requires (Makarenko, 2012; Paoli et

al. 2022). To address this, a working definition is essential—not only to guide discussion but also to frame this research, test its validity, and refine it within the prison context. For this thesis, the crime-terror nexus is defined as:

The spectrum of interactions between organised crime groups and terrorist groups, as well as individual criminals and terrorists. These interactions may involve collaboration, imitation, transformation, or convergence, varying in nature and intensity based on local contexts, geopolitical dynamics, and the specific characteristics of those involved.<sup>1</sup>

This definition will be explored further in Chapter 3.

This thesis addresses the gap in the literature by examining the prison crime-terror nexus (PCTN) through a qualitative empirical study, drawing on interviews with practitioners and textual data from prisoners. It explores the factors that influence the PCTN, introduces a theoretical model to identify prison establishments where the nexus is most prevalent, and conceptualises the intelligence capability gap that impedes effective identification of the PCTN. To achieve this, I pose three research questions.

## 1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to:

- Identify what factors influence the prison crime-terror nexus.

The three research questions below allow for a more focused investigation of the overarching aim:

RQ1: What factors promote the prison crime-terror nexus?

RQ2: What factors inhibit the prison crime-terror nexus?

RQ3: What factors influence the identification of the prison crime-terror nexus?

## 1.2 Arguments

In the process of addressing these research questions, five main original contributions to knowledge have been formed:

1. **This thesis develops a data-driven definition of the Prison Crime-Terror Nexus (PCTN), demonstrating its contextual and individualistic nature.** It challenges the notion of a universal PCTN, demonstrating that engagement in crime-terror interactions depends on personal ideology, social dynamics, and prison conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Researchers own definition.

The research further examines the roles of co-location, security categorisation, and mutual incentives, offering a refined framework for understanding and addressing the PCTN.

2. **This thesis introduces the Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum, a novel framework that categorises crime-terror interactions within prisons, offering a more nuanced taxonomy of inmate motivations than existing models.** This spectrum distinguishes between necessity-driven interactions, such as protection-seeking and support network formation, and opportunity-based interactions, including skill acquisition and strategic collaboration. This framework situates these dynamics within the prison context, advancing scholarship on the PCTN, addressing a critical gap, and providing a nuanced insight of criminal-terrorist interactions.
3. **The crime-terror nexus does not exist in all prisons, but some exhibit 'black hole' characteristics—environments where corruption, violence, and instability create fertile ground for its emergence (Makarenko 2004).** These prisons, often denoted as 'failing prisons' or 'dangerous spaces', can sometimes mirror the dysfunctionality of 'failed states' (Williams, 2010; Liebling, 2015). Within these prison establishments, structural characteristics akin to those found in weakly governed territories become evident, including corruption, violence, and instability. These elements collectively embody the characteristics of what has been termed a 'black hole' state, a concept introduced by Makarenko (2004). Drawing on insights from prior literature and the empirical data collected and analysed, I have identified six specific characteristics that collectively define a 'black hole' prison. These indicators serve as a framework for understanding the unique dynamics within these prisons, highlighting the conditions that foster the PCTN.
4. **This research presents a two-axis matrix integrating prison security categorisation with 'black hole' characteristics, providing a structured method to assess environments most conducive to the PCTN.** The matrix conceptualises the relationship between governance failures and security levels, illustrating how different prison environments influence the likelihood of PCTN formation. By identifying high-security prisons with 'black hole' characteristics as the highest-risk environments,

this framework offers a structured framework for policymakers and practitioners to assess and mitigate PCTN-related risks.

- 5. This study introduces the ‘intelligence capability gap’—a framework identifying systemic, operational, and conceptual barriers that hinder the detection and understanding of the PCTN.** The intelligence capability gap results from definitional ambiguities, inconsistent intelligence practices, misaligned institutional priorities, and a reliance on interpersonal dynamics, all of which contribute to intelligence blind spots within the prison estate. By proposing a clear and consistent definition of the PCTN, this research addresses a foundational barrier to intelligence effectiveness, offering a basis for improved collaboration, training, and intelligence-sharing across agencies. This original contribution enhances both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for mitigating intelligence weaknesses.

### **1.3 Summary of Chapters**

This thesis is comprised of nine chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of the PCTN. Chapter 2 offers an extensive account of the research design, methods, and methodology employed in this study. It explains the rationale behind participant selection, highlighting the challenges, ethical dilemmas and practical considerations encountered, particularly as the data was generated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter explores the methods used to secure thirty-four interviews with professionals and gather data from questionnaires and letters. Additionally, it provides an understanding of the analytical approach, which employed thematic analysis informed by research questions and key interview topics. Chapter 3 and 4 provide a thorough review of relevant literature concerning the crime-terror nexus and crime and terrorism in prisons. The aim of these chapters is to establish a contextual backdrop and identify prevailing themes and debates. This review of existing literature illuminates gaps, inconsistencies, and uncertainties within contemporary theories whilst highlighting the absence of academic research dedicated to the PCTN.

Chapters 5 to 8 constitute the core study chapters. Chapter 5, the first of these empirical chapters, explores the individualistic and contextual nature of the PCTN and offers a ground-breaking, data-driven definition. In Chapter 6, attention shifts towards identifying the drivers of this nexus by categorising the interactions between criminal and terrorist prisoners. Chapter 7 examines the contributory causes and indicators of the PCTN. Chapter 8 adds complexity to the discussion by considering the various factors influencing the identification of the PCTN with an emphasis on the intelligence capability gap. Chapter 9 serves as a discussion, reflection and conclusion chapter, consolidating the main findings and arising themes from

each of the study chapters. It not only synthesises these findings but also clarifies their contributions to the existing literature and details the recommendations delineated from this study. In addition to bridging the gap between the introduction and conclusion, Chapter 9 briefly explores the implications of the research findings and outlines potential avenues for future research.



## Chapter 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

The primary aim of the study was to investigate the factors influencing any PCTN, as well as the conditions affecting its identification. However, since the works of Sykes (1958), Irwin and Cressey (1962), and Cohen and Taylor (1972), gaining access to prisons for research has become increasingly difficult (Jewkes and Wright, 2016). This is due to issues such as heightened political involvement, budget constraints and media scrutiny. Prison managers are often reluctant to allow researchers into their facilities, and resource limitations further complicate access. Even well-regarded accounts of contemporary imprisonment rely on secondary sources (e.g., Skarbek, 2014; Ellis, 2021). These challenges influenced my choice of methodology and research methods. Ideally, I would have had direct access to prison staff and a broader and more diverse population of prisoners with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) National Research Committee (NRC) approval. However, due to my application to the NRC being denied,<sup>2</sup> I opted for a pragmatic approach, gathering insights from professionals, ex-prison staff, and frontline practitioners in law enforcement and related agencies.

Fortunately, my status as an insider provided me with an advantageous position to gain initial access to frontline practitioners and professionals. The insider perspective refers to researchers 'who conduct studies with populations, communities and identity groups of which they are also members' (Kanuha, 2000: 439); thus, the researcher shares the same identity, language, and experiences as the study participants (Asselin, 2003). Despite criticisms of the 'insider-outsider' dichotomy and the fluidity and multiple positions that a researcher can take, my position was one of 'insider'. I am a front-line intelligence professional researching the world of policing the PCTN. Being an insider granted me access to exclusive circles and uncovered data inaccessible to outsiders (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). My insider status fostered trust, credibility, and a sense of 'complete acceptance' among research participants (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 58), paving the way for candid conversations. Additionally, my status and security clearance facilitated effortless rapport-building, enabling open discussions during interviews despite the subject's complexity (Allen and Walker, 2000: 29). My familiarity with intelligence gathering procedures and ethical considerations enhanced data quality and focus (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018: 465).

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<sup>2</sup> This was on the grounds that similar projects were ongoing, it would involve too much resource demand and, the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed methods were concerning given the sensitive nature of the topic.

However, being an insider is not all smooth sailing; it comes with its own set of challenges, such as questions about objectivity and the potential for bias (Kanuha, 2000). Crewe (2014: 396) writes that his 'masculine identity and personal circumstances shaped the dynamics' of his own prison research; my professional background, unintentionally influenced my own fieldwork. My first-hand involvement in law enforcement has influenced my perspectives, potentially leading me to overlook shortcomings in familiar procedures. Before embarking on the research study, I held preconceived notions, including a deep understanding of the obstacles associated with intelligence sharing and the often strained dynamics between law enforcement agencies and HMPPS.

To address these limitations, I collected data while actively considering the social phenomenon from participants' perspectives, minimising personal biases (Asselin, 2003; Taylor et al. 2016: 3). Maintaining reflexivity, I documented self-reflections throughout the research to assess the impact of my actions transparently (Mason, 1996). Open-ended questions were used to deepen understanding (Galletta, 2013: 76), with clarity in interviews crucial for accurate interpretation. Reflexivity during interviews helped maintain vigilance against interference (Galletta, 2013: 104), supplemented by constructive discussions with my supervisor to mitigate unconscious bias. During interviews, I adhered to Kvale's (1996) criteria for successful interviewing, allowing interviewees time to respond thoughtfully. Grounded in my experience, I maintained objectivity, trying to challenge statements without showing agreement or disagreement (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 97). Avoiding proselytising, I endeavoured to facilitate critical analysis on the prison crime-terror nexus (Liebling, 2001). During transcription and analysis, I acknowledged my theoretical perspectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 88), interpreting data comprehensively to refine emerging themes (Taylor et al. 2016: 115). Conscious of my reflexive position, I actively engaged in the analytical process, leveraging my subjectivity as a resource for knowledge production (Braun et al. 2017).

Throughout, I aimed for empathic neutrality in the collection, interpretation and presentation of the data (Ritchie et al. 2014). However, scholars argue that unbiased research, devoid of personal influences, is unattainable (Becker, 1967; Lumsden, 2013). This means my findings are inherently subjective, influenced by my own experiences and position in law enforcement. Nevertheless, on reflection, my close awareness of my own biases and perspectives reduced the potential concerns associated with insider status (Holliday 2007; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 59). Despite these potential pitfalls, my insider status proved indispensable. It opened doors that would have remained firmly shut to an outsider, allowing for candid conversations and a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of the PCTN.

This chapter commences with an overview of the study's aim, design, questions, and strategy employed to investigate the prison crime-terror nexus. Ethical issues (e.g., confidentiality and anonymity) are then discussed. It explores the sampling and recruitment strategy employed, and examines the merits, limitations, and practical aspects of utilising purposive sampling and gatekeepers to recruit respondents. Subsequently, it discusses the methods used, which yielded thirty-four semi-structured interviews, along with data from nineteen questionnaires and six letters from prisoners. The chapter also reflects on and justifies the methodology, considering its appropriateness, strengths, and limitations in addressing the research questions, notably within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter concludes with an outline of the analytical approach used to analyse the data, incorporating essential themes from the interview guide to shape the thematic coding framework.

## **2.1 Aim, Research Design and Questions**

The reviewed literature encouraged an initial focus on addressing *how to tackle any crime-terror nexus inside prison*. This initial assumption was predicated on the existence of a crime-terror nexus operating within prisons. This assumption was challenged in early interviews with participants because there was a significant degree of divergence of opinions regarding the existence of such a nexus within prison. Therefore, it became appropriate to adjust the research questions, aim, and objectives to incorporate this early observation from data collection and analysis. As a result, the research aim was revised to *identify what factors influence the prison crime-terror nexus*.

The research design was shaped around a qualitative strategy as this was likely to succeed in describing subjective experiences and interpreting meaning, in order to answer the research questions (Flick, 2022). Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires and then analysed to identify key themes. This methodology is aligned with the aim and research questions of the study, as well as being practical, given the time-constraints of undertaking fieldwork and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In-depth descriptive detail was required when reporting the findings (Bryman, 2016: 394) to elicit participants' perceptions of factors influencing any nexus inside prison.

### **2.1.1 Research questions**

The research question was: *what factors influence the prison crime-terror nexus?* To enable a more focused investigation of the overarching study aim, the three subsidiary questions were addressed:

RQ1: What factors promote the prison crime-terror nexus?

RQ2: What factors inhibit the prison crime-terror nexus inside?

RQ3: What factors influence the identification of the prison crime-terror nexus?

### 2.1.2 Research strategy

A qualitative research strategy informed the study's design because the three research questions above needed a rich and complex understanding of the participants' experience. Hence, a constructivist ontological orientation and an interpretivist epistemological position was adopted. The principal orientation of the study between theory and research was abductive reasoning with elements of the inductive approach (See Table 1).

	RESEARCH STRATEGY
Ontological Orientation	Constructivism
Epistemology Position	Interpretivism
The Role of Theory	Abductive/Inductive; Generation of theory

*Table 1: Research Strategy*

The constructivist ontological orientation of the study emphasised that each participant would perceive the prison crime-terror nexus differently, based on their perceptions and consequent actions of those social actors involved in their life (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). I distilled evidence and constructed research findings from each different account. An interpretivist epistemological consideration was chosen to understand participants' experiences. Interpretivism emphasises the subjective approach to reality (Willis, 2007; Levers, 2013: 3). It is concerned with how individuals make sense of the world and emphasises the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey's, notion of 'lived experience' as meaningful (Heidegger, 1962; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Willis, 2007: 100). The knowledge gathered from the participants' lived experience informed the research findings and provided data on what factors influence any existence of the prison crime-terror nexus.

Consequently, the principal orientation of the study between theory and research was abductive reasoning (Hood, 1983). I collected and analysed the data as the theory developed; thus, knowing with each step what further data and which participants should be approached in order to refine the theory and evaluate the 'hunches' (Hood, 1983). As gaps, information and recommendations appeared, I returned to previous participants and asked them additional questions, before writing and analysing further. This helped to prevent getting caught in either 'unfocused data collection or foiled analyses' (Charmaz, 2006: 104). I was committed to viewing the research questions and phenomenon through the eyes of the participants. After understanding the phenomenon (observable event) from the participant's viewpoint, conclusions were drawn from those perspectives (Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 2012). Importantly, there was an element of the inductive reasoning approach in the study because

theory was the outcome of research data, but the overall theoretical account was based on the worldview of the participants (Bryman, 2016: 394).

## **2.2 Ethical Considerations**

Ensuring high-quality data generation within the framework of a robust ethical philosophy is a cornerstone of responsible research practice (Terry and Hayfield, 2021: 18). In this study, the commitment to ethical standards was not only a foundational principle but also a dynamic process involving continuous assurances and negotiations with the participants.

From the outset, the research design was carefully rationalised and explained to potential participants. The framing of the study emphasised the significance of ethical considerations and respected the rights and well-being of the individuals involved. The process of obtaining ethical approval from the Ethics Panel at Staffordshire University, which involved a review of the research design, methodology, procedures for participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis, further highlighted the commitment to rigorous ethical standards. The approval granted served as an acknowledgment of the study's adherence to ethical guidelines and a commitment to protecting the rights and confidentiality of the participants.

In addition to the formal ethical approval, ongoing negotiations with participants were essential in upholding ethical principles throughout the research process. Early on, participants were provided with clear and comprehensible information about the study's objectives, methods, and potential implications. This transparency laid the foundation for informed consent and facilitated a mutual understanding between me and the participants. Moreover, an open line of communication was maintained, allowing participants to express any concerns or seek clarification at any stage of the research. This iterative and dialogical approach not only respected the autonomy of the participants but also enabled me to address ethical considerations in real-time, adapting the study's procedures as needed.

The ethical philosophy guiding this research was not a static set of principles but a dynamic and evolving framework that responded to the needs and concerns of the participants. By integrating ethical considerations into the very fabric of the research process and maintaining a continuous dialogue with participants, the study aimed to go beyond mere compliance with ethical guidelines, aspiring to foster a genuine ethical culture throughout the research.

### **2.2.1 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality refers to ensuring the participants 'will not be identified or presented in identifiable form' (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996: 318-319). The participants can be identified, but their identities are not revealed to anyone outside of the study. As Israel and Hay (2006: 94) stated, if researchers do not observe the confidentiality of what is said to them 'who would talk

to them in the future?’ Overlooking confidentiality could also harm generations of future researchers and Staffordshire University’s reputation (Bryman, 2016: 127). However, I informed participants that I could not assure confidentiality in all situations. If I encountered information which needed to be communicated, for example relating to safety or a criminal act, confidentiality would be set aside and the information would have been disclosed. Fortunately, I did not encounter any information which would result in the need to breach participant’s confidentiality.

Measures were implemented to ensure that the participants’ identities were not revealed to anyone else. Notes, recordings and transcripts were always kept on the University OneDrive and any hand-written notes were shredded. I collected the participants’ names and contact details and nothing more. These details were not saved on any system and only their participants’ numbers were used to identify the transcript and consent form. This allowed any personally identifying information to be stored separately from the data. Given the detailed, rich and personal nature of the data generated, I preferred to use a generic title of participants’ job, such as ‘Intelligence Officer’, alongside their pseudonym. Therefore, at the start of each interview, I asked each participant if they consented to using a generic title that they provided. From the outset of my study, I was aware of balancing the need to provide sufficient contextual information and preserve confidentiality and anonymity (Wincup: 2017: 55).

### **2.2.2 Anonymity**

Anonymity refers to guaranteeing that no one will be able to tell which responses came from which respondents’ (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996: 318-319). The core data collection method was through (online) face-to-face encounters. Anonymity was not guaranteed to participants. However, as indicated, I took all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity of those who had participated in the research. On the contrary, the questionnaires and letters do not allow disclosure to be traced back to the specific individuals (Wincup, 2017: 54) and are viewed as the most common method of anonymous data collection. All respondents were not identified from any publication and were only known by a number. Nevertheless, the body of this thesis refers to the respondents in relation to the category prison they are located, (e.g., Category A) and in some cases their participant number.

In addition, I have incorporated textual data (typed and handwritten) extracted from a selection of questionnaires and letters. Incorporating visual content from the data can compromise the anonymisation process in research (Crow and Wiles, 2008). However, while incorporating this textual data, I remained vigilant in adhering to ethical considerations, particularly regarding privacy, safeguarding identities, and handling sensitive information (Crow and Wiles, 2008). During the process of extracting and using this textual data, I took great care to ensure the

protection of individual prisoners. However, since no additional contextual information was provided about the prisoners, the risk of prisoner identification was extremely minimal. The questionnaires and letters were electronically scanned and kept within the University OneDrive.

## **2.3 Sampling and Recruitment**

### **2.3.1 Sampling strategy**

The study used purposive sampling when selecting participants, to ensure and maintain research validity and address the research questions posed. With reference to James Spradley (1979: 46-54), some important characteristics of a participant, when selecting individuals, are that participants must have 'expert knowledge' and 'a first-hand... involvement' in the prison environment (Spradley, 1979: 49). Therefore, I decided that a minimum of 2 years' experience in the field would match this criterion, although it was felt that individuals with longer experience of the prison environment would be better because these respondents would have more knowledge and anecdotal and empirical evidence. I verified that prospective participants were from the profession (i.e., police, HMPPS) and could add value to the research findings.

In contrast to Spradley's important characteristics (1979), this study included retired professionals provided they had experience and knowledge of prisons, prisoners, and investigating crime and/or terrorism within the prison environment. Their former employment ensured that their views could be regarded as a credible source of expert opinion. As discussed in Chapter 4, OC and terrorism do not present an easy subject to research academically and law enforcement agencies are reluctant to disseminate much of their information, for obvious operational security reasons. Interestingly, individuals who have recently worked professionally within this sector have not, commonly, been used as a source of information (Silke, 2009; Gallagher, 2016: 58).

The purposive sampling was a contingent approach because the research questions would initially guide the sampling of participants (Hood, 2007). As the study developed, the sampling gradually altered to ensure that the research questions and new areas of interest that emerged were addressed. Using a purposive sampling approach, I interviewed individuals from the police and their partner agencies because they have departments and teams involved in countering-crime and terrorism within the prison setting. More specifically, individuals from these organisations were best placed to address the research aim by providing their professional perception of the existence of any PCTN. Some of these individuals have knowledge and first-hand experience of observing prisoners and handling intelligence regarding any crime-terror nexus, so they were able to draw on their own direct experience.

Notably, I am well positioned to contact such individuals due to being an insider in the profession (Lavrakas, 2008: 148-149).

When determining whether potential participants met the criteria, I also looked for a range of diverse organisation. I selected participants that were either affiliated to the Government, policing network (i.e., the National Counter Terrorism Policing Network [NCTPN]), the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs), the National Prisons Intelligence Coordination Centre (NPICC) or HMPPS. I also selected several participants who had experience in this area such as Senior Government Advisors.

NCTPN is the national collaboration of police forces in the UK to prevent, deter and investigate terrorism. It includes dedicated Regional Counter Terrorism Units and intelligence units which are responsible for the delivery of the policing contribution to the CT strategy (CONTEST) 2023. The units include officers and staff working in a range of specialist fields such as investigations, forensics and financial inquiries. ROCUs provide a range of specialist policing capabilities at a regional level, which help forces to tackle SOC effectively. NPICC was launched in November 2015 as an integrated police-led multi-agency unit with the remit to coordinate the response to the threat from all extremists, terrorists and OC prisoners across the UK (HM Government, 2018: 50) (see Section 7.2.5.5 for more details). NPICC has since been dissolved and been replaced with the National Joint CT Prisons and Probation Hub (JCTPPH).

### **2.3.2 Sample size**

It was difficult to establish how many people should be interviewed. I aimed to conduct a minimum of thirty interviews but as many as necessary to answer the research questions (Kvale, 1996: 101). I considered that this sample size would facilitate a diversity of experiences and professions and was likely to effectively answer the research questions and support convincing conclusions. This was a pragmatic decision which meant that the management and analysis of the rich interview data was practical. Importantly, as much as the number of participants is partly determined by issues of time, cost and other practicalities (Galletta, 2013), I was cognisant of when the data seemed rich enough to 'identify meaningful patterns' (Terry and Hayfield, 2021: 26). Thus, when interviews with additional participants yielded no genuinely new insights, I reached the conclusion that no further interviews were necessary. It was a balance between achieving data breadth, depth and a diversity of experiences and having sufficient scope to undertake deep, effective analysis (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007).



### **2.3.3 Recruitment strategy**

The main method of recruitment was through promotional material (posters, see Appendix A) distributed to policing organisations, my connections in the public sector, academia and using non-probability sampling approaches—the ‘snowballing’ method (Penrod et al. 2003; Platt et al. 2008). The recruitment strategy began with acquaintances and then moved onto strangers (Warren and Levy, 1991). Most individuals were contacted via email. As highlighted by Taylor et al. (2016), many researchers now employ email as a recruitment tool. This method was especially convenient during the COVID-19 pandemic. While some potential participants might be hesitant to respond to such outreach, the pandemic's effects amplified the shift towards virtual interactions.

Snowballing was employed as a second, supplementary recruitment method because individuals who had already been interviewed were asked to promote the study and identify relevant colleagues, who might fit the selection criteria (Ritchie et al. 2014: 129). I evaluated nominees to confirm they satisfied the requirements (such as experience and job role) and leaned towards colleagues of interviewees rather than ‘close friends’ to promote diversity within the sample. Recruiting ‘friends’ of interviewees might compromise the diversity of experiences (Ritchie et al. 2014: 129) because of homophily; a phenomenon referred to by McPherson et al. (2001) where people tend to be friends with others who are similar to them (‘birds of a feather flock together!’). Due to snowballing possibly limiting the diversity of participants (Cannon et al. 1988), I employed other non-probability sampling as a supplement (e.g., purposive [Hood, 2007]) and convenience (Dörnyei, 2007: 99; Given, 2008: 124-125), to gather a diverse range of opinions which could contribute to and stimulate debates and discussion.

### **2.3.4 Recruitment in practice**

Initially, I used the promotional material (see Appendix A) to advertise my study within the organisations mentioned above. If I received an email from a prospective participant, I then sent a Participant Information Sheet (PIS - Appendix B) that outlined the nature of the project and the ethical considerations so they could make an informed decision about participating in the study (Bryman, 2016). If they responded confirming they would like to take part, I asked them for their availability and any preferred dates/times for the interview. I provided some dates that were suitable for me and ensured they knew I was very flexible and interviewing until September 2021. Additionally, I articulated that I preferred Microsoft (MS) Teams or a similar mode of videoconferencing, as the idea of social interaction accords better with the face-to-face qualitative interview (Warren, 2002).

Snowball sampling was particularly useful for this study because the focus of attention was on particular organisations (Bryman, 2016: 415). Thus, initial participants proposed other people who met the selection criteria (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Weiss 1994; Arksey and Knight, 1999) and advertised my research by word of mouth. Snowball sampling continued over a period of about six months until theoretical saturation occurred.

### **2.3.5 The Intervene Project**

During data collection an opportunity arose to use a 'gatekeeper' to facilitate engagement with prisoners and access these hard-to-reach individuals. The Intervene Project is a small charity that provides legal support and advice to current prisoners. Historically, their principal concern has been offering support and advocacy. However, they have now expanded their focus and services to include assistance with research. The Intervene Project provided me with the opportunity to communicate with prisoners via postal method. They did not influence the research, the findings or how they were presented, but the Intervene Project did ask if I could include a question to inmates about 'the effects of COVID-19' (Bryman, 2016: 142).

The Intervene Project played a key role in choosing the sample and then acting as gatekeepers to respondents. I worked closely with the organisation to articulate what data I wanted to obtain and ensure the sample they selected met the required criteria (Ritchie et al. 2014: 126). The Intervene Project was the trusted gatekeepers (Lavrakas, 2008: 299-300) and I had limited control over their sampling strategy. Regarding the recruitment strategy, they sent the Questionnaire, Consent Form and PIS (see Appendix C) to the selected sample. The PIS provided information about the research study and set out their participation (Ritchie et al. 2014: 126). This was sent alongside a covering letter (see Appendix D) explaining to each prospective participant why the Intervene Project was involving them in the research and that they would like them to participate in the study.

### **2.3.6 Reflections on recruitment**

I received thirty-six research inquiries and conducted thirty-four interviews, including five joint interviews with a total of 10 participants. Fortunately, I encountered no outright refusals to participate. Some respondents expressed their interest but had scheduling conflicts, and we either booked interviews for a later date or agreed on a follow-up contact. Occasionally, I had to follow up with potential interviewees, but the controversial and intriguing nature of the topic made most of them eager to participate.

The participants in the study encompass diverse professionals spanning various sectors, from law enforcement and prisons. Among the participants were:

- Counter Terrorism Intelligence Officer: Craig

- Police Officers: Melissa, Alex, Joseph, Christian, Daniel, Marcus, Sean, Larry, David, Adam, Jeffrey, Jennifer, Mark, and Kenneth
- Former Commanders and Senior Police Officers: Robert, Terry, Jerry, Charles, and Paul
- Prison Intelligence Managers: Ivan and Anthony
- Debriefers: Gregory
- Former Prison Governor: Jerry
- Ports Officer: David
- Senior Government Advisors: James and Isaac
- Regional Prisons Coordinator: Adam
- Prison Prevent Lead: Christopher
- Prison Intelligence Officers: Jim, Scott, Matthew, Patrick, Dennis, Natasha, and Kimberly.

Overall, the participants represent a wide range of expertise and experience within the fields of counterterrorism policing (CTP), intelligence analysis, and prison management. The majority of participants were male. As a result of challenges in securing prison access, the analysis of the data from the sample gathered in this study focuses on macro-level explanations and the policing of prisons, rather than specific motivations or factors at the individual level. Furthermore, due to the availability of data, the study focused on male closed prisons rather than women or open prisons.

The merits and limitations of my access to individuals who met the selection criteria is worth discussing. Many interviewees became aware of the project through colleagues or acquaintances, either directly or indirectly through work. At times, I opportunistically recruited relevant individuals when the occasion arose, as it was too good to let them pass. This led me to conclude that 'word of mouth' and convenience sampling were important factors in recruiting participants and obtaining early information about the field of study. However, I am cognisant of the flaws (e.g., not representative of the entire population and lack of diversity) this recruitment approach places on the validity of the findings (Berg and Lune, 2012).

Furthermore, my direct access to prospective participants negated the need for additional 'gatekeepers' except for the Intervene Project. While I acknowledge my reliance on the gatekeeper for sample selection, upon reflection, this approach yielded a higher response rate

and more suitable participants. Without this intermediary, as a solo researcher, gaining access to prisoners would have been highly improbable, especially given that the NRC refused my application to research inside the prison estate (see section 2.1).

### 2.3.7 Interview sample characteristics

Although increasing attention has been given to demographic data in interviewing literature (i.e., race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation), my selection criteria only required that the sample be from the crime-related sector and had professional working experience in the subject area (minimum 2 years). Hence, I obtained data on the professional's **employment** and **years of experience** (see Table 2 for characteristics of interview sample). I wanted to ensure that each participant had a sufficient level of experience in the relevant sector and represented a range of perspectives and understandings about the phenomenon under investigation.

#### 2.3.7.1 Employment

The sampling strategy proved highly effective in recruiting professionals from the crime and terrorism sectors in the prison environment, including high-profile individuals. My insider status significantly reduced the need for additional explanations of specialised terminology, likely enhancing the motivation of high-profile individuals to participate in interviews (Bogner et al. 2009: 2). It was crucial to interview participants at both strategic and operational levels to capture diverse perspectives on the issue, given their distinct roles and viewpoints. Participants in strategic positions offered insights into policy, strategy, and the broader organisational vision. They are anonymous but these individuals had extensive experience in the crime-related sector and were involved in policymaking or advising the government (Meuser and Nagel, 1991). They provided valuable input on legislation, long-term strategies, and organisational structure, and some even recommended additional interviewees to approach during their interview (Bogner et al. 2009: 2). Conversely, operational interviewees shared their first-hand knowledge of implementing procedures, strategies, and policies on a daily basis in the prison environment, bringing an on-the-ground perspective. They held roles such as Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) Handlers,<sup>3</sup> Prisoner Debriefers,<sup>4</sup> Prison Prevent Leads (PPLs), and Prison Intelligence Officers<sup>5</sup> (PIOs). Determining their job roles allowed for tailored interview questions that aligned with their experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> These are responsible for the daily management of CHIS, including their welfare, safety and protection.

<sup>4</sup> These provide proactive and efficient debriefing of persons detained in prison to gather intelligence for various reasons usually to maximise opportunities to gain credible intelligence to support management to make informed operational decisions.

<sup>5</sup> These are police officers/staff embedded within prisons and have the role of overseeing the collection of prison intelligence by LE. They serve as the main link between the police and the prison security unit,

Characteristic	Category	Interviewed Participants (N = 34)	
		n	%
Gender	Female	4	12
	Male	30	88
Number of Years' Employment	Under 10	3	9
	10 - 20	10	29
	20 - 30	13	38
	30 - 40	6	18
	40+	2	6
Mode of interview	MS Teams	33	97
	Telephone	1	3
Audio-Recorded	Recorded	29	85
	Not Recorded	5	15
Role	Strategic	10	29
	Operational	24	71
Type of Interview	Single	24	71
	Joint	10	29

*Table 2: Characteristics of Interview Sample*

### 2.3.7.2 Years of experience

Experience and knowledge were essential to this study, as the sample needed to provide crucial insights and perspectives on the PCTN. Participants with lengthier employment in this field were deemed to possess 'expert knowledge' (Spradley, 1979: 49), a deeper understanding of the sector, and first-hand experiences and case examples to share. Talking to experienced individuals, given time and access constraints, proved an efficient way to gather data (Bogner et al. 2009: 2). Consequently, identifying suitable participants with relevant experience was a key aspect of the research (Creswell, 2009; Sargeant, 2012). Participants were selected based on their capacity to offer valuable insights into the research questions and enhance the understanding of the subject matter. This included individuals with experience working inside, or in close contact with, the prison environment. The sampling strategy successfully recruited individuals with varying years of experience, ranging from 2 to 42 years, with an average of 22 years' experience among the interviewees. Even the participant with the least experience had been a Senior Government Advisor for two years and possessed extensive experience in a related field.

## 2.4 Generating Data

This section outlines the data generation methods employed, their suitability for addressing research questions, and their strengths and limitations in studying the PCTN.

### 2.4.1 Interviews

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method to gain insights into participants' perspectives on the PCTN, as they were best suited for

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managing intelligence requests from law enforcement agencies and facilitating access to prisoner information (Muir, 2020: 7).

understanding interviewees' viewpoints (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002: 221). The interviews combined open-ended and theory-driven questions to collect both participant experiences and data guided by established theories in the field (Galletta, 2013). While the study focuses on the prison context, qualitative interviews were preferred over ethnographic methods because the social phenomena under investigation are not confined to a specific setting; the study sought to identify common patterns and themes that influence the PCTN. Therefore, the interviews aimed to construct knowledge from the participants' viewpoint, emphasising interpretive understanding rather than hypothesis testing (Mason, 2018). Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that qualitative depth, not breadth, is advantageous in criminology. Consequently, qualitative interviews provided extensive coverage of the social phenomena while maintaining a specific focus on the research objective.

#### **2.4.2 Single and joint interviews**

Participants were given the choice of single or joint interviews, with joint interviews involving one interviewer and two interviewees in similar roles, such as a Counter Terrorism PIO (CT PIO) and an Organised Crime PIO (OC PIO). Despite joint interviews being relatively overlooked in interviewing literature (Morris, 2001; Morgan et al. 2013), they proved valuable for stimulating discussions and enriching the data, allowing interviewees to complement and expand on shared experiences (Seymour et al. 1995). This approach harnessed mutual prompting, challenging, and support within their narratives, while also saving participants' time (Morgan et al. 2013). Concerns regarding one interviewee dominating the conversation or potential friction and disagreement (Arksey, 1996) were unfounded due to the professionalism and similar job roles of the interviewees. Instead, the interactions flowed smoothly, with minimal interruptions. However, the transcription process presented some challenges as it required simultaneous identification of speakers and interpretation of their non-verbal cues, such as nodding in agreement.

#### **2.4.3 Virtual and email interviews**

While interviews are a common qualitative research method (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013), arranging in-person interviews during the Covid-19 pandemic proved challenging. Burns (2010: 5) suggests that 'digital interactions', including email and technologies like Skype and MS Teams, expand research possibilities. Online interviews, including phone and Skype, have demonstrated minimal differences in data quality (Novick, 2008; Hanna, 2012; Deakin and Wakefield, 2013; Hanna and Mwale, 2017). As a result, this study used various virtual interview methods, including videoconferencing, phone, and email. Synchronous interviews were conducted via phone and video, while email facilitated asynchronous interviews.

I preferred virtual interviews, particularly via MS Teams, as they offered a visual aspect similar to face-to-face interviews. Most participants were comfortable with this mode, but it required the right software, internet access, and some tech proficiency. It also meant participants had to be comfortable with the camera and audio on, which was generally not a problem given their professional backgrounds. Telephone interviews were an option for some participants, though I recognised they might affect rapport-building and the loss of valuable visual non-verbal cues, such as expressions, gestures, and tones, which are crucial for thorough analysis (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013: 605). Asynchronous online interviews, such as by email, are gaining attention in the literature due to our email-centric society (Bampton and Cowton, 2002; Burns, 2010). I considered including email interviews as a practical way to collect data, especially for busy professionals. Although email interviews take longer to conduct, they naturally generate a transcript. Despite some disadvantages, such as potential for rehearsed responses and loss of spontaneity, email interviews offer advantages, particularly in the context of today's technological advances and the pandemic (Meho, 2006; Gibson, 2010).

#### **2.4.4 Conducting interviews**

An interview schedule comprised four sections, blending structure, evaluative, and explanatory questions while maintaining clarity and brevity (Kvale, 1996). Notably, the interviews were semi-structured, allowing for the exploration of emergent questions and themes during the discussions. This approach ensured thorough coverage of essential topics with specific participants (Kvale, 1996; Hennink et al. 2011). As the primary researcher, I played a leading role in the research process (Taylor et al. 2016: 102).

Formulating the questions and their order required time, and I tested the schedule in three pilot interviews, two via MS Teams and one via email. Analysing one of the online interviews helped assess its suitability for gathering sufficient data. The pilot phase allowed me to refine my technique, fine-tune questions, and confirm the instruments' functionality. I gained experience, practised using prompts and probes, and obtained feedback from interviewees afterwards. The second virtual interview was separated into three interviews due to the participant's time-constraints. Delays in scheduling, prompted me to begin contacting other participants for main interviews concurrently with the pilot study, enabling me to adapt my approach based on feedback and insights.

Piloting the method of email interviews confirmed that this mode of interviewing was *not* as effective as anticipated. One participant initiated an email interview due to their busy schedule. I sent the first few questions, and not the whole interview schedule, because breaking them into appropriate 'bite size' activities (Burns, 2010: 10) is suggested to help maintain the 'interactivity' and add detail to the information supplied (Bampton and Cowton, 2002). I gave

the participant time for reflection, stipulated a reasonable cut-off date and sent a reminder 1 week before the deadline (Meho, 2006). The participant had not met the reasonable time limit and ignored the reminder emails. After 2 months, the participant had only answered the initial greeting questions, so they suggested a date/time for a virtual interview. I share Burns' perspective (2010: 12) on the advantages of the variety of new tools available to qualitative researchers, viewing them as a positive development and a logical evolution of research practices in today's technological landscape. However, it is important to note that these tools may not be suitable for all interviewees.

Thirty interviews subsequently took place on MS Teams and one via telephone (34 total interviews (see Table 2). Pilot study responses were included in the final data set. Twenty-four single interviews were conducted, each of which lasted around an hour (see Table 2). Five joint interviews (with two participants) took place, which usually lasted about an hour and a half (totalling ten participants).

Each interview followed a similar format. I began with introductions about myself and the study and then checked that the interviewee had read and understood the PIS. In order to consider and safeguard against any harm to the participants, this PIS (Appendix B) directed interviewees to contact a support helpline if they experienced any discomfort, following the interview. However, due to interviewing professionals, I anticipated minimal risk and no significant ethical implications. Additionally, I obtained informed consent from all participants in the study to help guarantee that I adopted 'stringent ethical practice' (Mason, 2018: 95). I encouraged them to ask questions or request clarification, prior to consent. The consent forms have been kept separately from transcripts on the University OneDrive. For the participants who gave permission, I audio-recorded their interview. From the total dataset, four interviews were not recorded which involved five participants (one joint; see Table 2). Instead, I made notes during the interview and wrote them up fully, immediately after the interview had finished. In each interview, inquiring about the participant's work history and current job role served as an icebreaker, establishing rapport and pacing for the conversation. Additionally, it allowed for necessary adjustments, to make the questions tailored to the individual.

Before commencing the interviews, I ensured I was knowledgeable around the theory, merits and limitations of the topic area and qualitative interview method, so that I could easily listen and engage with the participant and understand when the discussion was diverted and travelling away from the proposed line of questioning. On occasions, I deployed the technique of appearing deliberately naive to elicit richer, deeper explanations to avoid people assuming I knew what they were talking about (Kvale, 1996: 21; Taylor et al. 2016: 115). During the first part of the interview, I asked participants about the crime-terror nexus and whether they



thought it was happening inside prison. I probed deeper into their responses, their understanding of the nexus and any circumstances influencing its existence. The second part of the interview explored their perceptions of any nexus, institutional structures, problems, and factors influencing the prison crime-terror nexus. The questions in this section were tailored around the interviewee's profession. For instance, those working inside the prison, were asked questions around HMPPS strategies and methods, while those involved in policing were questioned about the CONTEST strategy, covert tactics, and intelligence sharing. In the final part of the interview, interviewees considered questions that encouraged them to share their thoughts on risks, implications and tackling any nexus inside prison. The interview schedule (Appendix F) had a more supplementary role in this section. Instead, I used my written notes as prompts because several interviewees had mentioned important comments throughout the interview that I wanted to investigate further.

To close the interview, we discussed future considerations, and I returned to points in the participants' narratives that I felt were still in need of further exploration and clarification (Galletta, 2013: 51). Securing clarification during the interview helped ensure accuracy in interpretation. I then offered participants the opportunity to broach topics that they had expected to talk about, but which had not emerged during our discussion and to ask any questions. Many participants said they had nothing further to add, and a few used this opportunity to talk about the research in more depth and additional experiences they felt were relevant. After the interview, these conversations informed my post-interview reflection (Galletta, 2013) and I made notes of any new avenues of interest. Some data were really fascinating and may warrant a separate postdoctoral study, so undertaking a post interview reflection enabled me to maintain a timely record. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim if audio-recorded, and any parts of the interview that could not be heard properly on the audio-recording were indicated in the transcript. Transcribing the interviews verbatim and including non-verbal communication fostered reliability, validity and trustworthiness within the research (Seale and Silverman, 1997; Easton et al. 2000). I then provided the participant with their transcript, so they could review and omit any relevant sections of the interview they did not want to be used in analysis (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). This functioned as a way of gaining second informed consent and making sure I had suitably anonymised their interview (Riessman 2008: 197; Mason 2018).

#### **2.4.5 Reflections on generating interview data**

Semi-structured interviews were an effective method for data generation, providing a structured, yet flexible, approach to maintain consistency and relevance in the discussions. They encouraged detailed responses from the interviewees, allowing room for improvisation and the pursuit of fruitful lines of inquiry (Bryman, 2016). The study's constructionist

epistemological leaning supported open-ended interviewing (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Adjustments were made to the study's emphasis and interview schedule based on emerging issues and themes in the data (Taylor et al. 2016: 123). Throughout the process, a research diary served as an audit trail to maintain credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, crucial for building confidence in the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merrick, 1999; Wheeler et al. 2010).

Following the pilot study, I initiated contact with potential participants, and one individual sought more information about the interview. After discussing the research topics, it became evident that providing a brief interview guide to participants in advance would be beneficial. I opted to send a concise version of the interview schedule to participants as part of a reminder email the day before their interview, allowing them to prepare and understand the interview structure (see Appendix G). This approach proved effective, with some interviewees referencing their notes during the interview and adding prepared comments at the end.

The scheduling of the interviews went well, with mutually agreed dates and times. I then provided participants with a meeting request via email, assigning them a participant number, which I included on their consent form (see Appendix H). Typically, I sent the consent form along with the PIS one week before the interview, requesting participants to read, sign, and return the consent form prior to the meeting. Given the occasional challenges of respondents forgetting, not attending, or causing interview delays (Warren, 2002), I took the precaution of sending a reminder email to all participants the day before the interview, urging them to communicate any issues or cancellations. Fortunately, only a few participants needed to reschedule their interview, and a handful were slightly delayed. The flexibility of virtual interviews, as opposed to in-person meetings, allowed for convenient last-minute adjustments to interview scheduling.

On the interview day, I had the adjusted interview schedule, recording software, paper, and pen to hand. Since all interviews were conducted virtually, there was no need for travel. Instead, I ensured I was in a quiet room to maintain confidentiality and took measures to prevent anyone in my household from overhearing. Leveraging technology for interviews offered advantages in terms of flexibility, time efficiency, cost savings, and enhanced safety during data collection (Bryman, 2016: 492). While conducting the interviews, I sometimes encountered challenges in stimulating participants to share their perspectives and experiences without imposing excessive structure or predefined responses. As Kvale (1996: 34) noted, 'the interviewer leads the subject toward certain themes, but not to certain opinions about these themes.' On reflection, my probing and active listening skills significantly improved

as the empirical research stage progressed. Successfully probing in qualitative interviews, I learned, is a skill that develops with practice (Taylor et al. 2016).

Given the topics of conversation, some interviewees requested that I did not audio-record their interview. Therefore, I produced interview scripts made from notes taken during the interview. While the absence of an audio-recording device posed an initial limitation, upon examination, the level of detail captured in the interview scripts written immediately after the interview are comparable to that in the audio-recorded transcripts (Rutakumwa et al. 2020). However, the broader experience of the interview which includes observation and personal interactions are lacking in the scripts (Glaser, 1998: 107; 2002). Such personal features were noted through my recall of the interviews.

As for the interviews that were audio-recorded, I am unsure if recording the interviews altered the conversations and what was said. Rapley (2004) explores the potential influence of a recording device in an interview, asserting that the recorder is merely one among several factors influencing the interaction. My perception was that interviewees were open and forthcoming in their responses—particularly knowing they were anonymised. Several times, interviewees indicated that certain information they shared could not be included in the final thesis. I would further reassure the participant of their anonymity, and that no information would be attributed to any one individual. Subsequently, I excluded the mentioned points from the interview transcript as requested. Additionally, a few participants continued to speak after the audio-recorder had been turned off but most of these discussions were centred around the debrief and promoting my study to other prospective participants.

Overall, the flexibility of social researchers ‘favoured digging tool’—interviews—enabled me to continue my research and generate data during the COVID-19 pandemic (Taylor et al. 2016: 102). Using the MS Teams approach to conduct the interviews was very successful and, I believe, should be adopted more often, as it is time and cost efficient for both the interviewee and interviewer.

#### **2.4.6 Questionnaire data**

Prisons have always been particularly hard to access (Jewkes and Wright, 2016); this was compounded by the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic creating a challenge I had to address. In lieu of in-person interviews with prisoners, data was collected through questionnaires and letters. This approach aimed to enhance the research findings by gaining deeper insights from a difficult-to-reach population, namely prisoners (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

The textual methods used in this study were self-administered questionnaires sent through the post to thirty prisoners (Appendix I). The questionnaires consisted of ten closed questions

followed by an area for free-flowing text or drawings (open question). The questionnaires asked for the prisoner's gender as well as questions concerning prisoner networking and relationships. For the final question, I invited the participants to express their views and experiences of networking and socialising inside prison in any format they wished. I decided to include an open free flowing section at the end of the questionnaire after consulting the research method of 'World Café' (Page and Gratton, 2020), acknowledging that insufficient literacy skills might be a barrier to participation (MoJ, 2022c). I also included a question about further communication via letter. Nineteen prisoners out of thirty responded to the questionnaire. I chose to communicate further with nine of the respondents due to the level of detail and information they provided in their questionnaire. For example, I probed further into any crime-terror relationships they may have mentioned and clarified that my interpretation of their previous answers was correct (see Appendix J). Six prisoners responded to the letters.

#### **2.4.7 Reflections on generating data from prisoners**

Using questionnaires and letters as data collection methods proved effective, cost-efficient, and convenient for prisoners, while also reducing ethical and logistical concerns (Bryman, 2016: 222). Additionally, I had the opportunity to follow up with some respondents for further insights. Despite the usual lower response rates associated with postal questionnaires (Bryman, 2016: 224), a substantial percentage of the respondents (63%) completed the questionnaire, and 75% responded to the letters.<sup>6</sup> The questionnaire design and questions were carefully crafted with input from my supervisors and the Intervene Project. An open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire proved highly successful, as thirteen respondents (68%) provided additional comments in this section, including poetry and essays.

Moreover, the absence of my presence during the self-administered questionnaire eliminated interviewer effects (de Leeuw and Hox, 2008). However, this advantage should be taken with caution since there was no interviewer to assist respondents in interpreting questions, probe for answers, or encourage the completion of all questions. Some respondents chose not to answer specific questions, resulting in missing data issues (Bryman, 2016: 224). It is possible that they faced difficulties in reading or understanding certain questions. Additionally, data reliability is a concern, as survey methodology commonly encounters the challenge of respondents not consistently providing truthful answers (Hyman, 1944; Parry and Crossley, 1950). Respondents may have underreported socially undesirable behaviours, such as criminal offences, and overemphasised desirable ones (Preisendörfer and Wolter, 2014).

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<sup>6</sup> While 9 letters were sent originally, one respondent was no longer on file, which has been taken into consideration when calculating the response rate.

They might have withheld information due to concerns that it could be used against them or a reluctance to disclose the true situation within the prison.

To address this limitation, I assured respondents of the anonymity and unattributed nature of their responses. It is important to note that this approach may have created a sense of 'felt anonymity' for the respondents (Terry and Hayfield, 2021: 23), potentially resulting in more truthful responses compared to face-to-face interviews. Overall, the data obtained from the questionnaires and letters complemented and enriched the interview data, offering a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective.

## **2.5 Analysis**

As noted earlier, the literature lacks important considerations related to this topic. Therefore, the analytical strategy aimed to be open-ended, with an emphasis on the generation of theory and how the participants interpret their social world. However, the process of analysing the data was systematic and involved looking for thematic patterns and reflecting on ideas that emerged (Galletta, 2013). The following section will outline the analytical strategy implemented, which seemed best suited to the study's qualitative research.

### **2.5.1 Analytical strategy**

Throughout the study, Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to identify, analyse and report patterns within the data that thirty-four interviews, nineteen questionnaires and six letters generated (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2012; 2013). TA is widely used in qualitative research (Terry and Hayfield, 2021: 3) but Boyatzis (1998: 6) argues that there is no exact definition of what constitutes TA or the process of doing it (see Attride-Stirling, 2001; Tuckett, 2005; Braun and Clarke, 2006). TA is a very accessible and theoretically flexible approach that can be applied in various traditions of qualitative research (Crabtree and Miller, 1992). Nonetheless, in more recent publications by Braun and Clarke (2019: 593) they articulate that the flexibility of specific iterations of TA 'is more or less constrained by paradigmatic and epistemological assumptions around meaningful knowledge production'. Therefore, this analytical strategy is situational within the landscape of qualitative research and has been developed whilst fully acknowledging my own underlying research values and assumptions (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

Notably, another reason for choosing TA was that the semantic and latent levels at which themes are to be identified, enables any researcher to 'capture explicit meaning' (Terry et al. 2017: 22) and examine the 'underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 13). The distinction between semantic and latent codes can be blurry (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Terry and Hayfield, 2021) and throughout analysis, meaning and experience were examined at both levels. Hence, the latent approach involved interpretative work, beyond

participant-expressed meanings, which is a particularly important attribute for the constructionist paradigm (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Some of these codes were informed by theory to help identify what to look for in the analysis. The semantic level was adopted more often. This encompassed identifying codes at the surface level of the data (Terry et al. 2017: 22). Using both levels of coding, facilitated an inductive approach, allowing for an iterative and continuing pursuit of meaning.

## 2.5.2 Conducting analysis of the data

Six analytical stages were devised and piloted to ensure the process was consistent and meticulous (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2012). Additionally, an extra step of data summary and display, using Framework, was deployed (Ritchie et al. 2014) to aid organisation and analysis (see Table 3). The analysis was inductive (data-driven) and throughout the process, emergent analytical ideas were recorded in a research diary and entered as memos within NVivo. Hence, codes that appeared not useful or relevant in early analysis could be retrieved and used at a later date (Galetta, 2013: 124). The six-stages are discussed in turn, but it is imperative to highlight that the process was iterative (Miles and Huberman; 1994: 224; Braun and Clarke, 2019: 594).

<b>SIX-STAGE THEMATIC ANALYSIS MODEL</b>	
<b>STAGE 1</b>	Familiarisation with the data
<b>STAGE 2</b>	Initial coding*
<b>STAGE 3</b>	Theme generation**
<b>STAGE 4</b>	Developing and reviewing themes
<b>STAGE 4.1</b>	Data summary and display***
<b>STAGE 5</b>	Defining and naming themes
<b>STAGE 6</b>	Reporting the findings

\*Initial coding was inductive and included in vivo and descriptive coding.

\*\*Theme generation was expanded to include thematic analysis coding.

\*\*\*This stage included the creation of a framework matrix.

*Table 3: Six-stage Thematic Analysis Model (Author's Own)*

### Stage 1: Familiarisation with the data

The analysis commenced during data collection, where I maintained a research journal for reflection after each interview. These notes covered substantive topics and methodological aspects, shaping subsequent changes to the research aims and interview schedule. This reflective phase was crucial given the study's interpretative qualitative methodology.

The transcription phase that followed was meticulous, encompassing verbatim orthographic transcripts, including non-verbal cues like pauses, gestures, and tones, recognised as significant in qualitative interviewing (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 92). Certain elements in the delivery of the speech can be highly telling and communicate more to the researcher about the interviewee's attitude and state of mind, particularly around sensitive topics or when the professional does not want to discredit their organisation (Oliver et al. 2005: 1285; Opdenakker, 2006). Some transcripts underwent post-transcription research, incorporating case studies, books, and spelling corrections. Anonymising personal information and assigning pseudonyms using *BabyNameVoyager* maintained participant anonymity. Any identifying details were removed to protect participant identities. Transcription occurred on the University OneDrive.

After transcribing all interviews, I organised and thoroughly reviewed them, noting intriguing topics, recurring themes, and their relevance to research questions. Immersing myself fully in the data, I took a deliberate, unhurried approach, appreciating its value as a crucial orientation to the collected information. I documented my findings from the entire dataset, capturing what I found interesting and thought-provoking.

#### Stage 2: Initial coding

I employed NVivo to assist with the analysis, a well-suited tool for TA (Zamawe, 2015). While not universally adopted among qualitative data analysts, I chose NVivo to expedite coding and retrieval, fostering connections between codes later in the process. Embracing modern technology to enhance qualitative data analysis's rigor (Paulus et al. 2013 in Bryman, 2016), I invested time in mastering NVivo's usage. I uploaded the transcripts and initiated coding for the first ten interviews. Employing various coding methods, including in vivo (Strauss, 1987), descriptive, and open coding, I sought repetition, similarities, differences, and theory-related social concepts within data extracts. This initial coding followed an inductive, ground-up approach, devoid of a predetermined codebook. By refraining from preconceived notions, I allowed theories to emerge from the raw data itself. The early coding primarily involved open coding, leading to a 'proliferation of codes' (Bryman, 2016: 588). Balancing relevance and manageability, I used participants' own words (e.g., proximity, better food) and concise word or phrase summaries (Braun and Clarke, 2013) to encapsulate data contents (e.g., reticence, protection, skills transfer, multiplicity of nexuses).

#### Stage 3: Theme generation

Before coding the remaining interview transcripts, I printed my initial codebook and created a Hierarchy Chart using NVivo (see Figure 1). I organised codes hierarchically to better understand their interrelationships, evaluating higher-order concepts and sub-themes to

provide genuine data insight (Bryman, 2016: 588). Identifying similar codes helped avoid commonalities. Some codes, like those related to the effects of COVID-19, emerged that did not directly address the research question. I chose to document these for potential use in future research projects (Galletta, 2013: 123). This phase aimed at crafting creative, interpretive narratives from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The themes were not mere by-products of coding but were generated at the intersection of my theoretical assumptions, analytical tools, expertise, and the data itself (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

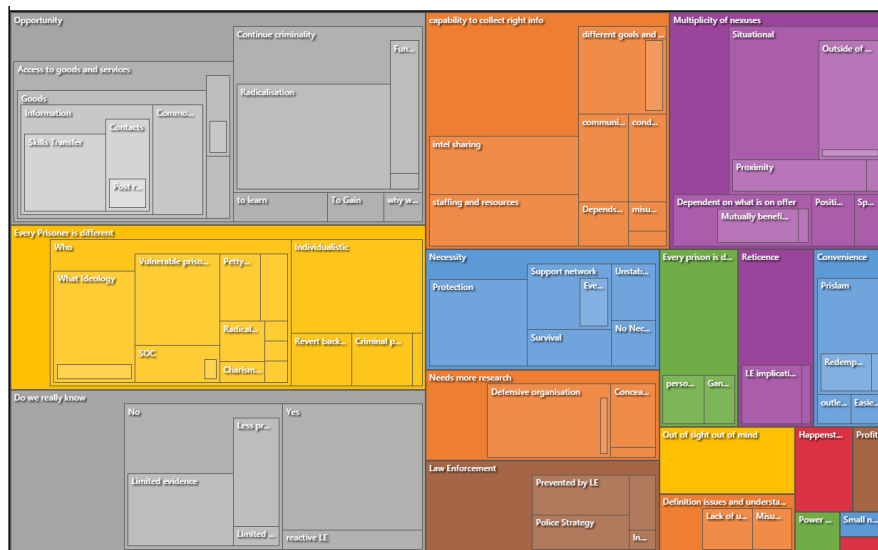


Figure 1: Hierarchy Chart (Nvivo)

Once I was content with the themes and sub-themes, I created Buzan diagrams (see Appendix K), re-organised my codes on Nvivo and created a codebook (including descriptions and examples). I engaged in an iterative coding process, revisiting existing codes and categories while coding additional transcripts, similar to the approach in a study by Jones et al. (2010), demonstrating an ongoing interplay between conceptualisation and reviewing interview data.

#### Stage 4: Developing and reviewing themes

The fourth analytical stage involved reviewing and refining the themes which included 'identifying the essence of what each theme was about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 98). More specifically, I contrasted and compared the themes to examine links and connections, before writing up the insights and highlighting the most important evidence. Although theory is already rooted in my interview schedule and questions, I immersed myself in the data analysis before relating it to literature. My role in the knowledge production was at the heart of this approach—so my reflective and thoughtful engagement with the data and analytical process was vital (Braun and Clarke, 2019).



Furthermore, I returned to some participants to discuss emerging themes (Galletta, 2013: 127). At the end of this stage, I had a good idea of the different themes and how they fitted together. Therefore, at this point, I also began to analyse the questionnaires and letters. I used the initial codebook I had created from the interview data to identify any repetition, similarities, differences and supporting or opposing comments of the initial themes and sub-themes.

#### Stage 4.1: Data summary and display using Framework

Before moving on to the more interpretive stage of analysis, I decided to add a further step of data summary and display. Braun and Clarke consider this analysis to 'sit somewhere a bit 'in-between' their approach' (2019: 594). This was a vital step in the data management process because it facilitated both cross-case and within-case analyses and supported me moving back and forth between different levels of abstraction without losing sight of the raw data (Ritchie et al. 2014: 283). Additionally, it helped me to condense the interview material into more manageable quantities. I wrote a precis for each sub-theme and each participant in the study and entered the summaries into a set of matrices. I justified why each theme depicted something important in relation to the research questions and how each theme could have wider implications.

#### Stage 5: Defining and naming themes

In this step, I finalised the themes by determining a specific description and setting definitive criteria. I further developed each theme by explaining why it was important to the broader research question. I also selected data extracts to be used in the final report that illustrated key features of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

#### Stage 6: Reporting the findings

The last step involved writing up the final analysis and description of the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, much of the writing process had already taken place through note taking, describing the themes and selecting data extracts, hence this phase was more of a continuation of the analysis rather than a separate step. Reporting the findings moved from mere description of codes and themes. I used both literature and data extracts to describe the findings and provide an account of why the themes and interpretations of the data fully answered the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The discussion and concluding chapter then broadens the analysis by relating themes and sub-themes to theory and situating the findings within the existing body of literature (Tuckett, 2005).

By applying the method of TA, the research has provided 'a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 81). The fruits of this analytical process are presented in four chapters (5-8).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter reflected upon the methodology and analysis, and their appropriateness, strengths and limitations in addressing the research questions of this study. Collectively, the combined methods have provided valuable data. The study strove to remain reflective of the fact that its own conceptual and methodological choices inevitably shape the identification of themes throughout the research process. Indeed, the findings discussed in the following chapters are products of subjective interpretation of relationships and interactions between the researcher and the participants. Thus, presenting the methodological and analytical choices of the study in a transparent way is of paramount importance, as they have directly influenced the interpretation of the research findings. The next chapter will consider current literature on the crime-terror nexus.

## Chapter 3 UNDERSTANDING THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

### 3.1 Introduction

A systematic literature review was conducted to explore the theoretical works on the crime-terror nexus in prisons, analysing conflicting perspectives, research trends, and identifying areas for further exploration. A list of keywords and synonyms was compiled (refer to Table 4) and searched across online libraries, e-journals, and search engines such as EThOS and Open Access Theses and Dissertations. After exhausting search parameters, the snowballing technique was employed by examining source materials from previously collected publications. Additionally, Zetoc

alerts, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds were set up on search engines (e.g., Google Scholar) and relevant journals to highlight literature matching the search keywords. Articles—as well as pertinent government and legal documents—were included and

chosen based on their relevance to the research topic, author expertise, and methodological rigor. Both popular and niche articles were included.

For the crime-terror nexus, literature from the 1990s onwards was prioritised due to increasing examination of links between transnational organised crime (TOC) and terrorism. Literature from the early 2000s was given prominence, aligning with the introduction of the term ‘crime-terror nexus’ and the start of the international War on Terror. After reviewing several key works on the crime-terror nexus (and prisons), mind mapping software was used to create Buzan diagrams<sup>7</sup> to help order preliminary themes (Figure 2) and identify key authors (Figure 3).

SEARCH TERMS	
Terror-crime nexus	Organised crime groups
Narco-terrorism	Cross pollination
Terrorist-criminal nexus	Organised crime-terrorism nexus
Prisoner Networking	Terror-crime nexus
Networking	Narco-terrorism
Terrorist recruitment in prisons	Terrorist-criminal nexus
Crime-terror nexus	Prisoner Networking
Crime terror nexus and prisons	Networking
Crime terror networking	Terrorist recruitment in prisons
Prisons	Prisoner relationships
Crime in prison	Terrorism in prison
	Organised crime in prison

*Table 4: Search Terms*

<sup>7</sup> Developed by Tony Buzan (1974). Now more commonly called a mind-map.

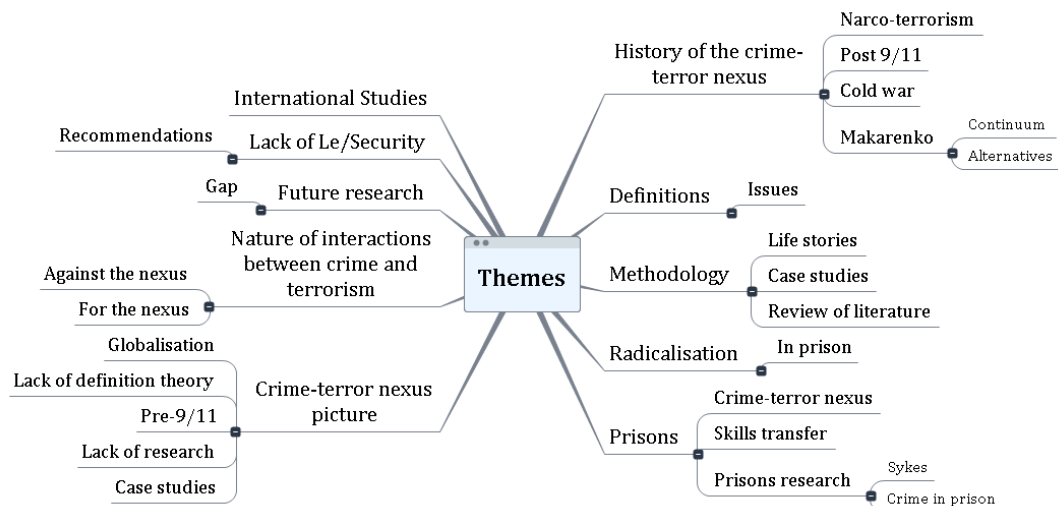


Figure 2: Preliminary Themes (Author's Own)

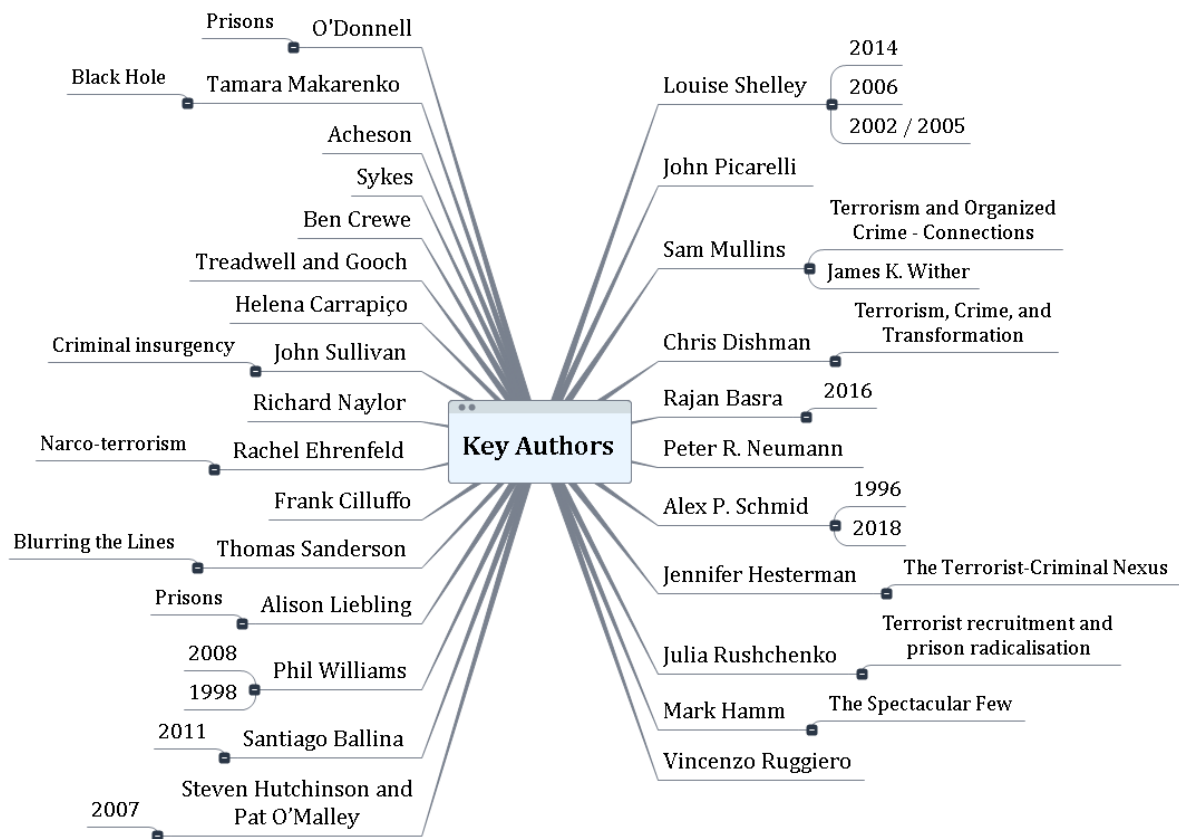


Figure 3: Key Authors (Author's Own)

The literature on the crime-terror nexus was first reviewed chronologically to outline historical developments. Following this, international theoretical frameworks spanning the last three decades were examined, with consideration of publication date and authorship. These decisions were critical in shaping the content of the examination, influencing the inclusion and exclusion of specific sources. By scrutinising the publication date, the aim was to ensure the

incorporation of the most current and relevant research, considering the evolving nature of the crime-terror nexus. The impact of the publication date was evident as researchers initially investigated the phenomenon, and over time, authors developed positions either supporting or refuting proof of the crime-terror nexus. While the primary focus of the study is the crime-terror nexus in English and Welsh prisons,<sup>8</sup> some international literature was considered due to the limited UK-specific research on this topic. However, literature pertaining to the crime-terror nexus in other contexts, such as state-sponsored terrorism, was excluded to ensure research clarity.

This chapter begins by exploring the literature on historical developments and the definition of the crime-terror nexus. It then considers the mechanisms and dynamics of the crime-terror nexus such as promoting factors and the profit vs. ideology dichotomy. The limited literature on the crime-terror nexus within prisons is first reviewed, followed by a discussion of studies that explore strategies for addressing the nexus in prison settings. Notably, research on the crime-terror nexus in women's prisons remains scarce. As a result, this study focuses on its dynamics within male prison populations. Future scholarly efforts should address this gap by examining the crime-terror nexus in women's prisons. Chapter 4 explores literature pertaining to crime and terrorism within prisons.

### **3.2 Historical Developments of the Crime-Terror Nexus**

One of the earliest acknowledgments of the 'nexus' emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, when Marxist rebel groups in Latin America (e.g., the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia [FARC] and the National Liberation Army [ELN]) diversified activities into drug cultivation and trafficking (Ochoa, 2018). Organised drug trafficking began to be seen as a means to support terrorist groups' political motivations (see Ehrenfeld [1990] on Pablo Escobar and the Colombian drug cartels). This connection between drug production and trafficking, is often termed 'narco-terrorism'.<sup>9</sup> This term indicated the first identification of a link between OC and terrorism, despite there being no single, accepted definition of the term in literature (Bobkier and Herman, 2022). Despite some theories arguing that OC and terrorist groups respective motivations and goals are merely 'drug mafia-cum-terrorist conspiracy' (Schmid, 2011: 4), the developments in 'narco-terrorism' led to the introduction of the term 'crime-terror nexus' in the 1990s. Hoffman (2006) even analysed the crime-terror nexus almost exclusively in terms of narco-terrorism.

In the 1990s, an era of increased international pressure and control on the financing and supporting of terrorist organisations (Sanderson, 2004; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007; Basra

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<sup>8</sup> Prisons in England and Wales have the same policies and guidelines (Silvestri, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> The term itself was coined by the Former Peruvian President Fernando Belaunde in 1983.

and Neumann, 2016), enhanced globalisation and a growing number of weak or failing states promoted the crime-terror nexus (Mylonaki, 2002; Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Makarenko, 2004; Shelley, 2005; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007; Piazza 2008; Schmid 2018). Once the Soviet Union and United States scaled back their financial support for violent non-state groups and traditional avenues such as charitable giving came under intense scrutiny, these organisations began to look for other sources to fund their activities (Williams, 2008; Hesterman, 2013; Forest, 2022). Hence, early writers in the debate (such as Curtis and Karacan, 2002; Makarenko, 2004; and Grabosky and Stohl, 2010) argue that the adoption of criminal activity by terrorist organisations was a practical response to the decline of state sponsorship.

During the post-Cold War era, academic literature on the connections between TOC and terrorism was limited. Schmid (1996) initially explored their similarities, differences, and the potential benefits and risks of collaboration in the mid-1990s. In 2018, he revisited his stance, considering evolving factors such as a shared recruitment pool and the role of prisons (Schmid, 2018). Terrorism specialist Hoffman (2017: 38) emphasised the distinction between terrorists and common criminals in his renowned 1998 book, *'Inside Terrorism'*, while Laqueur (1999: 211) suggested the development of a symbiotic relationship between terrorism and OC in certain instances.

The crime-terror nexus was established during the 1990s when criminals and terrorists began to display similar organisational and operational characteristics, challenging law enforcement. Until recently, the term crime-terror nexus was viewed as an interconnection (nexus) between OC (crime) and terrorist (terror) groups (Makarenko, 2004; Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2004; Levi, 2007; Grabosky and Stohl, 2010; von Lampe, 2016b). The post-9/11 era, marked by the Bush administration's declaration of a global 'War on Terror', witnessed a substantial escalation in attention towards crime-terror interactions. Domestically, the period from the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 to September 11, 2001, witnessed significant societal changes, potentially impacting how state security and law enforcement agencies viewed threats. Hence, experts became increasingly interested in how the two groups interacted and adapt their methods to achieve their motives, in order to improve security and law enforcement.

Some researchers have attempted to bridge the divide between OC and terrorism, especially with evidence of their interconnectedness, as seen in events like the 2004 Madrid train bombings. In this attack, diverse individuals collaborated with radicalised common criminals using their networks to fund the operation (Reinares, 2010: 100). This event, inter alia, has prompted increased research into the overlap between crime and terrorism, focusing on facilitative factors, the nature of relationships, group evolutions, and policy implications. By

2005, the 'nexus' concept was firmly established in academic and policy literature (Petrich, 2021).

For instance, Dishman (2001), initially using historical records, outlined a spectrum of transformations between 'crime' and 'terrorism' categories. He argued that due to differing goals and motivations between 'revolutionaries and Mafiosos', enduring strategic alliances between terrorist and criminal groups were improbable (Dishman, 2001: 44). However, a few years later, building on Makarenko's (2004) work, Dishman (2005: 237) shifted his perspective. He noted that the 'breakdown of hierarchical structures in illicit organisations' was fostering networked groups, creating opportunities for criminals and terrorists to cooperate. Improved security measures and law enforcement actions were flattening these organisations' hierarchies, resulting in a leaderless nexus with 'far-reaching and dangerous implications' for security (Dishman, 2005: 237). Less systematically, Bovenkerk and Chakra (2004) emphasised structural and operational parallels between terrorist and OCGs, highlighting their shared desire for influence. They acknowledged that extensive and enduring criminal organisations were becoming scarcer within both OC and terrorism, being replaced by loose networks of individuals and cells. The authors stressed that the level of collaboration depended on the specific actors involved.

Overtime, the debates concerning the crime-terror nexus have become more complex, and scholars have mostly defined three main nexus conditions: cooperation, transformation, and convergence (Dishman, 2001; Makarenko, 2004; Ibanez, 2013). Pioneer crime-terror nexus researcher, Tamara Makarenko (2004), depicted these fundamental areas, which will be discussed in more depth below (Section 3.3.1). Since 2004, the nexus has been analysed across disciplinary boundaries (criminology, terrorism studies) that have offered adaptations of the nexus in different areas of the world. The heightened focus on crime-terror interactions can be attributed, in part, to the resurgence of terrorism as a significant concern post 9/11.

Moreover, to further develop the concept of the crime-terror nexus, in 2012 Europol conveyed some conclusions in their Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (2012):

'The connections between terrorist, violent extremist and OC networks may become more blurred. Terrorist and violent extremist activities are often financed through crime or OC activities. In some cases, the same individuals who are engaged in terrorism or violent extremism are also involved in OC activities' (Europol, 2012: 32).

In tandem with this report, Europol produced a study entitled *Europe's Crime-Terror Nexus* (Makarenko, 2012), where they presented a qualitative analysis of the linkages between OC and terrorism. They refer to each stage of the nexus (alliances, appropriation, hybrids and

transformations) and reveal that certain linkages between OC and terrorism exist in the EU. The report predicted that these linkages would continue to develop. More recently, Europol suggested in their Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (2022a) that any nexus between terrorism, extremism, and SOC is characterised by:

- 1) the joint use of criminal services;
- 2) a common pool for recruitment, as well as overlapping backgrounds; and
- 3) a source of funding for terrorists and violent extremists (Europol, 2022a: 19).

### **3.3 Defining the Crime-Terror Nexus**

Understanding the crime-terror nexus requires acknowledging the lack of universal consensus in defining both terrorism and OC. The contentious nature of these subjects has led to significant disagreement within the literature. Until the early 21st century, terrorism and OC were typically examined as separate phenomena. Even in the rare cases where institutional courses addressed both topics, they were usually taught within distinctly separate academic programmes and faculties (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2004; Innes and Levi, 2012).

Organised criminals and terrorists can interact, forming a spectrum of relationships, linkages and connections (see Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Makarenko, 2004; Wang, 2010; Miklaucic and Brewer, 2013; Shelley, 2014; Smoot, 2014; Matfess and Miklaucic, 2016). These relationships have been labelled in various ways which has introduced ambiguity into the concept. Additionally, despite continuing policy concerns and the rapid expansion of literature on the crime-terror nexus, inconsistencies and uncertainties persist in current theories. The root of this challenge rests in the varied and often ambiguous conceptualisations of key terms such as (organised) crime, terrorism, and nexus (Oberleitner, 2022; Paoli et al. 2022). Schmid (2004) argues that some of these terms encompass a broad semantic range, underlining the importance of precise terminology. Consequently, the crime-terror nexus remains ill-defined and poorly understood, often examined through narrow theoretical perspectives rather than a necessary comprehensive approach (Makarenko, 2012).

While much of the discussion surrounding the nexus focuses on how terrorist groups engage in criminal activities to fund their operations, it extends beyond mere terrorist financing. The nexus also involves access to specialised skills (see Basra et al. 2016) and the appropriation of operational tactics (see Shelley et al. 2005), allowing criminal and terrorist groups to pursue their political or financial goals more efficiently and effectively.

Given the conceptual ambiguity surrounding the crime-terror nexus, various scholars have developed theoretical frameworks to classify and understand its dynamics. These frameworks



provide structured ways to examine the relationships between OC (or crime more broadly) and terrorism, offering perspectives on how and why these groups interact. By engaging with three key frameworks in the literature (Makarenko, 2004; Basra et al. 2016; Paoli et al. 2022) this section will outline their definitions, assess their strengths and limitations, and establish a working definition for this thesis.

### 3.3.1 The Crime Terror Continuum

While earlier research by Dishman (2001) and Shelley and Picarelli (2002) addressed the crime-terror nexus, the seminal study on the connection between OC and terrorism is by Makarenko (2004). Grounded in historical case studies, she constructs a theoretical framework explaining the various degrees of interaction between OC and terrorism. Despite criticism that the model draws rigid distinctions between the core motivations of terrorists and organised criminals, linked to politics and profit, respectively (see Jamieson, 2005; Madsen, 2009), Makarenko's theoretical continuum remains highly influential in contemporary academic discourse, including this thesis.

Makarenko presented the crime-terror nexus as a convergence continuum (Figure 4), which identifies four primary relationships: (1) alliances, (2) operational motivations, (3) convergence, and (4) black holes; albeit similar descriptions have been provided (e.g., Jamieson, 2005; Rollins et al. 2010; Philips and Kamen, 2014).

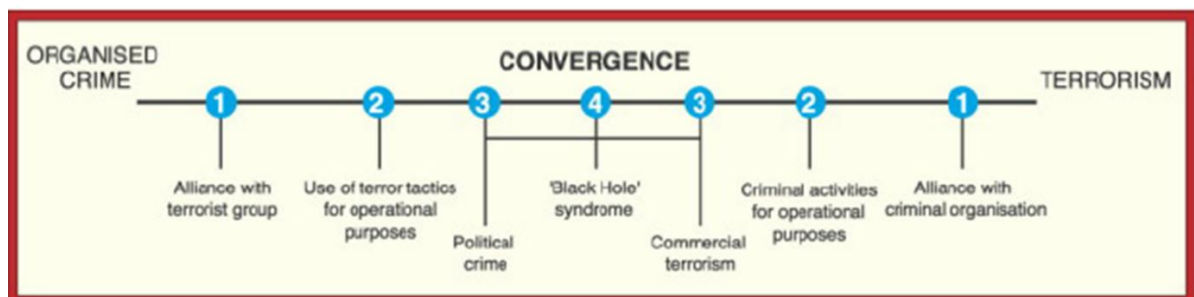


Figure 4: The Crime Terror Continuum (Makarenko, 2004)

The first type of relationship is an alliance between OC and terrorism, where cooperation occurs for mutual operational benefits. These alliances vary in duration, from one-off collaborations to long-term associations (Makarenko, 2004). They serve diverse purposes, with some groups seeking expertise—such as counterfeiting—while others require operational support. Makarenko emphasised that such alliances are particularly common in unstable regions, such as Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Eurasia (Makarenko, 2004: 133).

The second relationship involves the appropriation of each other's tactics for operational purposes. Makarenko (2004) argued that both OCG and terrorist groups prefer to develop in-

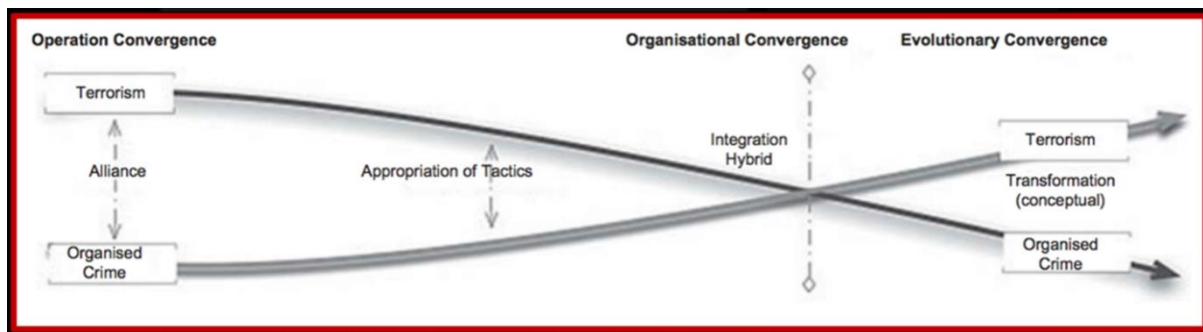
house capabilities rather than forming alliances, as this ensures greater operational security. Avoiding external partnerships helps groups reduce risks, such as conflicting goals, distrust, and competition, as they ‘mutate their own structure and organisation’ (Dishman, 2001: 48). According to Makarenko (2004), this shift in operational priorities intensified following the post-Cold War period, when criminal groups began exploiting weak states for political gain, and terrorist organisations sought financial resources to sustain their campaigns. Importantly, at this level of interaction, both groups maintain distinct motivations —OCGs use terror tactics primarily to ‘secure their operational environment’ (Makarenko, 2004: 133), while terrorist groups engage in criminal activities as a means to fund their political objectives (Dishman, 2001).

The third relationship, the convergence thesis, suggests that OC and terrorism can merge into a single entity, displaying characteristics of both, including shared motivations, organisation, and operations (Makarenko, 2004; Dishman, 2005). This transformation often involves terrorist groups using political rhetoric as a cover for broader criminal activities, distracting law enforcement from their criminal operations and enhancing their position among rivals (Makarenko, 2004). However, this perspective has been widely debated. While Makarenko (2004) and Dishman (2005) suggest that groups may fully merge, many scholars argue that their differing ideologies and goals make such long-term convergence unlikely (see Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Sanderson, 2004). Wang (2010) reinforces this view, asserting that while collaboration occurs, it is usually tactical and strategic, rather than a complete structural merger.

The black hole thesis, positioned at the most extreme point of the continuum, represents the greatest security threat (Makarenko, 2004: 137; Phillips and Kamen, 2014). This scenario occurs when weak or failed states facilitate the unregulated expansion of crime-terror networks, allowing these hybrid groups to flourish. Makarenko (2004) identified two key risks: (1) criminal groups adapting political objectives to justify their illicit activities, and (2) states becoming overrun by these hybrid entities. In such cases, conflicts may be driven by criminal gain rather than ideology, as seen in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone. The ultimate consequence is the establishment of alternative economic and political structures, where these groups exert state-like control over specific regions or entire nations (Makarenko, 2004).

Makarenko’s original model has evolved since 2004. In subsequent publications, she introduced a refined version that operates across three distinct planes: operational, organisational, and evolutionary (see Figure 5). This updated framework includes five interaction types: alliance, appropriation of tactics, integration, hybrid, and transformation

(Makarenko and Mesquita, 2014). This revision highlights the growing complexity of the nexus, which has expanded beyond mere financing or temporary alliances.



*Figure 5: Refined Nexus Model (Makarenko and Mesquita, 2014)*

Scholarly literature—including Makarenko’s early work—has traditionally focused on the crime-terror nexus in developing nations, particularly those with weak governance, high corruption, and entrenched criminality. Recognising this gap in research, Makarenko’s revised model accounts for geographic variations, distinguishing between the nexus in Western democracies, transitional states, and conflict zones. In the 2014 study, Makarenko and Mesquita provided a qualitative analysis of the crime-terror nexus in Europe, focusing on operational structures, interaction locations, and key mechanisms. They concluded that:

‘The European theatre offers unique insight into the crime-terror nexus that is atypical of the traditional ‘geopolitical hotspots’, characterised by weak state institutions, sustained conflict, corrupt public officials and entrenched criminal operations. Conversely, Europe remains a stable political/economic environment where the nexuses comparatively opaque and unpredictable’ (Makarenko and Mesquita, 2014: 270).

In Western democracies, the nexus functions predominantly at the operational level, with alliances, tactical appropriation, and integration being more common (Makarenko and Mesquita, 2014). However, these interactions remain highly opaque and adaptable, posing significant security challenges (Makarenko, 2007). While European criminal groups rarely adopt terrorist methods (primarily due to the overall economic and political stability experienced by EU member-states), such cases are more prevalent in states experiencing political upheaval or weak governance (Makarenko, 2012).

Makarenko’s work remains one of the most influential attempts to conceptualise the crime-terror nexus, offering a structured framework to understand how OC and terrorism interact. By positioning these relationships along a continuum, she presents a dynamic model that captures their fluidity. Groups may form alliances, adopt tactics, or undergo transformations that blur the distinction between criminal and terrorist organisations. Real-world examples

include FARC and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)—both of which initially engaged in criminal activities for funding purposes, later evolving into organisations primarily motivated by profit. This shift aligns with Makarenko’s black hole thesis, where groups mutate beyond their original purpose, adopting hybrid strategies from both terrorism and OC. Following her research, other scholars have expanded and refined the crime-terror nexus framework, offering alternative perspectives on its complexity and adaptability.

Despite its foundational status, Makarenko’s Crime-Terror Continuum (2004) has been widely critiqued. Scholars argue that her model’s rigid distinction between terrorism and OC—particularly in terms of motivation and structure—does not reflect modern realities (Jamieson, 2005; Wang, 2010). Additionally, the binary framing of divergence (where groups maintain distinct identities) vs. convergence (where they fully merge) no longer fully explains how these interactions evolve (Shelley, 2014; Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019). Recent manifestations of the crime-terror nexus indicate greater strategic opportunism, where interactions are fluid, temporary, and shaped by contextual factors rather than fixed pathways. This evolving reality raises important questions about whether traditional models remain fit for purpose in today’s security landscape.

### **3.3.2 The ‘New’ Crime-Terror Nexus**

The lack of conceptual clarity and the recent terrorist attacks in Europe,<sup>10</sup> particularly those linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), have paved the way for a subtle yet significant shift in focus. Notably, these recent attacks involved individuals with prior criminal records (Bakker, 2006; Mullins and Wither, 2016; Acheson and Paul, 2019; Ilan and Sandberg, 2019). While this is not a new phenomenon (Zelin, 2014), the increased convergence observed in these attacks has led some scholars to argue that the relationship between terrorism and crime has evolved from a mere nexus to one of symbiosis (ICCT, 2017; Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019). The transition of individuals from criminals to terrorists, and the resulting convergence of criminal and terrorist social environments, is now recognised as the ‘new’ crime-terror nexus (Basra et al. 2016).

The new crime-terror nexus was coined from a unique empirical examination by Basra et al. (2016). They studied 79 European jihadists with criminal backgrounds to examine the relevance of their criminal pasts in relation to their terrorist futures. The findings of their research identified four key themes: (1) radicalisation and recruitment, (2) prisons, (3) skills transfer, and (4) financing. They argue that the crime-terror nexus should now be considered

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the murder of Lee Rigby in 2013, the Paris attacks at Charlie Hebdo in 2015, Westminster attack in 2017 and Barcelona attack in 2017.

the convergence of social networks and environments, rather than the merging of criminal and terrorist organisations. Recruits are predominantly drawn from a common pool, including marginalised youth gangs and minor criminals (Basra et al. 2016; Schmid, 2018).

Basra et al. (2016) also contribute to the crime-terror nexus debate by questioning whether the nexus exists primarily between OC and terrorism, or crime in general and terrorism. Rather than viewing the nexus as a structured relationship between criminal and terrorist *groups*, they argue that it increasingly involves individual petty criminals. Thus, they identified that many European jihadists come from low socioeconomic backgrounds typical of young urban offenders, engaging only in petty or violent crime before their radicalisation (Ljubic et al. 2017). This shift reflects an evolving model of terrorism, aligning with the emergence of a 'fifth wave' of terrorism (Gallagher, 2024). Unlike earlier waves of terrorists, who were often recruited from universities or religious schools, modern terrorist organisations now draw heavily from European prisons and 'immigrant gangs', where criminality and jihadism become intertwined (Burke, 2015: 207; Gallagher, 2016). These individuals bring valuable criminal expertise to terrorist operations, including familiarity with violence, access to weapons and forged documents, and the ability to evade law enforcement (Basra and Neumann, 2016: 26; Basra et al. 2016).

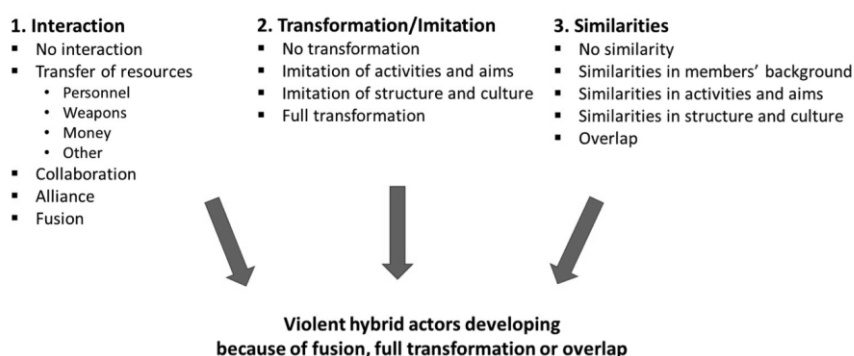
The new crime-terror nexus can be defined as the intersection of social networks, environments, or milieus between criminals and terrorists rather than structured groups. This perspective builds on earlier models but highlights a shift towards lone actors, fluid networks, and digital-age threats (Gallagher, 2024). Hence, the concept of the crime-terror nexus remains relevant, but its characteristics and dynamics have evolved from traditional perceptions (Basra and Neumann, 2016: 26). Additionally, recent research has discovered limited evidence for the conventional link between OC and terrorism (Paoli et al. 2022). Therefore, any examination of crime-terror interactions should consider a variation of Makarenko's continuum that applies at an individual level and accounts for the role of petty criminals, not just OCGs (Basra et al. 2016; Gallagher, 2016).

### **3.3.3 From the Nexus to Several Nexuses**

Research on the nexus between OC and terrorism is rarely undertaken in comprehensive book-length studies (Shelley, 2014: 14). However, in a recent development, three professors have collaborated to edit *The Nexus Between Organized Crime and Terrorism: Types and Responses* (Paoli et al. 2022). The discussions presented in this book originated from a series of lectures in 2018, featuring twelve case studies and three comparative analyses. However, some chapters may be considered outdated due to the four-year period it took to complete the

book. Despite this limitation, the book makes a significant contribution to the literature on the crime-terror nexus.

Building on Makarenko's (2004) seminal yet simplified continuum concept, Paoli et al. (2022) introduced an innovative tripartite conceptualisation of the linkages between OC and terrorism. This model identifies three primary types of nexuses: (1) interaction, (2) transformation/imitation, and (3) similarities (see Figure 6). These categories range from no nexus to hybridity, offering a more nuanced perspective on crime-terror relationships.



*Figure 6: Three types of nexus (Paoli et al. 2022)*

The first type, interaction, assumes that both OC and terrorist actors are present in a specific context. More pronounced forms of this interaction—such as regular collaboration, alliances, or merging—typically require the simultaneous presence of both OC and terrorist organisations. However, this level of sustained interaction is relatively rare. The second type, transformation/imitation, does not require both types of actors to be present. Instead, groups may adapt tactics or structures from one another, either due to external influences or local contextual factors. In some cases, this transformation is deliberate, while in others, it is an unintended byproduct of shared environments. The third type, similarities, is the most loosely defined category. It refers to shared characteristics between OC and terrorist activities, which can emerge across different geographical and historical contexts without requiring co-presence. This broadens the understanding of the nexus, recognising that OC and terrorism may display overlapping methods and goals without direct interaction.

This novel framework is rigorously tested against real-world cases by both the editors and individual chapter authors. In the concluding chapter, the editors make a significant observation:

‘Far from being confronted with a single nexus, we observe a multiplicity of nexuses between different types of organized crime and terrorism, depending on the local manifestations of these two broad, multi-faceted and poorly defined phenomena as well as the links between them. The nexus usually varies from the occasional

exchange of products, such as weapons, money or forged identity documents, between an organized crime actor and a terrorist actor to the imitation of the other's activities and aims. On a far rarer basis, collaboration between the two sets of actors might also occur' (Paoli et al. 2022: 490-491).

While Paoli et al. (2022) do not provide a definitive definition of the crime-terror nexus, this citation is the closest they come to outlining it. Their core argument is that there is no single, universally applicable crime-terror nexus. Instead, there are multiple nexuses that vary depending on local conditions, actor motivations, and historical contexts. This perspective challenges earlier models, such as Makarenko's continuum, by rejecting the notion of a linear or universal relationship between OC and terrorism. While the concept of the crime-terror nexus remains valuable, Paoli et al. (2022) conclude that reality is far more nuanced than traditionally conceived, with a diverse range of nexuses emerging between different forms of OC and terrorism.

### **3.3.4 My Definition of the Crime-Terror Nexus**

During the review, it became evident that current literature lacks the level of precision necessary to establish clear identification of the crime-terror nexus (Paoli et al. 2022: 31). No single authority or definitive source provides a universally accepted definition of the crime-terror nexus (Wang, 2010; Hesterman, 2013). To navigate these conceptual complexities, this thesis proposes a working definition that not only facilitates discussion but also provides a foundation for research, allowing for its validity to be tested and refined within the prison context.

For the purposes of this discussion, the crime-terror nexus is defined as:

The spectrum of interactions between organised crime groups and terrorist groups, as well as individual criminals and terrorists. These interactions may involve collaboration, imitation, transformation, or convergence, varying in nature and intensity based on local contexts, geopolitical dynamics, and the specific characteristics of those involved.<sup>11</sup>

This definition aligns with the significant conceptual shift in recent years toward the new crime-terror nexus and individuals rather than groups (Rapoport, 2004; Basra et al. 2016; Gallagher, 2016, 2024; Ljubic et al. 2017). It considers previous literature while incorporating individuals with criminal backgrounds who transition into terrorism, even in the absence of a traditional organised criminal structure. Regarding the 'crime' aspect of the nexus, this thesis adopts a broader perspective, rather than limiting its scope exclusively to OC. The 'terror' aspect is

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<sup>11</sup> Researchers own definition.

defined in accordance with the definition of terrorism and terrorist actors provided in Section 4.2.

This working definition of the crime-terror nexus will be reviewed and refined within the prison context based on the research conducted in this study. This process will allow for a comprehensive examination of the crime-terror nexus within custodial settings, leading to the proposal of a new definition specific to prisons. In doing so, this thesis will demonstrate how the prison crime-terror nexus (PCTN) differs from *traditional* understandings of the crime-terror nexus.

### **3.4 Theoretical Debates and Influencing Factors**

Since the 1990s, scholars have debated the key drivers of the crime-terror nexus, yet challenges in data collection have limited both theoretical and empirical research. While early studies focused on financial necessity, recent research highlights a broader range of structural and environmental factors that facilitate these interactions. This section examines the main conditions that promote the nexus, providing insight into how and why these relationships develop.

#### **3.4.1 Globalisation**

The continuous wave of globalisation (the interconnected, transnational flow of businesses, individuals, information, and resources that often transcend political and state boundaries), occasionally denoted as 'deviant globalisation', has intensified the nexus by presenting multifarious opportunities for both criminals and terrorists (Gilman et al. 2013; Hesterman, 2013; Stevanović, 2021: 158). Globalisation has facilitated increased mobility and communication, granting smaller groups access to international markets, and made exchanges and collaborations among illegal actors easier (Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Makarenko, 2004; Schmid, 2018).

#### **3.4.2 Necessity**

The emergence of the crime-terror nexus was credited to the end of the Cold War, reduced state sponsorship, and increased international pressure on terrorism financing. Consequently, much of the theoretical exploration of the crime-terror nexus concerns the concept of economic necessities and incentives as the primary motivating factors (see Shelley et al. 2005; Schmid, 2005; Hausken and Gupta, 2015; Gallagher, 2019; Europol, 2022a). Naím (2005) further highlights how globalisation and the decline of state sponsorship forced terrorist groups to seek alternative funding through illicit markets, embedding them deeper into criminal economies. Similarly, Williams (2008; 2010) emphasises that necessity drives terrorist organisations to exploit existing criminal infrastructures, engaging in activities such as drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and smuggling to sustain their operations.



### **3.4.3 Opportunities**

Opportunity-based theories suggest that any crime-terror associations are shaped more by available opportunities and constraints than by individual economic imperatives (Shaw, 2019; Williams, 2002). As a result, some scholars argue that relationships between terrorist groups, particularly Islamist groups, and OCGs are largely opportunistic (Roberts, 2016). The concept of crime and opportunity in criminology has longstanding roots, dating back to Mayhew et al.'s 1976 publication *Crime as Opportunity*. Scholars such as Felson and Clarke (1998) have reinforced these theories, emphasising that criminal behaviour is primarily driven by opportunity. Kleemans and de Poot (2008) expanded on this by introducing the 'social opportunity structure,' which explains how organised criminals exploit profitable opportunities. Despite critiques by Clarke (1983) and van Dijk (1994), the prevailing consensus maintains that crime occurs largely due to the environmental conditions surrounding the offender (Felson and Clarke, 1998).

### **3.4.4 Weak, Failed, Corrupted and Criminalised States**

Leveraging an extensive dataset from the former Yugoslavia, Mincheva and Gurr (2013) constructed a comprehensive explanatory framework comprised of five significant factors that influence the dynamics of interactions between militants and criminals through comparative case studies. Of importance to this study, is the fourth factor of 'weak states, failed states, corrupted and criminalised states.' This factor concerns the importance of the structural features of the environment. Mincheva and Gurr developed a typology to categorise vulnerable states, ranging from those that are weak and failed to those that are corrupted or criminalised. When referring to weak and failed states, this typically encompasses nations characterised by weak border controls, low levels of state legitimacy, and limited economic and social services for their citizens (Williams, 2010; 41). State weakness, stemming from inadequate policing, can create an environment with low risks and abundant opportunities for criminals and terrorists, while rampant corruption and criminalisation can actively facilitate such collaborations (Berry et al. 2003; Mincheva and Gurr, 2013: 15).

Furthermore, authors such as Shelley and Picarelli (2002), Berry et al. (2002; 2003), Makarenko (2004) and Ibanez (2013) have discussed the crime-terror nexus according to diverse geographic idiosyncrasies. They suggest that the nexus between OC and terrorism is more common in weak states or countries with ongoing conflicts or in a state of chaos. States with armed conflict create ungoverned spaces that offer a hospitable environment for such groups. Makarenko (2004) has termed this the 'black hole' thesis—when failed or unstable states cultivate hybrid political-criminal gangs. Makarenko (2007) considers regional variations of the crime-terror nexus, stating that any interactions are determined by the level of stability

within the geographic region. Case studies, including Afghanistan and Algeria, have been used by scholars to evidence the significance of unstable conditions.

Interestingly, scholars such as Liebling (2015) and Hamm (2009; 2013) have drawn parallels between failed states and failing prisons, identifying common traits such as ineffective management. Liebling (2015) describes failed-state prisons as being paralysed by distrust, which erodes dynamic security and fosters anger, alienation, and heightened political charge. Likewise, Hamm (2009) contends that disordered and overcrowded prisons provide fertile ground for radicalisation and the emergence of underground networks. This suggests that the crime-terror nexus can emerge not only in failed states but also within failing prisons that exhibit similar characteristics.

Numerous scholars contend that states characterised by corruption and criminality, including Kosovo and North Korea, are also attractive to OCGs and terrorist groups (Ibanez, 2013; Mincheva and Gurr, 2013; Forest, 2022; Petrich, 2022). Specifically, Neumann (2013: 252) asserts that 'corruption is a gateway to crime that both facilitates the criminal activity of these fixers and facilitators and undermines good governance'. Ultimately, state corruption tends to foster a criminalised environment where illicit activities permeate all levels of government (Mincheva and Gurr, 2013: 19). The presence of extensive shadow economies, lenient financial regulations, and white-collar crime can offer a sanctuary for these groups, promoting the nexus, both in developed and developing nations (Shelley, 2014; Forest, 2022). Therefore, it can be argued that neither criminals nor terrorists 'fear ineffective and corrupt law enforcement regimes in conflict regions', which pose a threat to international order (Shelley, 2005: 101).

It is essential to acknowledge that some authors assert that the crime-terror nexus is not observable in many weak, corrupt states (Hehir, 2007; Hansen, 2011; Hübschle, 2011; Schmid, 2018). Specifically, some contend that the nexus struggles to thrive in truly failed states, as they often lack the necessary infrastructure for illicit networks to function effectively.<sup>12</sup> Menkhaus (2006) suggests that while weak governance may create opportunities, the nexus still requires a minimum level of transportation, banking, and communication infrastructure. Similarly, Shelley (2014: 3) argues in *Dirty Entanglements* that terrorist groups cannot execute sophisticated or costly attacks without financial backing and access to institutions in the developed world. Hansen (2011: 2–3) further asserts that 'weak state structures alone are clearly an insufficient explanation for the presence of terrorist

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<sup>12</sup> They argue that these actors face greater international CT scrutiny, a higher risk of getting involved in chaotic activities, fewer opportunities to blend in unnoticed due to a lack of foreign presence, and the possibility of being drawn into local disputes or domestic conflicts that distract from their main goals (Menkhaus, 2006; Piazza, 2008).

groups.’ This perspective challenges the assumption that state fragility alone fosters the crime-terror nexus.

Indeed, power operates and corrupts in both fragile and authoritarian states, albeit through different mechanisms. While weak states may provide permissive environments due to a lack of control, authoritarian and illiberal regimes—such as Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran—can actively enable the nexus through corruption and state crime. These states may cultivate OC and terrorism through strategic alliances, patronage networks, and covert financial dealings. For instance, Saudi Arabia has been linked to endemic bribery and the sponsorship of Wahhabism, Iran has provided direct support to Hezbollah and, more recently, Hamas; and Russia has fostered ties between the state and oligarchic criminal networks (Al Omran and Kerr, 2017; Markus, 2017; Mandaville, 2022). In these contexts, rather than collapsing into lawlessness, state structures themselves become tools for criminality, enabling OC and terrorism to flourish in a different but equally significant way. This broader perspective highlights that the crime-terror nexus is not solely a product of state weakness or failure. Instead, both fragile and authoritarian states can facilitate illicit networks—either through a lack of governance or through the deliberate manipulation of power structures for criminal and ideological ends.

### **3.4.5 Co-location**

Several studies have emphasised the significance of co-location for groups or individuals engaging with each other. In the broader field of criminology, the Brantingham’s (1981) identified specific locations, like a local McDonald’s restaurant or a rough bar as crime hotspots, highlighting the importance of geographical settings in understanding criminal behaviour (Felson, 2006). In the context of the crime-terror nexus, Shelley (2005) draws on Edwin Sutherland’s ‘differential association’ (1947) theory to propose that co-location in conflict regions, urban areas of developed countries and within prisons, facilitates interactions between terrorist and criminal groups, potentially leading to ‘shared behaviour and mutual learning’ (Shelley, 2005: 34). Asal et al. (2016: 20) applied this theory to the realm of inter-terrorist alliances, to suggest that ‘proximity to one another (co-location within the same country or region)’ constitutes a fundamental environmental condition promoting interaction and alliance formation (Forest, 2022). This concept is applicable to interactions between criminals and terrorists within prisons, where individuals are often incarcerated for extended periods and share a common adversary in the state (Shelley, 2014; Hesterman, 2013: 170). It can be argued that prisons provide an environment conducive to offender convergence (Felson, 2006: 9), fostering the development of criminal networks and laying the groundwork for unlawful activities (Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019: 264).

### **3.4.6 Socioeconomic Disadvantage**

Finally, scholars studying the new crime-terror nexus (discussed in Section 3.3.2) emphasise that widespread deprivation, poverty, and social marginalisation are the primary driving forces behind the growing overlap between urban criminals and terrorists (Basra et al. 2016). Expanding upon a strain theory approach, Ljujic et al. (2017) use secondary and open-access data to investigate socio-economic characteristics as a feature of the complex criminological (and psychological) infrastructure of the violent-crime nexus. They propose that a lack of education and employment (Newman, 2006) and a history of criminal activity, constitute the potential pool from which individuals involved in violent and terrorist activities may be recruited.

## **3.5 Key Challenges and Weaknesses**

Despite developments, opinions and responses to the crime-terror nexus have been inconsistent. While there is concern about any crime-terror interactions, some argue that its impact is relatively minor and does not justify special attention, as it may not be significantly different from other forms of terrorist activities. Some authors believe the crime-terror nexus is overly broad and exaggerated (Naylor, 2002; Boon, Lovelace and Huq, 2010; Hübschle, 2011; Ruggiero, 2020; Keen and Moiseienko, 2018), contending that its perceived prevalence overshadows its absence in many global areas (Dishman, 2001; Sanderson, 2004; Shelley, 2005; Omelichev and Markowitz, 2021a). While some critics find the nexus concept reductive, as it oversimplifies the complex diversity among violent non-state actors labelled as either terrorist organisations or OCGs (Keen and Moiseienko, 2018), this research argues that the crime-terror nexus scholarship performs a crucial role in highlighting the multifaceted and often symbiotic relationships among various non-state actors (Phillips and Kamen, 2014). Failing to encompass broader networking elements within the crime-terror nexus isolates the examination and analysis of each concept, whereas recognising these connections enables policymakers and researchers to develop more effective strategies for countering and preventing the activities of such groups (Shelley, 2014). However, this chapter will expand upon three shortcomings of the crime-terror nexus as identified in the literature review.

### **3.5.1 Profit vs. Ideology Dichotomy**

The main challenge of the crime-terror nexus is the 'profit vs. ideology' divide, preventing full convergence or complete symbiotic collaboration (Dishman, 2001; Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Sanderson, 2004; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007; Wang, 2010). Organised criminals prioritise financial gain, while terrorists are driven by political goals (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Hoffman, 2017). Terrorists seek publicity, while criminals avoid attention (Wang, 2010). Naylor (2002) uses a combination of plausible assumptions and empirical evidence to stress the fundamental differences in motivations and strategies between guerrilla movements and run-

of-the-mill criminals. This dichotomy led to a specialisation in OC or terrorism, with few experts addressing groups involved in both (Petrich, 2021), which resulted in a siloed approach in academic and policy discussions. This specialisation, while providing a clearer analytical framework, inadvertently created a blind spot where groups involved in both criminal and terrorist activities operated. Consequently, this nexus grew in the 1990s and early 21st century (Shelley, 2014).

Moreover, the distinction between political and economic motives is increasingly unclear, challenging the conventional classification that assigns economic motives to criminals and political motives to terrorists (Shelley, 2005; Hamm, 2007; Hesterman, 2013; Rossi, 2014). Subsequently, the crime-terror nexus fails to provide a satisfactory theoretical framework. Thus, drawing on Schmitt's (1986) understanding of politics and sovereignty, Rossi (2014) presents an alternative theoretical framework that shifts the focus away from a priori politics/economics distinction and identifies these actors as embodiments of 'illicit sovereignty' (2014: 313).

### **3.5.2 Empirical Gaps and Methodological Challenges**

The study of OC and terrorism faces significant methodological challenges due to the clandestine nature of these groups and the inherent difficulties in obtaining reliable data (Merari, 1991; Hobbs and Antonopoulos, 2014). Thus, the crime-terror literature is hindered by limited research and development, mainly due to the scarcity of empirical data, leading to methodological difficulties in studying interactions (Williams, 2002; von Maravic, 2012; Carrapico et al. 2016; Cheng, 2018). Academic research largely relies on anecdotal evidence, qualitative case studies or quantitative research on numerical data (Puttonen and Romiti, 2022), and most studies focus on specific phenomena (e.g., narco-terrorism) or limited geographical contexts (e.g., Balakrishnan, 2018; Sahgal and Zeuthen, 2020). Authors often revisit familiar examples without empirical analysis and rely primarily on conjecture rather than evidence (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2004: 5; Hübschle, 2011: 96). While some progress has been made, such as in the Netherlands, where law enforcement has facilitated quantitative research on OC (see Kleemans and De Poot, 2008), comparative studies remain scarce, limiting the development of typologies for both criminal and terrorist actors. Reflecting this challenge, most research adopts a case-study approach, and few attempts have been made to conduct comparative analyses between organised criminals and terrorist actors (Chocquet, 2003).

### **3.5.3 Conceptual Imprecision of the Nexus**

The terms OC and terrorism remain contentious and problematic due to their inherently dynamic and context-dependent nature, which allows for multiple interpretative frameworks

(Oberleitner, 2022). Over the decades, both concepts have been defined in numerous, often contradictory ways, reflecting their complexity and evolving manifestations. Consequently, many contributors to the crime-terror nexus debate avoid defining these key terms altogether, further heightening the ambiguity surrounding them. Therefore, accurately defining the concept of the 'crime-terror nexus' poses a significant challenge. This can lead to various interpretations and a lack of consensus about what the concept entails.

Furthermore, although the crime-terror nexus has become the principal term, numerous other partially overlapping terminologies and expressions have been employed to describe the phenomenon, including: 'links between transnational OC and terrorist crimes' (Schmid, 1996), 'links between transnational OC and international terrorism' (Shelley and Picarelli, 2005), 'transformation' and 'mutation' (Dishman, 2001), 'crime–terror continuum' (Makarenko, 2004), 'crime–terror interaction' (Shelley and Picarelli, 2005), 'dirty entanglements' (Shelley, 2014), 'crime–terror alliances' and 'unholy alliances' (Mincheva and Gurr, 2013), and 'any and all connections between terrorists and crime' (Mullins and Wither, 2016: 60). Schmid (2004) argues that some of these terms encompass a broad semantic range, underlining the importance of precise terminology. Thus, the current literature often lacks the degree of precision required, to effect clear identification (Paoli et al. 2022: 31).

The varied use of terminology across studies reflects their differing focal points but also highlights a degree of conceptual imprecision, as many terms are applied casually without clear definitions. This lack of rigor, complicates cross-study comparisons, making it difficult to determine whether researchers are addressing the same phenomena.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, as mentioned in Section 3.3.2, the lack of conceptual clarity has led to shifts in focus over time, with early debates emphasising relationships between OC and terrorist organisations, while more recent discussions centre on the recruitment of young petty criminals into Islamist terrorist cells (e.g. Basra et al. 2016). Consequently, there is a clear requirement to establish and present precise definitions for the crime-terror nexus and other related terms.

### **3.6 The Crime-Terror Nexus in Prisons**

A review of the literature identified that few scholars have written about the crime-terror nexus inside prison. Among the early contributors, Cuthbertson's 2004 article stands out, as he explored the role of prisons as unintended universities for terrorists whilst highlighting the often-neglected nexus between crime and terrorism. He emphasises that law enforcement face significant challenges in identifying and substantiating connections between crime and terrorism. Thus, terrorists are frequently convicted for unrelated criminal offences (Laqueur, 1999; Shelley, 2014; Gaub and Lisiecka, 2017; Basra and Neumann, 2019: 19). Given that

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<sup>13</sup> The researcher experienced this during the search and review of the literature on this subject matter.

these prisoners are operating under 'false identities' they are able to thrive inside prison and adeptly recruit, indoctrinate, and radicalise fellow inmates whilst unmonitored (Cuthbertson, 2004; Shelley, 2014: 140). Additionally, Cuthbertson (2004) argued that staff are hesitant to intervene in any radicalisation and recruitment because they do not want to disrupt the stability and order of the prison environment and often lack the necessary knowledge and understanding of Islamic cultures and languages.

### **3.6.1 Prisons as Sites of Convergence**

Prisons have been widely recognised as key environments where criminals and terrorists converge, creating opportunities for radicalisation, recruitment, and collaboration. Williams (2010) characterised prisons as 'dangerous spaces,' where OCG leaders continue their illicit operations and terrorists exploit the environment for recruitment. Similarly, Shelley (2014) argues that prisons serve as fertile ground for crime-terror interactions, exacerbated by corruption, weak governance, and modern communication technologies such as mobile phones and the internet. These factors contribute to an environment in which criminals and extremists form alliances that enhance their operational capabilities (Shelley, 2014; Gaub and Lisiecka, 2017).

The concept of the *new* crime-terror nexus was introduced by Basra et al. (2016), highlighting the convergence of social networks, shared environments, and overlapping recruitment pools between criminals and terrorists. Their research gives emphasis to the vulnerability of prisons, where extremists often encounter 'angry young men' (Basra et al. 2016: 29) who may be especially susceptible to cognitive openings and radicalisation (Mullins and Wither, 2016; Schmid, 2018). Prisons provide an environment in which disillusioned individuals seek identity, camaraderie, or protection—factors that extremists exploit for recruitment (Neumann, 2010). Recruitment efforts in prisons often target young, disenfranchised individuals with prior criminal involvement, using ideological narratives that justify political violence (Hamm, 2013; Basra et al. 2016). This risk is heightened in isolated and hostile prison environments, where religious and ethnic divisions can further facilitate networking and collaboration. If extremists are not entirely segregated, they may capitalise on these conditions to build alliances and strengthen underground networks (Basra et al. 2016).

Further reinforcing this view, Marcus (2022) discussed the role of charismatic extremist leaders, who naturally command authority and credibility among inmates. This dynamic benefits extremists by granting them access to vulnerable recruits, operational contacts, and illicit resources. Basra and Neumann (2019) reaffirmed the crucial role of prisons in fostering crime-terror interactions through their European-wide study, which produced 28 reports for EU member states. They found that prisons function as microcosms of the crime-terror nexus,

encompassing radicalisation, recruitment, networking, and, in some cases, even attack planning (also see Duquet and Goris, 2018).

Kupatadze and Argomaniz (2019) built on Basra et al.'s (2016) work by introducing the concepts of 'overlapping ecosystems' and 'melting pots,' which describe the shared recruitment bases for criminals and terrorists. They suggested applying Felson's (2006) theory of 'offender convergence settings'—places such as local neighbourhoods, sports clubs, and, most notably, prisons—where individuals interact, share skills, and collaborate. As Basra et al. (2016: 33) wrote: 'prisons are the place where the two milieus are at their closest'. In these settings, criminal expertise is transferred to terrorists, enhancing their capabilities, while terrorists provide ideological justification for criminal activity.

### **3.6.2 Skills Transfer and Networking**

Prisons provide an environment where criminal and extremist networks can intersect, fostering collaboration and skill-sharing. Shelley (2014) argues that the intermingling of criminals and extremists within prison has contributed to the rise of a more potent, well-financed, and sophisticated form of terrorism. The exchange of tactical expertise—including counter-surveillance techniques, smuggling methods, and combat training—can enhance the operational effectiveness of terrorist actors post-release.

Additionally, Picarelli (2012), Basra et al (2016), Neumann and De Frias (2017) and Kupatadze and Argomaniz (2019) identified functional confluence as a key process within offender convergence settings, whereby criminals and terrorists engage in skill-sharing, social learning, and service exchange. In particular, Basra et al. (2016: 35) identified this potential skills transfer as 'one of the most disturbing aspects of the new crime-terror nexus'. They argue that individuals with criminal pasts can provide value for terrorist groups. This mutual benefit is particularly evident in prisons, where extremists can leverage the knowledge and resources of criminal counterparts, granting them access to forged documents, weapons, and illicit financial networks. Simultaneously, criminals may adopt extremist ideologies to justify their actions or gain protection within the prison hierarchy. This dynamic was evident in the case of Chérif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly, who first met in Fleury-Mérogis prison, where they were mentored by al-Qaeda recruiter Djamel Beghal, eventually leading to their role in the 2015 Paris attacks (Chrisafis, 2015).



### 3.6.3 Tackling the Crime-Terror Nexus in Prison

Regarding literature on tackling the crime-terror nexus, numerous works offer policy guidance and strategies.<sup>14</sup> However, there is an evident paucity of literature, especially empirical studies, concerning how to mitigate the risk of the crime-terror nexus within prisons. Several reports discuss crime-terror nexus trends and make recommendations (e.g., Makarenko, 2012; Europol, 2022a) but none properly explore the phenomenon in the prison environment.

Government publications issued by HMPPS and the Home Office, primarily examine radicalisation as a form of crime-terror nexus and do not investigate other aspects such as skills transfer and Prislam (e.g., Hall, 2022). For instance, Acheson (2016) conducted a review of Islamist extremism within the prison, probation, and youth justice systems commissioned by the then, Justice Secretary, Michael Gove. The review revealed that Islamist extremism is a growing concern in prisons, necessitating a comprehensive and co-ordinated strategy for monitoring and countering it. The recommendations included providing appropriate training for staff, with a specific focus on distinguishing between religious and cultural traditions, implementing stricter vetting processes for prison chaplains, and addressing the availability and sources of extremist literature (also see Howcroft, 2017). Following the report, a separation centre was established at HMP Frankland, marking the first implementation of the UK government's policy to segregate highly subversive terrorist prisoners who actively attempt to radicalise fellow inmates (MoJ, 2016).

Furthermore, the review of literature uncovered two studies on the crime-terror nexus within prisons, which offer recommendations. Basra et al. (2016) proposed five recommendations for making prisons safer from the threats posed by the *new* crime-terror nexus. These include:

1. Maintaining adequate prison staffing levels and reducing overcrowding;
2. Providing staff with training on radicalisation and terrorism;
3. Assigning prison security officers to liaise with security agencies;
4. Having mainstream prison imams; and
5. Ensuring probation services receive adequate resources for effectively reintegrating potentially radicalised criminals.

They also provided recommendations on re-thinking radicalisation, mapping the crime-terror nexus, targeting financing and improving information sharing. While Basra et al.'s (2016)

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<sup>14</sup> See Makarenko, 2007; Rollins et al. 2010; Oliveira, 2014; Schofield, 2015; Sullivan, 2015; Vasileva and Gotchev, 2016; Beesley, 2017; Reitano et al. 2017; Keen and Moiseienko, 2018; Matyasik, 2021; Paoli et al. 2022.

recommendations are well-considered, their reliance on open-source data (and interviews) may limit the study's comprehensiveness, as it excludes classified intelligence and first-hand operational insights. Additionally, the broad recommendations do not fully account for variations in prison systems, security categorisations, or country-specific CT strategies, potentially reducing their applicability across different contexts.

In 2019, the Counter Extremism Project, in collaboration with the European Policy Centre, investigated the relationship between criminality and terrorism, particularly within prison (Acheson and Paul, 2019). Experts conducted independent assessments of pressing issues in ten European countries and proposed a set of recommendations for governments and institutions. Their findings highlighted the significance of prisons as both catalysts for jihadist radicalisation and facilitators of connections between criminals and terrorists. They emphasised the growing need for a coordinated response from all agencies, stressing the importance of enhanced cooperation and robust actions guided by the rule of law (Acheson and Paul, 2019: 12-13). The chapter focusing on the UK, drew attention to the use of separation centres, challenges related to de-radicalisation and disengagement, and the role of the UK's CT strategy (CONTEST).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has critically examined the literature on the crime-terror nexus, highlighting key debates, conceptual ambiguities, and methodological limitations. While scholars widely recognise that (organised) crime and terrorism interact, the nature and extent of these relationships remain contested. Initial literature on the nexus demonstrates that these interactions exist along a spectrum, from tactical cooperation to full organisational convergence, yet definitional inconsistencies hinder comparative analysis (Paoli et al. 2022). Additionally, much of the research relies on case studies and media reports (Badurdeen, 2023), creating gaps in empirical data that limit broader theoretical development.

One emerging shift is the focus on individual-level interactions rather than structured group alliances. Basra et al. (2016) introduced the concept of the new crime-terror nexus, which suggests that European jihadists with criminal backgrounds are increasingly recruited from urban petty crime environments. This perspective aligns with broader criminological frameworks, such as Felson's (2006) offender convergence settings, which emphasise the role of shared environments—particularly prisons—in fostering criminal-terrorist interactions. However, the literature remains fragmented in assessing the factors influencing the crime-terror nexus in prison.

Despite the growing interest in the crime-terror nexus, there remains a marked scarcity of qualitative and quantitative studies focused on understanding and tackling this phenomenon

within prison. The limited body of literature addressing the crime-terror nexus in prison has not exclusively concentrated on this phenomenon but has integrated it into broader studies on the nexus. This scarcity is partially attributed to the methodological complexities discussed earlier, coupled with the inherent challenges of conducting research within prisons (Jewkes and Wright, 2016). Consequently, the existence, character, and scale of potentially detrimental crime-terror interactions within prison remain unclear and unquantified. The next chapter builds upon these discussions by considering literature on the broader dynamics of crime and terrorism in prison.

## **Chapter 4 CRIME AND TERRORISM IN PRISONS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to examine the broader dynamics of crime and terrorism within prison environments. A list of keywords and synonyms was compiled (refer to Table 4) and searched across a variety of sources. An initial chronological review provided insights into the evolution of prison research, followed by an analysis of key studies addressing subculture, governance, crime and terrorism within prison. To ensure academic rigor, careful attention was given to the authorship of selected works, enabling a critical evaluation of their credibility, methodological approach, and contribution to the field. Given the interdisciplinary nature of prison research, literature spanning penology, criminology, sociology, and terrorism studies was incorporated. The selection process prioritised contemporary scholarship while also considering seminal works (i.e. Sykes, 1958) that have shaped theoretical perspectives on crime and terrorism in prison.

This chapter begins by outlining definitions of key terms such as organised crime (OC) and terrorism. Next, crime in prison, such as the illicit economy, corruption and extra-legal governance is discussed. Finally, the literature on terrorism in prison is considered with a particular emphasis on radicalisation. By synthesising the existing literature, this chapter provides a contextual foundation for understanding crime and terrorism in prison.

### **4.2 Definitions**

Prior to the 1990s, criminological research on OC in Europe was limited, and terrorism remained relatively under-explored until the post-9/11 era. Both phenomena are inherently complex, context-dependent, and constantly evolving, making precise definitions and analysis particularly challenging (Phillips and Kamen, 2014). This difficulty is further compounded by fragmented or outdated understandings of their motivations, methods, and structures, blurring the distinctions between OC and terrorism (Oberleitner, 2022: 205).

#### **4.2.1 Organised Crime**

The growing interest in OC, during the 1990s, was primarily influenced by extensive research on the Italian mafia since the early 1970s (see Hess, 1973; Blok, 1975; Arlacchi, 1988; Gambetta, 1992). Scholars focusing on OC research emerged, initially thriving in Europe (see Fijnaut et al. 1998; Fijnaut and Paoli, 2004; Kleemans and De Poot, 2008; Hobbs, 2013) and expanding to incorporate global perspectives (see Wang, 2017). Interestingly, the expansion of academic research on OC has largely neglected its presence and dynamics within the prison system (Gooch and Treadwell, 2024: 2).

The concept of OC and its official definition have been the subject of extensive debate amongst academic circles, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies (Crocker et al. 2017). This debate, as exemplified by von Lampe's (2016a) compilation of nearly 200 distinct definitions from governments, international bodies, and scholars worldwide, underscores the profound divergence of opinions regarding what constitutes OC. As Sergi (2016) observes, the meaning and focus of this term vary significantly depending on who defines it and the purpose behind its definition. Some have even proposed that the concept is so inherently ambiguous that it should be discarded (Crocker et al. 2017). Despite this debate, OC continues to be a term frequently invoked, particularly by politicians, professionals, and law enforcement officials.

A review of the literature in the UK highlights that OC typically involves loosely connected networks of individuals with diverse skills and resources. These networks often lack structural stability or hierarchical organisation, mainly focusing on providing illicit goods and services to underground markets (Paoli, 2002). While there is no uniform group that can be easily labelled as 'organised' (Hobbs, 2013), research reveals common traits among those involved, including maturity, engagement in serious criminal activities, a lengthy criminal history and significant involvement of social connections (i.e. family, friends, and professional relationships) in the criminal activities (Kleemans and van Koppen, 2020).

In 2023, the UK Government released its *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2023 to 2028*, outlining its approach to tackling the full spectrum of serious and organised crime (SOC) threats (HM Government, 2023c). Within the strategy, a revised definition of SOC was introduced. Interestingly, this new definition differs slightly from the 2013 version. In 2013, the Government defined OC as:

'Serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain' (HM Government, 2013: 14).

However, the 2023 definition removes the emphasis on the need for individuals to work together, instead stating that SOC can involve individuals planning, coordinating, and committing serious offences *on their own*. This definitional shift is particularly relevant to this thesis, as it reflects a broader conceptual move toward examining the crime-terror nexus through the actions of individuals rather than groups (see Basra et al. 2016). The 2023 definition aligns with trends in criminology and CT, which increasingly prioritise individual roles in OC and terrorism over a sole focus on OCGs. Therefore, this thesis adopts the 2023 definition of SOC for this study, which is:

‘Individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks’ (HM Government, 2023c: 9).

The main categories of offences covered by this definition include:

‘Child sexual exploitation and abuse; illegal drugs; illegal firearms; fraud; money laundering and other economic crimes; bribery and other forms of corruption; organised immigration crime; modern slavery and human trafficking; and cybercrime (HM Government, 2023c: 9).

While this 2023 definition specifically relates to *serious and organised crime*, it remains highly relevant for understanding OC more broadly. The distinction between SOC and OC is primarily one of severity, yet the fundamental characteristics of organisation, coordination, and criminal intent remain applicable to both. The adoption of this definition is not only due to its broad acceptance within the law enforcement community, but also because it reflects the updated understanding of SOC that includes individuals. The updated definition offers a more inclusive framework that accounts for the evolving nature of crime, particularly the rise of lone actors in the context of both OC and terrorism (see Gallagher [2024] on Identity Terrorism). By aligning this study with the 2023 definition, it ensures consistency and coherence across the strategic frameworks guiding law enforcement agencies in England and Wales, while also addressing the significant shift towards considering individuals as key players in the landscape of SOC.

#### **4.2.2 Terrorism**

The term terrorism was coined during the Reign of Terror, a period of extreme violence during the French Revolution. Despite the brutality of this era (Matusitz, 2012), criminology paid limited attention to terrorism throughout the twentieth century (Paoli et al. 2022), with political scientists (see Wilkinson, 1974; Crenshaw, 1981) and later specialists in terrorism studies taking the lead (see Schmid, 2011; Hoffman, 2017). The field gained momentum after the events of 9/11, driven in part by increased government funding (LaFree et al. 2015). Research quality also improved, marked by greater collaboration, more sophisticated statistical analysis, and a gradual shift away from over-reliance on literature reviews (Silke, 2009; Schuurman, 2020). The community of terrorism researchers has grown significantly in the last two decades (Phillips, 2021), resulting in a substantial increase in research output and quality (Silke and Schmidt-Petersen, 2017). However, some works still exhibit shortcomings in methodology, conceptual clarity, and potential political bias (Silke et al. 2023).

As there is no international consensus on the definition of terrorism (Silke, 2001; Schmid, 2004b; Saul, 2008; Matusitz, 2012), the term presents conceptual challenges, making it

difficult to establish a universally accepted classification. Many countries have developed their own definitions of terrorism, often based on the presence or absence of domestic terrorism (Schmid, 2023: 17). One common thread in defining terrorism is violence or the threat of violence (Lacquer, 1999; Schmid and Jongman, 2005). However, scholarly research has identified more than 200 distinct definitions of terrorism, with around 90 of them being regularly used by governments and institutions worldwide (Simon, 1994). Numerous scholars have made efforts to define terrorism (see Laqueur, 1987; Hoffman, 2006; Saul, 2006). Schmid and Jongman (2005) researched this subject for many years, and even though they provided a comprehensive definition, it encountered difficulties in garnering broad acceptance. The challenges in defining terrorism are not limited to academia and have even led to public disputes among North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) leaders (Rose, 2019).

Defining terrorism presents a challenge primarily because a significant portion of terrorism research relies on secondary sources (Schmid and Jongman, 2005). There has been a noticeable absence of direct access to individuals who have first-hand experience of the phenomenon (Silke, 2001). This limitation is further compounded by restricted access to information beyond open source. Additionally, the recent attacks carried out by Axel Rudakubana<sup>15</sup> and Ali Sonboly,<sup>16</sup> which exemplify 'Identity Terrorism' (Gallagher, 2024),

Following the 2024 Southport attack, the UK Government is evaluating potential policy improvements and operational lessons in response to this serious violent offence, which, while non-TACT, had a Prevent footprint (HM Government, 2025). This has sparked debate over whether the definition of terrorism should be expanded to include individuals who commit mass murder and whether such acts constitute a national security threat. Most recently, in March 2025, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Jonathan Hall KC (King's Council), proposed a new offence to cover lone individuals planning non-terrorist mass killings, which would be similar to the existing offence of preparing an act of terrorism (Sandford, 2025). However, he cautioned against expanding or altering the definition of terrorism, warning that doing so could lead to the prosecution of individuals who, by no reasonable interpretation, should be classified as terrorists (Sandford, 2025). This ongoing debate is further complicated by President Donald Trump's bid to designate criminal gangs, such as Mexican cartels, as 'foreign terrorists', highlighting the broader challenge of establishing a clear and universally accepted definition of terrorism.

However, for this thesis, the UK definition from the Terrorism Act 2000, Section 1 has been used. The UK Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) summarise this as:

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<sup>15</sup> Axel Rudakubana is the Southport attacker who killed three children in 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Sonboly is a teenage gunman who killed nine people in Munich in 2016.

'Terrorism is the use or threat of action, both in and outside of the UK, designed to influence any international government organisation or to intimidate the public. It must also be for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause' (Crown Prosecution Service, 2020).

Using this definition was a pragmatic and contextually appropriate decision. By adopting this approach, the study aligns with the specific legal and operational framework governing terrorism in the country, offering the potential for the research to provide valuable insights for UK Law Enforcement Agencies and HMPPS.

Additionally, this definition is significant as it does not require perpetrators to be affiliated to a specific terrorist group for an act to be classified as terrorism. The Act does not define 'political, religious, racial, or ideological cause,' nor does it restrict ideological motivations to those associated with proscribed organisations. It also does not necessitate an entrenched belief in the ideology or cause behind a TACT (Terrorism Act 2000) offence (HM Government, 2025). Some individuals commit such offences with limited understanding of the ideology they claim to support. Consequently, those with unclear, mixed, or unstable ideological motivations—yet displaying connections to extremism, terrorism, or mass violence—are considered for Prevent intervention alongside those with more consistent ideological beliefs. This broad and flexible approach allows the criminal justice system to account for self-initiated and lone-actor terrorists.

#### **4.2.3 Terrorists**

The search for a clear psychological 'terrorist profile' dating back to the 1970s, has yielded unsatisfactory results (Russell and Miller, 1977; Hudson, 2002). Instead, there are diverse pathways to becoming 'violent extremists' or 'terrorists', terms used interchangeably but undifferentiated (Schmid, 2021: ix). Involvement in terrorism takes on various forms, including offering services such as providing safe havens and expert counsel to terrorist groups (Schmid, 2017: 9). Additionally, terrorists often engage in other criminal activities (Oberleitner, 2022: 185). Some act as 'lone actors' or 'self-initiated terrorists' and others are affiliated to terrorist groups (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017; Europol, 2022a).

In this thesis, a terrorist is an individual either committing an act of terrorism (as defined above) without a conviction or a TACT offender: a person convicted under the Terrorism Acts, or an offence found to be terrorism-connected under the CT Act 2008 (Hall, 2022 [see Section 5.3.1.2 for a novel view of the actor contributing to the 'terror' dimension of the crime-terror nexus]). A terrorist encompasses various ideologies, including Extreme Right-Wing and Far Right. Discussed in more depth below, this thesis focuses primarily on Islamist terrorism rather than other ideological forms of terrorism. This focus emerged organically during the research



process. Interviewees predominantly spoke about Islamist terrorism, reflecting its prominence in their professional experiences and the current threat landscape in the UK. This focus emerged without interviewer prompting, with only a few interviewees mentioning other forms of terrorism, such as far-right extremism. While this focus is justifiable given the current threat from Islamist terrorism (HM Government, 2023a: 9), it is essential to recognise that it may indicate a potential 'blind spot' for practitioners.

### 4.3 Prisons

In the late 18th century, influential figures like Jeremy Bentham and John Howard emerged, discussing crime and punishment. The idea of rehabilitating individuals to restore their reputation, proposed by Garland (1985), gained traction, and the notion of using prisons to deter criminal behaviour became appealing. The belief that prisons could transform individuals into law-abiding citizens and reduce crime justified increased imprisonment (Coyle, 2005). This emphasis on punishment, penal institutions, and their justifications is known as 'penology' (Sharma, 1998; Scott, 2008). Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) is a foundational work in this field (Valverde, 2017). Early academic accounts include Reimer's (1937) exploration of prison life through three months of participant observation, revealing prisoner leaders' influence on the prison environment, and Clemmer's (1958) initial systematic study of prison surroundings and inmate social groups.

Today, imprisonment is primarily characterised by the specific deprivation of liberty (Sykes, 1958; Coyle, 2005). Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that conditions in certain prisons remain far from acceptable (Coyle, 2016). These challenging living conditions, which encompass ill-treatment by a minority of staff, restricted routines, overcrowding, and the persistent presence of violence, can arguably be perceived as supplementary forms of punishment due to their degrading and inhumane nature (Deakin and Spencer, 2003; Bryans, 2005; Edgar et al. 2011; MacDonald, 2018). Existing literature also suggests that imprisonment may inadvertently lead to adverse outcomes and have a detrimental impact on many prisoners (Fazel, 2016; O'Donnell, 2016). Thus, an individual's experience of prison tends to be linked with heightened likelihood of future offending (Hannah et al. 2008; LeBel and Maruna, 2012) because criminal behaviour is not solely intrinsic but is significantly influenced by social and institutional factors (Zimbardo, 2007). Every prisoner, except for the very few serving life sentences, will eventually re-join society, carrying the experiences gained during their time in prison. Neglecting to provide any form of rehabilitation or support to imprisoned individuals often results in them leaving prison more marginalised and with a stronger commitment to criminal activities than when they first arrived in prison (Matthews and Francis, 1996: 3; Soering, 2004; Bryans, 2005; Lessing, 2017). Extensive research, dating back to the 1960s, has demonstrated that even typically law-abiding individuals can, under

certain circumstances, be driven to engage in hostile and violent behaviours when placed in a challenging or detrimental environment (Zimbardo, 2007).

Prisons have shifted away from Foucault's envisioned model of *Discipline and Punish* (1977) that characterised modern societies. They are no longer places of stringent supervision (Van der Laan, 2012). Instead of serving as reformatory institutions dedicated to control and the 'inmate social system' (Sykes, 1958), prisons are now seen as potential breeding grounds for criminal activity and violence and significant hubs for interactions between crime and terrorism (Cuthbertson, 2004; Williams, 2010: 45; Shelley, 2014; Haut, 2015; Gaub and Lisiecka, 2017). Additionally, the entrenched illicit drugs economy within prisons has become so rampant that it adversely affects control, discipline, incidents of violence, bullying, and staff morale (Atherton and Lloyd, 1995; Bond et al. 1995; Walker, 1995; Crewe, 2005). Therefore, meaningful rehabilitation is unlikely to occur in perilous prisons (South, 2023; Acheson, 2024), as individuals inside are primarily preoccupied with their own survival and displaying masculinity (Sturt and Gooch, 2021).

#### **4.4 Crime in Prison**

Imprisonment has evolved as the prevailing utilitarian approach to punishment (Zimring and Hawkins, 1995; Blackburn et al. 2014). The police and criminal justice system aim to use prisons as a tool for disruption—temporarily detaining offenders to interrupt their engagement in criminal activities (Hucklesby and Wahidin, 2013). Some argue that specific intervention programmes can reduce recidivism, even among the most entrenched offenders (Cullen et al. 1996; Gendreau 1996; Raynor and Robinson, 2005; Robinson, 2008). However, for prisons to function as spaces of rehabilitation, they must first ensure safety, security, and decency (Treadwell et al. 2019).

The prevalence of crime within prisons remains a critical and ongoing challenge (Acheson, 2024). Crime does not cease at the prison gates; rather, it adapts to the unique conditions of imprisonment. The Criminal Law continues to apply within prison establishments, meaning that offences commonly committed in the community—such as murder, assault, theft, and robbery—can and do occur within the prison environment. However, prisons also have a distinct set of offences specific to their environment which include the possession of psychoactive substances, mobile phones, and tobacco, as well as the smuggling of prohibited items into prison (Crown Prosecution Service, 2023). Furthermore, The Prison Act 1952 and Prison Rules 1999 outline additional prison-specific violations, such as disobeying lawful orders, failing drug tests, and possessing unauthorised items.

#### **4.4.1 The Illicit Drugs Economy**

Prisons serve as highly lucrative marketplaces, where both legal and illicit commodities are traded (Crewe, 2005b; Penfold et al. 2005; Gooch and Treadwell, 2015; 2020; Gooch, 2022). The restrictive nature of prison life makes illicit goods particularly valuable due to their limited availability. This scarcity does not diminish prisoners' consumerist desires but instead heightens the demand for contraband, as material possessions signify status, power, and influence. Within this subterranean economy, drugs represent one of the most profitable and sought-after contraband items (Crewe, 2005b). The profitability of the prison drug economy cannot be overstated. Illicit substances can command prices three to four times higher than their street value (Crewe, 2005b: 465), making drug dealing a highly lucrative enterprise. Despite the controlled environment of prisons, the illicit drugs economy thrives, mirroring consumer-driven patterns found in the outside world as it becomes a source of profit, power, and exploitation (Munson et al. 1973; Crewe, 2016; Gooch, 2022: 206). Chambers (2010) found that around 30% of inmates reported using cannabis, with over one-fifth using heroin and one-tenth using cocaine while imprisoned. Crewe (2005b) further highlights that both inmates and staff regarded drug use and distribution as routine aspects of prison life, reinforcing the notion that drug economies are deeply embedded in the prison experience.

The persistence of drugs within prisons has been central to debates surrounding inmate behaviour. Functionalist (deprivation) theories (Sykes, 1958) suggest that the deprivations of imprisonment, such as the lack of autonomy, goods, and services, drive prisoners to seek alternative means of self-medication and coping, including drug use. By contrast, importation theories (Irwin and Cressey, 1962) argue that prisoners bring pre-existing criminal behaviours with them into custody. Irwin (1970) found that prisoners with a history of drug use and dealing before imprisonment adapted differently to prison life, often continuing their criminality behind bars.

Significantly, entrepreneurially minded individuals often take advantage of the lucrative drugs economy by continuing their criminality inside prison (Wheatly, 2016; Gooch and Treadwell, 2019; Treadwell et al. 2019). Crewe's (2006) interviews with imprisoned drug dealers revealed that many sought to preserve a lifestyle of relative comfort and social standing, reminiscent of their pre-prison existence. Thus, the illicit drugs economy extends beyond mere financial gain; it also carries connotations of status and influence for those who benefit the most (Crewe, 2005b). While traditional prison hierarchies have revolved around factors such as physical prowess, personality and offence (Sykes and Messinger, 1960; 1970; Clemmer, 1958; Winfree et al. 2002), the drug trade has also become a key determinant of power and influence within the inmate social structure. Access to contraband—particularly drugs—can reinforce existing hierarchies within prison, where those with the most access to illicit markets hold considerable

influence over the inmate population. Prisoners who gain the greatest advantages from the illicit economy not only enjoy a comfortable lifestyle but also overtly demonstrate their masculine qualities to others, thus advancing within the prison hierarchy (Wheatly, 2016; Gooch and Treadwell, 2019: 59).

Notably, this influence manifests when prisoners are encouraged to consume drugs, thereby exposing their vulnerabilities, which are then exploited by others for financial profit (Crewe, 2005b; Wheatley, 2016). The trade in contraband fuels coercion, intimidation, and violence, particularly when debts accumulate, and payments are not made on time (Edgar et al. 2003). Gooch and Treadwell (2019) describe a historical practice of lending and borrowing at exorbitant interest rates in prison, exemplified by inmates loaning their belongings with the agreement of repayment at twice the initial value, doubling each week until the debt is cleared. The consequences of drug-related debts can be severe, often resulting in physical violence, threats, or forced participation in further criminal activity. Additionally, violence is frequently used to punish informants ('grassing') and maintain control over illicit operations (Treadwell et al. 2019).

It is important to recognise that crime in prison is not a fixed or universal experience, so the dynamics of the illicit drug economy vary across different types of institutions. Likewise, individual prisoners engage in the illicit economy for varied reasons, whether for financial gain, status, survival, or addiction. While prison environments are intended to be secure and regulated, the persistence of a thriving illicit economy continues to challenge institutional control, rehabilitation efforts, and overall prison safety (Gooch and Treadwell, 2015).

#### **4.4.2 Illicit Mobile Phones**

Using modern communication methods, criminals and terrorists leverage the internet for rapid coordination on a global scale, with the aim of maintaining secrecy and evading surveillance (Shelley, 2014). As an illustration, the EncroChat messaging service, known as the 'Crime Chat Network', employed specialised software on Android devices, enabling users to communicate discreetly with others via unique identifiers or 'handles' (Griffiths and Jackson, 2022: 223). According to Europol, 'early in 2020, EncroChat had emerged as a major provider of encrypted digital communication, with a very high share of users presumably engaged in criminal activity' (Europol, 2022b: para 6). Shelley et al. (2005) outline how modern communication technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, and satellite communications have allowed criminals and terrorists to conduct their activities globally, in a relatively secure manner.

The body of literature on mobile phones in prison is even more limited than research on prison crime more broadly. In a governmental study, Ellison et al. (2018) examined the use of mobile

phones in prisons using data from interviews with Heads of Security and prisoners, as well as surveys and content analysis. Their research explored the factors driving demand for mobile phones in custody and the types of prisoners most likely to possess them. They concluded that mobile phones had become a widespread feature of prison life and were frequently used for criminal activities, particularly drug dealing. Additionally, their findings highlighted the exploitation of weaker prisoners, who were often coerced into acting as stewards for phones controlled by more dominant inmates (Ellison et al. 2018: 42). However, the study also acknowledged various other rationales for prisoners seeking access to mobile phones.

In their 2019 study on crime in prisons, funded by the four Police and Crime Commissioners in the Midlands, Treadwell et al. (2019) examined the use of illicit mobile phones. They found that mobile phones are widely used in prisons for both personal and criminal purposes, including drug transactions and maintaining family contact. While some prisoners are coerced into holding phones for others, prison staff remain sceptical of claims that phones are primarily used for non-criminal purposes. Treadwell et al. (2019: 21–22) found that both police and prison staff remain frustrated by the continued failure to control mobile phone access in prisons. While technological solutions have been effective in other countries, their implementation within England and Wales has been hindered by a lack of political will and investment. Nevertheless, the UK government, in June 2019, characterised the extensive use of illicit mobile phones as ‘one of the most significant threats facing our prisons’ (Buckland, 2019: para 1).

Similarly, the possession of illicit mobile phones, SIM cards, and other media has facilitated the spread of extremist ideologies, as seen in the 2020 attack on a prison officer at HMP Whitemoor. These devices played a role in enabling the violent acts, and if circumstances had allowed, the illicit phone could have been used to broadcast the officer’s killing (Hall, 2022: 15; Acheson, 2024: 124). For instance, inmates have also used phones to manage drug trafficking and orchestrate violent acts against rivals (HM Government, 2018: 50). Additionally, an Al Qaeda supporter used a mobile phone to oversee the creation of an extremist website (Yaacoub, 2018: 83). Gooch and Treadwell (2021) note that digital technology allows inmates to run criminal operations from their cells, further entrenching OC within prisons (Acheson, 2024). Furthermore, the trafficking of mobile phones into prisons fuels corruption, bolsters the illicit economy, and intensifies issues such as debt and violence (Sturt and Gooch, 2021).

#### **4.4.3 Corruption**

Corruption can weaken a state's control over its borders and its monopoly on violence (McCarthy, 1984). A public office-centred definition characterises corruption as a breach of organisational norms by a public employee seeking personal gain (Heidenheimer, 1970;

Sherman, 1974; Goldstein, 1977; Barker, 1977; Kleinig, 1996). However, academic exploration of *prison* corruption remains limited (Goldsmith et al. 2016; Barrington et al. 2019; Goldsmith, 2022).

Prison corruption is not clear-cut (Treadwell et al. 2019: 25) and can take various forms: for example, staff can actively assist prisoners in perpetuating their criminal activities (van der Laan, 2012: 141). This assistance may involve actions such as smuggling contraband into the prison or granting prisoners unauthorised privileges (Chambers, 2010; Barrington et al. 2019). Certain prison officers may choose to turn a blind eye to criminal activities, as it can lead to a quieter work environment or personal gain through corrupt payments (Goldsmith, 2022: 155).

As a former head of the Corruption Prevention Unit and a Prison Governor, Podmore (2012) devotes an entire chapter to the issue of corruption in prison, identifying key problems, proposing solutions, and arguing that the prison service is in denial about the extent of drug use, illicit mobile phones, and staff corruption. He contends that staff corruption is often overlooked, not by accident but by deliberate policy, as authorities are unwilling to acknowledge the problem. In his later work, Podmore (2015) provides a valuable perspective on corrupt practices, referencing Black's Law Dictionary (Garner, 2004), which classifies corruption into misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance (also see McCarthy, 1984). He concludes that the first step in addressing prison corruption is to recognise the problem, not as a condemnation or in response to a crisis, but as an essential acknowledgment of the system's vulnerabilities and a sincere effort to manage them effectively and professionally (Podmore, 2015: para 10).

Furthermore, a study by Transparency International (Macaulay, 2011) using desk-based research and interviews, claims that corruption in prisons must be regarded as a significant risk. Two broad categories of prison corruption were clearly defined: manipulation (placing corrupt individuals directly within the prison service) and implantation (threats; intimidation; inappropriate relationships; staff dissatisfaction). Whereas the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2017) classify four types of corruption in prisons: bribery, abuse of function, trading in influence, embezzlement and misappropriation.

Moreover, Goldsmith et al. (2016) discuss the categories of inappropriate relationships, trafficking, assaults, use of force and control, misuse of prisoner information and procurement as corruption. The authors also introduce the concept of 'correctional integrity' to better understand the motives behind certain types of corruption and develop effective anti-corruption measures for prisons. They argue that corruption should be viewed as an inherent aspect of power dynamics and consequential negotiated orders between staff and inmates in most prison environments (Goldsmith et al. 2016). They emphasise that achieving absolute

correctional integrity is neither feasible nor advisable, as it can undermine the quality of officer-prisoner relationships, which is crucial in custodial settings (Liebling and Arnold, 2004; Crewe, 2009). Similar to Sykes (1958), they argue that maintaining order in prisons requires a degree of compromise and discretion from staff. Sykes's concept of the 'corruption of authority' suggests that officers must sometimes tolerate minor infractions and exercise discretion in enforcing rules, as doing so is essential for keeping the peace and fulfilling their duties. In this environment, officers often rely on informal systems, such as offering incentives or sharing information with inmate leaders, to ensure compliance and stability (Crewe, 2016). This dynamic, where officers balance maintaining control with tolerating certain behaviours, highlights the complex and often compromised role of authority in prisons.

Another critical dimension of corruption within prisons is conditioning—the process by which inmates manipulate and influence staff to gain control and privileges. The Woodcock Report (1994) provides a stark example, exposing a culture of intimidation within the special unit at HMP Whitemoor, where a group of inmates successfully coerced prison staff. This report, which investigated the escape of six prisoners from Whitemoor, opens with an account of how 'several of their charges were in the process of escaping over the prison wall,' while 'four of the seven officers on duty in the unit' were distracted by a game of Scrabble (Woodcock, 1994: 1). Although the report reads compellingly, it reveals serious failings in prisoner management, particularly highlighting how the psychological manipulation of staff by determined inmates contributed to the infamous Irish Republican Army (IRA) escape (Acheson, 2024: 127). The escapees exploited weak enforcement, inadequate management support, and the natural tendency of frontline staff to maintain a sense of calm, turning these vulnerabilities to their advantage. This culture was encapsulated by the prevailing attitude: 'don't upset the inmates and don't rock the boat' (Woodcock, 1994: 24). Remarkably, many of the security concerns and issues of inmate conditioning raised in this report remain highly relevant today (South, 2023; Acheson, 2024).

The experience of managing prisoners associated with the Northern Ireland (NI) Troubles further illustrates how corruption and inmate conditioning pose broader security risks. Former prison governor William McKee (2009) provides a candid account of his time in the H Blocks at the Maze Prison, where he witnessed the systematic conditioning of prison staff. Inmates employed calculated methods of coercion, testing officers' will and challenging the balance of power between staff and prisoners. McKee details the struggle to maintain authority and order in an environment where control was continuously contested. Similarly, Murtagh (2018: 25) describes the Maze Prison in the 1990s as 'completely out of control'. He examines the psychological impact of conditioning on staff, noting instances where officers developed

behaviours akin to 'Stockholm Syndrome', further tipping the balance of power in favour of inmates (Murtagh, 2018: 632).

More broadly, O'Donnell (2023) explores conditioning alongside the concepts of integration and regulation, analysing prison social structures through four case studies, including the H Block. His comparative approach highlights how different institutional settings—from the isolation of ADX in Florence (Colorado) to the communal environments of Isir Bet in Ethiopia—shape inmate behaviour and staff interactions. Most recently, Acheson (2024: 59) argues that conditioning remains a serious threat to prison order and control today. Reflecting on the 2020 attack on Officer Trundle by prisoners Ziamani and Hockton, he argues that the monotonous and repetitive nature of prison life can foster complacency, even in high-security facilities where constant vigilance is essential. The events leading up to the attack suggest that staff oversight had weakened, allowing the perpetrators to loiter unchallenged in an area that should have been more tightly controlled (Acheson, 2024: 127). As seen at HMP Whitemoor decades earlier, conditioning remains a powerful tool for terrorist inmates seeking to maintain influence and continue their fight from prison (Acheson, 2024: 129).

#### **4.4.4 Extra-Legal Governance**

Although Sykes (1958) and Goldsmith et al. (2016) acknowledge that a certain level of compromise and discretion is necessary for prison staff to maintain order and carry out their duties, the repeated practice of officers bending the rules to preserve stability can also be seen as part of a broader pattern of corruption. This form of corruption is often rooted in camaraderie and the tacit acceptance of minor inmate infractions that encroach on officers' authority (Sykes, 2003: 361). Consequently, this lack of authority can jeopardise prisoner safety, leading to alternative forms of protection provided by prisoners (Williams, 2016: 7). Skarbek (2014; 2016; 2020) drew upon governance theory to argue that prison gangs form to provide extra-legal governance when inmates have a demand for it and official governance mechanisms are ineffective or unavailable. Gangs, therefore, emerge as substitutes for decentralised governance mechanisms. In some cases, they provide stability in otherwise chaotic environments, as seen with the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) in São Paulo. Through complex interactions with prison authorities, the PCC enforces order and mitigates violence, with staff tacitly allowing them to oversee illicit activities in exchange for maintaining control (Dias and Salla, 2013; Butler et al. 2018: 435).

Similarly, in many Western prisons, gangs can offer protection and structure where official governance is weak (Williams, 2016). However, Skarbek (2020) acknowledges that English men's prisons have few, if any, organised prison gangs, highlighting the significant variation in how inmate governance systems develop. Their prevalence is particularly notable in large,



overcrowded, and under-resourced prisons (Martin and Chantraine, 2018; Skarbek, 2020). However, Skarbek (2020: 125) notes a recent decline in the quality of official governance in English prisons. This has coincided with a sharp rise in assaults on staff, prisoner-on-prisoner violence, and self-harm. Additionally, concerns have grown over potential radicalisation in some maximum-security facilities and the growing Muslim prison population. However, it remains unclear whether this reflects genuine radicalisation or the formation of prison gangs. Instead, the Muslim prisoner community provides protection, not as a centralised extra-legal governance structure, but rather as a natural response to declining official governance and the need for safety (Skarbek, 2020: 130).

Moreover, Butler et al. (2018) add another dimension to the debate by highlighting the importance of integrating governance theory with importation and deprivation models to fully understand prison gang dynamics. Their comparative case studies of Kyrgyzstan, NI, and Brazil illustrate how prison gangs not only emerge but also consolidate and monopolise informal governance structures under certain conditions. While their findings offer qualified support for Skarbek's (2011; 2014; 2016) governance theory, they emphasise that the number and structure of prison gangs are also shaped by broader ideological, political, societal, and environmental factors, reinforcing the need for a multidimensional theoretical approach (Butler et al. 2018).

Building on Skarbek's analysis, O'Donnell (2023) expands the discussion by challenging the assumption that inmate self-governance only arises in response to a lack of official authority. While governance theory suggests an inverse relationship between the number of staff and the emergence of prisoner-led structures, O'Donnell (2023) argues that such arrangements can still develop even when formal governance is abundant. This occurs when inmates reject official control and possess a high level of integration. A key example is the H Block in NI, where, despite strong formal governance, the IRA resisted authority, leading to a gradual withdrawal of state control. In this case, although legal governance was extensive, its legitimacy among prisoners was minimal, allowing an alternative system to take hold. The IRA set the agenda, establishing the form of self-governance they desired (O'Donnell: 2023: 70). Staff conditioning was continuous, with IRA prisoners deliberately manipulating social relationships to shift the balance of power in their favour (McKane, 2008). In highly integrated prisons like the H Block, prisoners could wear down staff through a mix of co-option, intimidation, and persistence (Hennessy, 1984; McKeown, 2001). Many officers chose to avoid confrontation, believing it was not worth the trouble, but this reluctance—combined with a more relaxed atmosphere on the wings—created the conditions for significant security breaches (Longwell, 1998). Furthermore, a recent case study by Gooch and Treadwell (2023) reveals that this extra-legal governance has significant human costs, as it contributes to

elevated rates of prison violence, self-harm, drug abuse, and provides an environment conducive for the growth of OC.

## **4.5 Terrorism in Prison**

The body of literature on terrorism is steadily expanding, yet high-quality primary studies remain scarce (Jones, 2007; Scottish Government, 2023). Surprisingly, research specifically examining terrorists and extremists in prison is limited (Silke, 2014). Given the extensive scholarship on terrorism over the past few decades—particularly the surge in publications following 9/11—it is notable how little attention has been devoted to the role of prisons. This gap in the literature is especially salient considering that most terrorists will, at some point, experience imprisonment. Existing studies primarily fall into three categories: autobiographical accounts from former terrorists detailing their time in prison (e.g. Baumann, 1975; Schiller, 2009); research on Irish terrorism, which has clear relevance to prison dynamics (McKee, 2009; Reinisch, 2022; O'Donnell, 2023); and an influx of papers emerging in the post-9/11 period.

### **4.5.1 Radicalisation**

A dominant theme within the literature on terrorism in prison is radicalisation. Historically, groups such as the IRA, Shining Path and the Red Army Faction were not commonly described as being radical groups, despite fitting contemporary definitions of the term (Silke, 2014). Thus, research on radicalisation, though relatively young, has explored the long-standing issue of prisons being used for radicalisation and terrorist recruitment (Cuthbertson, 2004; Goldman, 2014). Studying radicalisation in prison is extremely difficult due to the widespread reluctance of prisons to allow researchers access (Hamm, 2013) and the multitude of working definitions for radicalisation (Cottee, 2019; Rushchenko, 2019; Marsden et al. 2023). In this thesis, radicalisation is defined as the process by which individuals or groups adopt extremist views, particularly the belief in using violent actions to achieve objectives (Sinai, 2014: 36).

Kushner and Davis (2004) and Cuthbertson (2004) asserted that Western prisons serve as significant recruitment grounds for Al Qaeda. More recently, high-profile attacks in Europe involving second and third generation Muslims, some of whom had prior prison experiences, have fuelled a narrative that portrays prisons as potential incubators of Islamist extremism (e.g., the 2018 attack in Liege, Belgium; Roy, 2017; Acheson and Paul, 2019; Rushchenko, 2019; Basra and Neumann, 2020). Thus, it has been argued that prisons can provide a conducive environment for extremist ideologies to take root, allowing vulnerable prisoners to be recruited into extremist networks (Mulcahy et al. 2013). Furthermore, the constant influx of new inmates creates a recurring pool of potential recruits (Cuthbertson, 2004; Basra et al.

2016). Academics and policymakers have dedicated significant efforts to understanding the extent and dynamics of prison radicalisation, but it is still heavily contested (Hamm, 2008; Useem, 2012; Jones, 2014; Yaacoub, 2018; Cottee, 2019; Schulz et al. 2021; Williams and Liebling, 2022). Furthermore, empirical evidence on the prevalence of radicalisation within prisons remains limited. That said, concerns about radicalisation, particularly Islamist extremism, continues to grow (Neumann, 2010).

Radicalisation encompasses various paths leading to extremism and extends beyond religious contexts (such as right-wing extremism or advocacy for specific causes like animal rights or suffragettes). While radical movements vary in ideology and objectives, much of the academic and policy discourse has focused on Islamist extremism, as this group comprises the majority of convicted TACT offenders. The scholarly debate on Islam in prison is sharply divided: one perspective argues that Muslim prisoner groups serve as breeding grounds for terrorism (alarmist view), while the opposing view asserts that there is no direct link between religious conversion in prison and terrorist activity (reassurance view; Hamm, 2009; 2013; Mulcahy et al. 2013; Thompson, 2016). For instance, Liebling et al.'s (2011) second study of HMP Whitemoor did not initially aim to investigate Muslim prisoners, religious conversion, or radicalisation. However, their findings confirmed that radicalisation was a genuine concern within the prison. More notably, they identified alienation, loss of meaning, and violence as more immediate challenges, suggesting that neglecting these issues could heighten the risk of radicalisation (Liebling et al, 2011: 178). While they tempered the overall threat of Islamist extremism in prison, they acknowledged the influential roles held by radicals within the prison hierarchy.

A review of the literature on radicalisation highlights that research in this field primarily focuses on why imprisoned individuals become radicalised, particularly through conversion to Islam. A common argument suggests that adopting faith 'identities', such as Islam, in prison serves as a protection strategy, similar to gang affiliation (Marranci, 2009; Ballas, 2010; Liebling et al. 2011; Maitra, 2016; Powis et al. 2019: 13; Ruschenko, 2019). Prison life is often defined by violence, bullying, and control, requiring inmates to develop survival strategies (Crewe, 2016). Male prison cultures, in particular, are shaped by discourses of masculinity, toughness, and the rejection of perceived weakness (Sim, 1994; Carrabine and Longhurst, 1998; Sabo et al. 2001; Jewkes, 2002; Murray, 2023). These environments reinforce dominance, aggression, and the suppression of emotional expression while undermining other aspects of manhood (Sim, 1994). Sykes' (1958: 98) concept of 'secondary proof of manhood' captures this dynamic, where any display of vulnerability can lead to victimisation (Sabo et al. 2001). In extreme cases, prison rape exemplifies this power structure, where perpetrators assert

dominance rather than being perceived as homosexual, while victims are permanently stigmatised and emasculated (Scacco, 1975; Kupers, 2001).

In this context, aligning with the dominant prison group often serves as a survival strategy, with religious conversion—particularly to Islam—frequently providing support and protection (Powis et al. 2021). For instance, Liebling et al. (2011: 64) found that sex offenders, who are typically vulnerable within the prison hierarchy, gained a sense of security when accepted into the Muslim community, the most influential religious group in the prison. This belonging offered protection, as converts could rely on a large network of ‘brothers’ in future vulnerable situations. An inmate’s offence plays a key role in determining their status in prison. While sex offenders are widely despised (South, 2023:32), those convicted of armed robbery, drug trafficking, or OC often command respect (Winfrey et al. 2002). Status is also shaped by traits such as intelligence, charisma, and defiance toward authority (Clemmer, 1958; Sykes, 1958).

Similarly, Hamm (2007: 62) identifies five personal and social motivations for religious conversion in prison, including the ‘protection-seeking convert’. Similarly, Neumann (2010) argues that prisons create conditions of vulnerability to radicalisation and violent extremism, fostering ‘identity seekers’, ‘protection seekers’, and ‘rebels’—circumstances in which radical, religiously framed ideologies can thrive (Neumann, 2010: 1-13). Crucially, prison radicalisation often emerges through personal relationships (Brandon, 2009a). However, individuals who join radical groups or prison gangs for protection rather than genuine ideological commitment may not necessarily engage in extremist activity after release (Neumann, 2010; Liebling et al. 2011).

The need for protection is closely linked to the literature on ‘failed’ state’ prisons and institutional legitimacy, key factors in understanding radicalisation risks within prisons. While radicalisation remains rare, prison conditions significantly influence these risks (Hamm, 2013). Disorder, violence, crime, and overcrowding undermine institutional legitimacy, making prisons feel less secure for inmates (Williams, 2016). In contrast, structured, controlled, and well-managed prisons foster stability and reduce the need for inmates to seek alternative forms of security. When formal governance is weak or inconsistent, prisoners may turn to religious or gang-like groups for protection (Williams, 2016). Scholars argue that prisons perceived as illegitimate or akin to a ‘failed state’ create fertile ground for charismatic leaders to spread radical ideologies, leading to increased ideological radicalisation (Hamm, 2009; 2013; Wilner, 2010; Cohen, 2016; Liebling, 2015; Gaub and Lisiecka, 2017; Powis et al. 2021). For example, Hamm (2013) identifies three perspectives on prisoner radicalisation: the alarmist view; the reassurance view; and his own position, which links radicalisation to mismanaged, understaffed prisons. He found that these ‘failed state’ prisons generate a sense

of 'political charge', fostering anger and alienation among inmates. While Hamm (2013) briefly references political charge, the term may now offer a more useful framework than radicalisation, as it encompasses a broader range of negative outcomes rather than focusing on extremism alone. Within the broader prison context, high levels of political charge are considered harmful, contributing to disorder, violence, and suicide (Williams and Liebling, 2022:16).

Furthermore, a more recent publication by Williams and Liebling (2022) further explores how specific prison conditions shape the potential for radicalisation, particularly through factors such as anger and alienation. The study finds that while all prisons generate some level of anger, alienation and reactivity (Williams and Liebling, 2022: 16), not all prisons foster radicalisation. Instead, the risk of radicalisation is heightened in facilities with low staff numbers, inexperienced officers, and high levels of violence, where inmates may turn to extremist ideologies as a means of coping or resistance (Crewe et al. 2014; Crewe and Liebling, 2018). Their research compares two maximum-security prisons, demonstrating that in more stable environments, faith identities remain fluid and personal, whereas in prisons paralysed by distrust, religious identities can become power-infused and contribute to radicalisation (Williams and Liebling, 2022: 2). Accordingly, 'failed state' prisons which are plagued by distrust and instability generate a heightened 'political charge', leading to more rigid and potentially dangerous religious identities, as well as stagnation and lasting harm to inmates' well-being and character (Williams and Liebling, 2022).

#### **4.5.2 Prislam**

The literature on Islam in prison is growing and has been since terrorist attacks of 9/11. Importantly, scholars argue that religious affiliation in prison can provide various benefits, including a sense of belonging, better food and increased influence within the inmate hierarchy (Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007; Brandon, 2009a; Hamm, 2009; Liebling et al. 2011; Phillips, 2012). Thus, radicalised prisoners commonly display a strong affiliation with similar subcultural groups and a yearning for solidarity, social cohesion, and a community (Cottee and Hayward, 2011; Liebling et al. 2011; Roberts, 2016; Bucerius et al. 2022). In some instances, Islam has been adopted as a trend, with converts showing little genuine understanding or commitment, and some Islamist extremist prisoners possessing only a superficial grasp of the religion (Phillips, 2012: 97; Powis et al. 2021). Instead, their beliefs are shaped by a distorted religious interpretation, often influenced by exposure to radical preachers outside prison. These extremist groups use coercion and manipulation to recruit prisoners (Hamm, 2013).

Hence, this has given rise to 'Prison Islam', a form of religious expression intertwined with gang culture, loyalty, and selective interpretations of the Koran (Hamm, 2009; 2013). This

phenomenon was identified as early as 2006 by Allen, who examined the Muslim Boys in HMP Belmarsh. Allen (2006) describes how this group used coercion and violence to impose extremist beliefs, pressuring non-Muslims to convert under threat of assault. Reports from HMP Whitemoor in 2008 further indicate that some Muslim prisoners operated as a gang, pressuring others to adopt a strict and extreme interpretation of Islam (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2008: 43). These findings challenge both alarmist and reassuring narratives, demonstrating that radicalised inmates can actively manipulate religious identity to advance extremist objectives (Hamm, 2009: 672). Hamm (2009) explored this concept through the case of Jamaat al-Islamiyya al-Shaheed (JIS) at New Folsom Prison, where a charismatic inmate led a Sunni-inspired form of Prison Islam, adopting the beliefs and terrorist tactics of al-Qaeda. Notably, he stated that 'the influence of Prison Islam cannot be overstated' (Hamm, 2013: 145).

Thus, radicalisation persists within the secretive subcultures of prison gangs, where extremist interpretations of religion foster intolerance, hatred, and violence (Hamm, 2009). However, research suggests that only a small fraction of converts to Islam, particularly new and emotionally driven adherents, translate their radical beliefs into terrorist action (Stern, 2003; Hamm, 2013).

#### **4.5.3 Genuine Faith**

Some religious conversions are motivated by personal crisis and the need for protection; however, the primary motivation for conversion is spiritual searching (Hamm, 2009; 2013; Wilkinson et al. 2022). Research by Hamm (2013) found that religious conversion—across all faiths—generally promotes positive behaviour rather than terrorism. Likewise, a cross-sectional analysis of prison systems by Jones (2014) supports Hamm's (2013) findings, emphasising that prison radicalisation and recruitment into Islamist militant groups are uncommon.

Similarly, a book by Wilkinson et al (2022), which is based on the largest international study of Islam in prison conducted between 2018 and 2021, offers a refreshing departure from research focused on the radicalisation of inmates and the corrosive impact of extreme Islamism. They argue that prisoners are more often drawn to Islam for spiritual fulfilment, emotional support, and a sense of community rather than for material benefits, privileges, or protection (Wilkinson et al. 2022: 107). Subsequently, Islam in prison can foster positive attitudes towards rehabilitation as well as the cultivation of ethical, non-criminal values within prisons (Williams, 2018; Wilkinson et al. 2022). The primary security concern is not the number of prisoners adhering to Islam or extremist ideologies but the potential for small, radicalised groups to incite terrorism upon release (Hamm, 2007; Brandon, 2009a). Hamm (2013) argues

that only a little fraction of prison converts turn to terrorism, and while these cases are spectacular, they remain rare. Nevertheless, the process of prisoner radicalisation can be a 'double-edged sword' (Hamm, 2013:1), yielding both positive and negative outcomes. While some prison radicals—such as Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi—have gone on to lead national liberal movements and serve as influential government figures, others may take more destructive paths.

While genuine conversion to Islam in prison may be positive and offer certain benefits, it can also carry negative consequences, as both inmates and staff may perceive rising conversion rates as a sign of radicalisation rather than sincere faith (Hamm, 2013). Thus, scholars claim that a key challenge for prison authorities concerns discerning between genuine religious conversion, religious convenience and radicalisation (Hamm, 2008; Basra and Neumann, 2016; Council of Europe, 2016). Prison staff often struggle to differentiate between these processes, as the outward manifestations can appear identical or highly similar (Basra et al. 2016: 30).

#### **4.5.4 Segregation vs. Integration**

The management of terrorist prisoners remains a key issue within the literature on terrorism in prison, particularly the debate between segregation and integration models. Unlike conventional criminals, terrorists and violent extremists present distinct challenges within prison settings. As a result, their imprisonment requires specialised approaches. Scholars identify three primary strategies for handling extremist prisoners: containment, dispersal, or a mixed approach (Jones, 2014; Rushchenko, 2019; Axelsson et al. 2024). In modern Western contexts, a combination of these methods is often implemented (Basra and Neumann, 2020). While the advantages and disadvantages of each approach continue to be debated, no definitive evidence establishes one as the most effective. Over the past decade the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has published a series of reports which directly or indirectly address the growing terrorist threat in prisons, most notably the studies by Liebling et al. (2011), Acheson (2016), Powis et al. (2019) and Powis et al. (2021). More recently, Jonathan Hall K.C, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, provided a report (Hall, 2022) which discusses Islamist groups in prison, terrorism offences that are committed in prison, governing governors, joint working and separation centres. He then provided a list of recommendations.

The UK has a history of managing prisoners involved in ethno-political and religious violence, particularly in NI. In the 1970s and 1980s, paramilitary prisoners were segregated to prevent violence and disruption. A similar approach was reintroduced at HMP Maghaberry in 2003, after the Steele Review (2003) concluded that some separation was necessary to protect rival factions and non-paramilitary prisoners. This marked a recognition of the link between

criminality and terrorism in the prison system. With rising numbers of prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offences, managing radicalisation remains a significant challenge. Currently, the strategy in England and Wales is to disperse TACT offenders throughout the general prison estate (MoJ, 2022e: 4), though concerns exist that this may increase the risk of radicalisation (Williams, 2016).

Ian Acheson's landmark 2016 independent review (henceforth, 'the Acheson review') of violent extremism in prisons led to further interest in focusing on how ideologically inspired offenders are managed within the prison estate and identifying and preventing any terrorism, radicalisation and crime-terror nexus. After the Acheson review found evidence that Islamist extremism was a growing problem within the prison estate, the containment of known extremists within dedicated specialist units was adopted (Acheson, 2016). The purpose of the units were to 'allow greater separation and specialised management of extremists who pose the highest risk to other prisoners' (MoJ, 2017a: para 12; Vipond, 2023). A comparative criminal justice study by Rushchenko (2019) found that separating the most dangerous terrorism-related offenders is the only viable solution for mitigating the threat of prison radicalisation. However, negative media coverage drew parallels between the units and Guantanamo Bay, labelling the centres as 'jihadi jails' that restrict individual liberties and produce more grievances (Farmer, 2017; Parveen, 2017). Additionally, several scholars argue that separation could potentially intensify the problem, creating jihadi universities, or even worse—reproduce another Maze Prison (Powis et al. 2019).

Contrary to critical media portrayal, the government established three separation centres exclusively designated for inmates with any political or religious affiliations suspected of posing a risk of radicalising fellow prisoners (Vipond, 2023): HMP Frankland, HMP Full Sutton and HMP Woodhill. The total capacity of all three centres is 28 prisoners (Hall, 2022: 61). From 2017 to April 2022, a total of 15 individuals were held in the centres (Taylor, 2022: 14). In a qualitative study by Powis et al. (2019: 28), they found that separation centres improved staff/prisoner relationships and Muslim/non-Muslim inmate interactions—and lessened disruptive behaviour in other prisons. Additionally, creating the centres had unintended consequences leading to a change in behaviour of extremist prisoners across the prison estate (Powis et al. 2019: 28).<sup>17</sup>

However, the impact of the centres is contested (Lee and Walker, 2022) and Jonathan Hall KC noted in his Independent Review in 2022 that: 'the use of Separation Centres has never fully taken off' because there are very few referrals, and any success has been mitigated by

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<sup>17</sup> The key change was that those who were most influential/disruptive appeared to moderate their behaviour once the centres were opened.



lack of engagement from prisoners (Hall, 2022: 62). Likewise, only a handful of prisoners are currently held at HMP Woodhill and according to Hall (2022), the centre at HMP Full Sutton has been ‘mothballed’.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Dominic Raab (former Secretary of State for Justice) announced that in line with recommendations from the Government’s Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, a new team will identify the most influential terrorists in prisons with the view of moving them to one of three new separation centres (MoJ, 2022b). Likewise, the most recent CONTEST strategy detailed a more robust approach to separating the most influential radicalisers from the wider prison population (HM Government, 2023a: 31).

## **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has critically examined the existing literature on crime and terrorism in prisons. It has outlined the definitional challenges surrounding OC and terrorism, highlighting the conceptual ambiguities that shape academic and policy discourse. Despite these challenges, this study adopts definitions that align with contemporary criminological and CT frameworks.

The discussion of crime in prison has demonstrated that these institutions are not merely spaces of confinement but serve as critical hubs for illicit economic activity, governance struggles, and corruption. OC networks exploit prison environments, sustaining illicit economies that undermine institutional control. Similarly, the literature on terrorism in prison has given emphasis to the role of radicalisation, the phenomenon of Prislam, and the contested nature of faith-based conversions. While concerns about extremist recruitment persist, some scholars argue that religious identity in prison can serve as a protective mechanism rather than an inherent risk factor (Hamm, 2013).

A key gap in the literature, however, is the crime-terror nexus in prison. While research has explored OC and terrorism independently, the specific ways in which these two entities interact within prison environments remain understudied. Understanding the crime-terror nexus is critical for developing more effective prison management strategies and broader security interventions. By addressing this research gap, this thesis contributes to a more nuanced perspective on how crime and terrorism interact in prison. The following empirical chapters (5-8) build upon these discussions, presenting original data that explores the crime-terror nexus within prisons. The next chapter details the analysis of the data collected which was used to form a clear data-driven definition of the PCTN.

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<sup>18</sup> A report on the inspection of Separation Centres by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in April 2022 found that there were nine men in total across the separation centres at HMP Frankland and HMP Woodhill when they were inspected in April 2022. A third centre at HMP Full Sutton remained closed for the time being (Taylor, 2022: 3)

## Chapter 5 DEFINING THE PRISON CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected to formulate a clear data-driven definition of the PCTN, a concept that is not currently defined in the existing literature. Initially, the study, as outlined in Chapter 2, aimed to explore strategies for addressing the crime-terror nexus in prisons, based on the assumption that such a nexus existed. However, early interviews revealed differing opinions on the existence and characteristics of the nexus in prison. It became clear that the lack of consistent terminology hindered the recognition and effective response to the PCTN. Without an agreed-upon label or discourse, it is challenging to articulate or even conceptualise phenomena that remain unnamed. Foucault's argument in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (1978) parallels this issue, showing that without a shared label, individuals struggle to identify and address phenomena. This gap in terminology led to a shift in the study's approach to better understand the nature of these interactions.

A working definition of the crime-terror nexus has been coined in order to frame the analysis in this thesis with a certain level of specificity. For the purposes of this discussion, the crime-terror nexus is defined as:

The spectrum of interactions between organised crime groups and terrorist groups, as well as individual criminals and terrorists. These interactions may involve collaboration, imitation, transformation, or convergence, varying in nature and intensity based on local contexts, geopolitical dynamics, and the specific characteristics of those involved.

This chapter interprets the data<sup>19</sup> gathered to refine and expand upon this working definition within the prison environment. By synthesising these insights, this chapter offers a new, data-driven definition of the PCTN.

This chapter begins by arguing that the term *crime-terror nexus* suffers from conceptual ambiguity, lacking a universally accepted definition, and is often interpreted differently by various individuals and organisations. Secondly, the analysis revealed that rather than a singular nexus, multiple nexuses exist between different types of criminals and terrorists, shaped by the individuals and the specific context. As a result, two sub-themes were identified

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<sup>19</sup> Data was collected from a range of sources, including thirty-four semi-structured interviews with professionals and frontline practitioners, such as police officers, PIOs, former prison governors, and senior government advisors. Additionally, textual data from nineteen prisoner questionnaires and six letters were analysed to enhance the qualitative findings. TA was employed to identify, analyse, and report patterns within the data, providing a nuanced insight into this phenomenon.

and will be explored in this chapter: 1) individualistic and 2) contextual. Thus, the study indicates that defining and identifying the PCTN is inherently complex, emphasising its individualistic and contextual nature.

The remainder of this chapter is structured in the following way: for each section, the key themes and sub-themes that interviewees referred to when discussing the PCTN are outlined before discussing these factors more thoroughly. To supplement these findings, any supporting and opposing comments in the data from the questionnaires and letters are included. The prisoners were not given pseudonyms, so will be referred to as 'prisoner' followed by their participant number and occasionally further relevant information.

## 5.2 Conceptual Imprecision

While the term crime-terror nexus has become the dominant expression, various other partially overlapping terms and phrases have also been used to describe this phenomenon. Schmid (2004) argues that some of these terms encompass a broad semantic range, underlining the importance of precise terminology. However, the current literature often lacks the degree of precision required, to effect clear identification (Paoli et al. 2022: 31). Hence, despite the array of expressions reflecting various research foci, half the interviewees (n = 18) highlighted a certain 'conceptual carelessness' (Paoli et al. 2022: 30), wherein many terms were used informally without proper definition. This contributes to confusion and a lack of consensus regarding the true scope of the nexus. Accordingly, individuals may misunderstand terminology and intelligence which indicates the occurrence of a PCTN. Figure 7 shows the differing sections identified within this theme which will be discussed below: 1) a lack of definition, and 2) subjectivity (the sub-theme of Misunderstanding Terminology is discussed in Section 8.2.1 which focuses on intelligence).

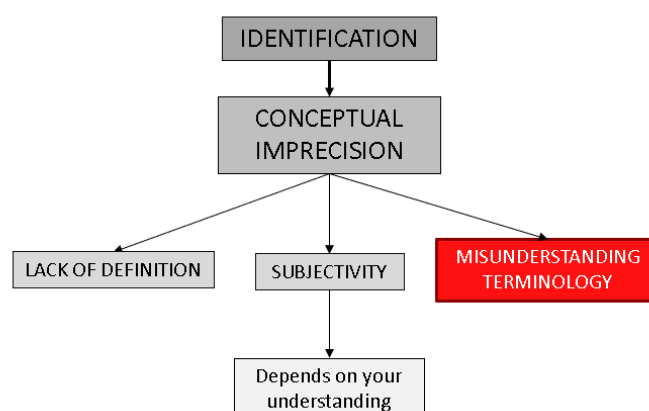


Figure 7: Conceptual Imprecision (Author's Own)

### 5.2.1 Lack of definition

The terms *OC* and *terrorism* remain controversial and problematic primarily due to their highly dynamic and context-specific forms of delinquency, which can be approached from multiple perspectives (Oberleitner, 2022: 179). Consequently, accurately defining the concept of the ‘crime-terror nexus’ poses a significant challenge. This variability can result in multiple interpretations and a lack of consensus on the concept’s meaning. Therefore, there is a clear need to establish and provide precise definitions for these key terms. Ivan, a Prison Intelligence Manager, described several examples of the nexus, such as ‘someone building a network’, the ‘transfer [of] an illicit commodity’, and ‘criminals meeting terrorists and then being radicalised inside prison’. He considered whether the 2017 Manchester arena terrorist attacker, Salman Abedi, provided an example of the crime-terror nexus because he was a known criminal who visited and was groomed by convicted terrorist prisoner, Abdalraouf Abdallah, weeks before the attack (Dearden, 2021). Ivan concluded that the crime-terror nexus has not been defined and therefore he has some reservations about the intricacies and extent of the concept:

‘I’m not entirely sure you can speak with any great confidence that you understand the nature and scope of the crime-terror nexus.’

Ivan argued that if there is no ‘proper definition’ of the concept, intelligence obtained to support some form of crime-terror nexus will be ‘classified as something different’.

Moreover, Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) and Robert (former Commander at New Scotland Yard) questioned the definitions of key relevant terms. They drew attention to a notable issue within the crime-terror nexus literature regarding whether it primarily pertains to *crime* or specifically to *OC*. Empirical studies both within Europe and outside have thus far lacked a shared conceptualisation or standardised methodology (Paoli et al. 2022). In Europe, the majority of research have concentrated on analysing the criminal backgrounds of jihadists, often (mis-)characterising petty criminals as serious offenders (e.g., Basra et al. 2016). Beyond Europe, scholarly studies have tended to concentrate on extreme cases, such as the Colombian FARC or Lebanese Hezbollah (see Hough 2011; Levitt 2013; Azizi and Hughes, 2024). Hence, Anthony and Robert emphasised that the lack of precise definitions for these concepts, particularly the ambiguity surrounding what constitutes *crime*, has resulted in a scarcity of evidence to substantiate the existence of any PCTN. Thus, in any definition of the PCTN—it needs to be clear whether it is crime or specifically *OC*.

### 5.2.2 Subjectivity

Defining concepts like extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism results in individuals forming their own subjective interpretations (van de Weert and Eijkman, 2019; Schmid, 2023). This



WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS	
Developing capability	Enabler
Intrinsically linked	Socialising
Networking	Friendships
Converting to Islam	Identify vulnerable people
Risks	Financial support
Assets being transferred	Organised criminals being affected by ideologies
Working group	Joint venture
Cooperation	Contacts
Low level crime	Random
Informal	Readymade network and knowledge
Supporting each other	Organised crime
Individuals	Mutual benefit
Transformation	Merging of groups
Gangs	Access to weapons
Criminals with extensive backgrounds and skills becoming terrorists	Crossover between two nominals or groups
Criminal expertise	Criminals radicalised in prison
Two groups co-existing	Profiting and a sense of belonging

*Table 5: Words to describe the crime-terror nexus*

Upon analysing the remarks from interviewees (see Appendix L for all comments), it was evident that there were several common themes and perspectives. The most common theme concerned overlap and collaboration as most interviewees highlighted the existence of links, crossovers, and collaborations between criminals and terrorists. A recurring theme was the use of skills (19%,  $n = 5$ ), where terrorists are seen to employ existing criminal expertise, or criminals facilitate terrorist endeavours through their skillsets (see Chapter 6). The role of prisons in fostering the crime-terror nexus was a prominent theme, with 27% of the responses ( $n = 7$ ) highlighting the significance of radicalisation and networking within the prison estate. Most of the interviewees that emphasised the nexus within prisons were PIOs. This theme also highlighted concerns that in some prisons, radicalised Muslim and extremist inmates are forming gangs, posing significant risks to staff and other prisoners, and presenting future threats upon release due to potential access to weapons. It is crucial to acknowledge that, this research focused on the crime-terror nexus within the prison, thus, some interviewees may have naturally described their understanding of the nexus in connection to the custodial environment.

Moreover, financial motivations also emerged as a prevalent aspect. Some interviewees (30%) suggested that the nexus is often associated with fundraising for terrorist activities through criminal enterprises (see Chapter 6). A noteworthy theme was the connection between

the crime-terror nexus and social deprivation, as some interviewees (15%) suggested that individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more susceptible to involvement in the crime-terror nexus (i.e. the new crime-terror nexus, Basra et al. 2016). Interestingly, two interviewees illustrated the nexus through examples of smuggling of weapons and drug trafficking. Additionally, the varied views on the nexus further validated the significant debate in crime-terror nexus literature about whether the nexus relates to *crime* or more specifically to *OC*. Another variation was whether the crime-terror nexus concerns individuals or organisations/groups. The data gathered highlighted the former (see Section 5.3), accentuating the importance of incorporating this distinction into any definition of the PCTN. This also aligns with a recent theoretical shift in the crime-terror nexus debate, moving away from group-oriented perspectives to a more individualistic focus on social networks and environments (Basra et al. 2016; Gallagher, 2021; Paoli et al. 2022).<sup>20</sup>

Fundamentally, the inherent subjectivity of the crime-terror nexus makes it vulnerable to ambiguity, as its interpretation can vary widely among individuals. This research highlights that the identification of the PCTN is shaped by each person's understanding and perspective. These differing definitions and viewpoints from interviewees draw attention to the challenge of establishing a clear, consistent definition. The data reveals that the concept suffers from a lack of universally agreed-upon definitions, resulting in a highly subjective understanding of the nexus. Consequently, individuals' perceptions and interpretations, along with their familiarity with the terminology, significantly influence the identification of the PCTN. This absence of standardised definitions, combined with the influence of subjective interpretations, leads to a scenario where the criteria for recognising the presence of a crime-terror nexus remain unclear and ambiguous.

### 5.3 Individualistic

Despite the ongoing policy concerns and the burgeoning literature on the crime-terror nexus, substantial progress has been hindered by the varied and often ambiguous conceptualisations of key terms and overlapping terminology. This lack of conceptual precision has facilitated a noteworthy theoretical shift (Paoli et al. 2022: 5). During the 1990s and early 2000s, the crime-terror nexus debate focused on the links between OC and terrorist groups (see Makarenko, 2004; Sanderson, 2004; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007). However, the nature and dynamics of the nexus then started to shift. Bovenkerk and Chakra (2004) observed a trend in which large, enduring criminal organisations were diminishing in prevalence, giving way to networks comprised of individual actors and cells. They argued that the level of collaboration between

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<sup>20</sup> Hence, my working definition of the crime-terror nexus includes the crime-terror nexus at an individual level.

individuals associated with OC and terrorism varies depending on the specific type of entities involved. Discussions started to then centre around the *new* crime-terror nexus, which focuses on a social nexus of individuals and networks, rather than any institutional links between groups (see Basra et al. 2016; Argomaniz and Bermejo, 2019). Basra et al. (2016) also emphasised that the new crime-terror nexus involves petty criminals rather than OCGs, particularly in prisons, which act as hotspots for radicalisation where petty criminals may be exposed to extremist ideologies. This study expands upon the concept of the new crime-terror nexus by contending that the PCTN exists at the individual, rather than the organisational, level.

Fourteen interviewees (41%) claimed that the PCTN applies to individuals rather than entire groups or organisations. Terry, Adam and Mark emphasised the significance of individuals, highlighting the existence of isolated instances where specific members of OCGs may collaborate with terrorists. Isaac (Senior Government Advisor) described the prison environment as an ever-shifting 'matrix of relationships', highlighting its complexity, while Joseph (Intelligence Officer) emphasised the 'nuanced nature' of the nexus. Similarly, David (Ports Officer) suggested that the dynamics within prisons could give rise to multiple, distinct crime-terror nexuses.

Seven interviewees even maintained that not all forms of a nexus signify a security threat and in fact, the process of prisoner radicalisation can be a 'double-edged sword' (Hamm, 2013: 1; Wilkinson et al. 2022). In some instances, a *positive crime-terror nexus* can emerge, wherein interactions between criminals and terrorists catalyse a transformation that guides individuals towards genuine and healthy religious practices (see Section 6.2.2.1). This shift often involves embracing structured routines, such as dedicating their time to study, prayer, and reflection, fostering discipline and reducing recidivism (Hamm, 2007; Brandon, 2009a; Marranci, 2009; Duwe and King, 2013; Goldman, 2014:53; Jones, 2014; Ammar, 2015; Rushchenko, 2019). Research indicates that Islam, in particular, has a moderating effect, encouraging prisoners to make profound lifestyle changes, such as abstaining from substance abuse and forming supportive communities (see Brandon, 2009a; Marranci, 2009; Duwe and King, 2013; Hamm, 2007; 2013; Goldman, 2014: 53; Jones, 2014; Ammar, 2015; Rushchenko, 2019). Such rehabilitative processes may even diminish the likelihood of their recruitment by extremist networks, in contrast to alienated individuals outside prison settings (Hamm, 2007; Jenkins, 2007). However, one of the main challenges for prison authorities remains the ability to 'spot the signs' and differentiate between (legitimate) religious conversion and (potentially problematic) interactions (Basra and Neumann, 2016: 31).



Moreover, Marcus (Senior Police Officer) offered support for Makarenko's 2004 model regarding organisations and groups but suggested its adaptation for individuals. Alex (Police Officer) reiterated the notion of the PCTN operating on an individual basis and illustrated this by explaining that some investigations have indeed revealed potential links between *individual* criminals and terrorist prisoners. To elucidate the individualist nature of the PCTN, the analysis revealed four underlying sub-themes (refer to Figure 9).

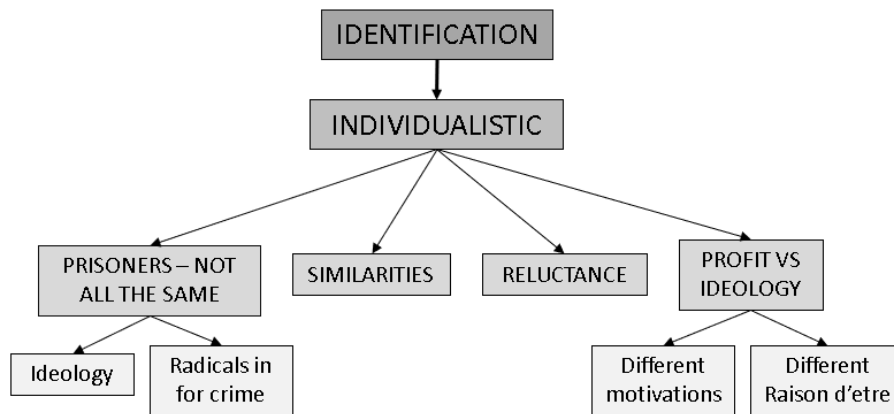


Figure 9: Individualistic (Author's Own)

### 5.3.1 Prisoners—not all the same

The initial sub-theme draws inspiration from a chapter in Podmore's (2012) book '*Out of Sight, Out of Mind*'. Podmore (2012: 60) contends that 'prisoners are not all the same', emphasising their individuality and uniqueness, much like people in broader society. Several interviewees (n = 6) underlined the importance of recognising the diversity among prisoners in order to understand the individual nature of the PCTN. They highlighted that this recognition is essential because any prison nexus is contingent on the individual and their unique combination of characteristics, motivations, and circumstances (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2004; Gallagher, 2018). To illustrate, Alex emphasised the diversity of crime and terrorism, noting that a broad spectrum of individuals with varying backgrounds, motivations, and affiliations exist within the prison. Jerry (former Prison Governor) expanded on this idea by stating that there are 'many gradations of terrorist... and serious organised criminals'. Larry (Police Intelligence Officer) presented an insightful viewpoint, observing that the link between crime and terrorism is primarily driven by a small minority of extremists with criminal backgrounds (Neumann and Basra, 2016). He highlighted that this phenomenon involves a 'tiny percentage' of the overall prison population, emphasising the importance of focusing on individuals, rather than groups, when examining the crime-terror nexus. This perspective resonates with the idea that inmates' engagement in terrorism is not a result of organisational 'convergence' or

'transformation', as Makarenko (2004) proposed in her seminal article, but rather a product of an *individualistic crime-terror nexus* (Basra et al. 2016).

#### 5.3.1.1 Ideology

Exploring the diversity of prisoners further, the data analysis identified that the nexus depends on the **ideologies** of the terrorist. Thirteen interviewees highlighted that terrorists cannot be neatly categorised into a 'generic profile' (Tony, Senior CT Officer); their motivations, ideologies, and views vary significantly, making it essential to consider the individuality of each case when examining the nexus. A divergence in opinion among interviewees became apparent as they distinguished between Extreme Right Wing (XRW) and Salafi-Jihadist, illustrating how these different ideologies can impact the potential for a crime-terror nexus. Natasha (PIO) claimed that the 'Muslim religion is a recruiting religion'; therefore, Islamic terrorists may recruit from individuals on the wings and 'spread the word'. In contrast, Kimberly (PIO) and Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) emphasised a noticeable lack of crossover between criminals and Islamic terrorists, particularly when compared to the XRW. They noted the blurred lines between the XRW and crime because these offenders often have connections to OC (Basra and Neumann, 2019: 14; Copeland and Marsden, 2021; Laryš, 2022). Gregory (Debriefing) suggested that mainstream criminals might be more inclined to assist the XRW due to shared ideological affinities (Simi and Futrell, 2010; Hamm and Spaaij, 2017; Berger, 2018).

However, other interviewees believed that such a crossover between crime and the XRW was less likely because these offenders usually exhibit insular behaviour within the prison environment (Blee, 2002; Simi and Futrell, 2010; Kimmel, 2013).<sup>21</sup> James (Senior Government Advisor) noted that some XRW terrorists are 'quite neurologically diverse' and often have autism, factors that often contribute to their social isolation (see Brooks and Greenberg, 2021; Grierson, 2021; Moss, 2022; Druitt et al. 2023). Similarly, Adam (Regional Prisons Coordinator) has observed isolated right-wing extremists who lack any notable support network and are often seen as 'weird individuals'. Interestingly, this shared perspective among the interviewees is supported by a comment from prisoner 46:

The Far right Terrorist stick to their own kind  
Whereas other terrorists mix with everyone  
and anyone They push their luck and look  
for foot soldiers.

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<sup>21</sup> See paper by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Jonathan Hall KC, on whether these individuals are 'keyboard warriors' (2022).

This comment highlights that far-right terrorists tend to maintain their insularity and isolation within their own group, in contrast to other types of terrorists who tend to mix more freely with a broader range of individuals. However, interviewees Tony and Craig (CT Intelligence Officer) argued that the crime-terror nexus transcends *all* terrorist ideologies, whether that is XRW or Salafi-Jihadist.

It is within this context that my thesis focuses primarily on Islamic terrorism rather than other forms of terrorism, such as far-right extremism. This focus emerged organically during the research process, as interviewees spoke about Islamist terrorism without prompting. This reflects Islamic terrorism's prominence in their professional experiences and its position as the primary threat within the current UK threat landscape. According to the UK Government's CT strategy, Islamist extremism represents the most significant terror threat in terms of both volume and severity (HM Government, 2023a). This emphasis was mirrored in the data, where only a small number of interviewees mentioned other forms of terrorism, such as XRW, and usually only in passing.

While this focus is justifiable given the current threat levels, it is important to consider the potential implications for practice. The limited discussion around non-Islamist terrorism may indicate a potential blind spot for practitioners, where less prominent but emerging threats—such as XRW—might be underestimated or overlooked. This is especially significant given the evolving nature of extremism, which requires ongoing vigilance across all ideological spectrums. While interviewees like Tony and Craig argued that the crime-terror nexus transcends all ideologies, whether XRW or Salafi-Jihadist, this chapter's findings demonstrate that ideology plays a crucial role in shaping the individual dynamics of the nexus. Recognising these ideological distinctions, while maintaining a broad perspective on all forms of extremism, remains essential for understanding and addressing the full scope of the PCTN.

#### 5.3.1.2 Extremist inmates convicted of crime-related offences

During analysis of the data, an intriguing discovery emerged that Basra et al (2016) failed to consider when they highlighted the role of prisons as environments for radicalisation and networking among criminals and terrorists. The individual contributing to the 'terror' aspect of the crime-terror nexus might not necessarily be a convicted terrorist. Instead, there are instances of extremist inmates convicted of crime-related offences who could potentially form a crime-terror nexus with a criminal counterpart (Laqueur, 1999; Cuthbertson, 2004). This possibility exists, especially considering that they are less likely to be subjected to the same level of surveillance as a convicted terrorist (Shelley, 2014: 140). As Joseph (Intelligence Officer) aptly pointed out:

‘People forget there are many more extremist criminals in prison than terrorists, and some of them are more extreme than the terrorists!’

It is worth considering whether such a scenario should also be classified under the umbrella of the PCTN. This discovery was primarily triggered by Robert's candid acknowledgment that while there are nearly 200 Islamist terrorist prisoners in the UK, there is a significant number of extremists imprisoned for offences unrelated to terrorism. Robert revealed that when he was a Commander at New Scotland Yard, he implemented a strategy akin to the ‘Al Capone approach’,<sup>22</sup> targeting known extremist terrorists even if they could not be convicted for terrorism-related offences. Instead, they were pursued and convicted for criminal offences (Richman and Stuntz, 2005; Gartenstein-Ross and Dabruzzi, 2007; Gaub and Lisiecka, 2017; Basra and Neumann, 2019: 13). Therefore, this finding expands on the work of Basra et al (2016) by highlighting that there are extremist individuals within the prison system who, despite not being terrorists themselves, may have a significant influence on the dynamics of this nexus (Cuthbertson, 2004).

### **5.3.2 Similarities**

This next sub-theme considers similarities, and that people tend to be attracted to others who appear similar to themselves (Berscheid and Walster, 1969; Byrne, 1971). This finding considers the similarity-attraction hypothesis (SAH) which frames much relationship and interpersonal attraction research (see Byrne, 1971; Montoya and Horton, 2013). The SAH posits that individuals are inclined to be drawn to others who share similarities with themselves. These similarities encompass a wide array of factors typically categorised into demographic<sup>23</sup> and psychological<sup>24</sup> (Abbasi et al. 2023). Numerous studies have demonstrated that similarities can result in the formation of friendships and other close relationships (see Riordan, 2000; McPherson et al. 2001; Bruce and Graziano, 2008; Kleinbaum et al. 2013). Seven interviewees (21%) highlighted that the PCTN is individualist because it often depends on factors such as similarities in nationality, religion or crime committed by the prisoners (Argomaniz and Bermejo, 2019). This viewpoint is consistent with certain prison ethnographies that discovered parallels between social structures within prison and those existing outside (Irwin and Cressey, 1962), in that relationships are often formed around similarities such as age, race, religion, educational background, or other demographic characteristics (Shrivastava, 1973; Bronson, 2008; Crewe, 2009; Skarbek, 2014).

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<sup>22</sup> Similar to how notorious American gangster Al Capone was finally jailed for tax evasion rather than murder and OC.

<sup>23</sup> Such as race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background and age.

<sup>24</sup> Such as personality, values, interests, religious beliefs, educational background and occupation.

For instance, Prisoner 51 wrote:

‘Birds of a feather, do flock together.’

This is an English proverb from the 16th century. The meaning is that beings (typically humans) of similar type, interest, personality and character tend to mutually associate (McPherson et al. 2001). Furthermore, Prisoner 29 noted that terrorist inmates often ‘pretend to seek out others with similar interests.’ Gregory (Debiefer) demonstrated the individualistic nature of these connections by providing the example of the Woolwich Boys,<sup>25</sup> which primarily consist of Somalis. He suggested that individuals within the Woolwich Boys might exhibit some sympathy toward terrorist prisoners, especially if they share a similar nationality. Thus, raising the possibility of a nexus emerging in such circumstances.

Equally, Jennifer (Intelligence Officer) noted that inmates tend to ‘gravitate’ towards one another, based on shared characteristics of nationality or religion. Jennifer observed that these affiliations transcend the boundaries of whether individuals are imprisoned for criminal activities or TACT offences. This suggests that a sense of commonality and identity, be it in terms of one’s country of origin or religious beliefs, often has a significant impact on any PCTN. Regarding the type of crime committed, Marcus (Senior Police Officer) applied the theory of ‘like attracts like’ to the prison setting. He proposed that:

‘If you’ve got someone with a terrorist skill base that verges into organised criminal activities, they are likely to end up in tow with people who are organised criminals with the same sort of activities.’

This suggestion indicates that within the prison environment, individuals who share common criminal tendencies may attract one another potentially facilitating the emergence of a crime-terror nexus. It is important for any definition of the PCTN to consider how the similarities between criminals and terrorists may impact the dynamics of the nexus within prisons.

### **5.3.3 Reluctance**

Prisons are unique social environments where distinct subcultures emerge, shaped by the interactions, power dynamics, and identities of their residents. Criminologists argue that prisons have a particular ‘culture’ or ‘code’ which governs prisoners by informal and formal rules of the institution (Sykes, 1958; Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Crewe, 2005a; Kreager and Kruttschnitt, 2018). This ‘inmate code’ refers to a set of expectations about how imprisoned individuals should behave during their confinement (Young et al. 2023: 423) and reflects outside cultural and social values that specify the immorality of a crime (Emery, 1970). Inmates

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<sup>25</sup> The Woolwich Boys are a gang based in southeast London known for involvement in criminal activities such as drug trafficking and violence.

usually display a sense of justice and moral standards so may express resentment and anger to certain crimes (Jones, 2014: 94). Within this context, terrorists, particularly those convicted under Terrorism Act (TACT) offences, tend to be vilified by other inmates (Jones, 2014: 94).

The findings in this sub-theme confirm that some prisoners actively dislike terrorists and are hesitant to associate with them. For instance, Robert noted a consistent reluctance among some members of the prison population to engage with terrorists, based on his observations of interactions over his long policing career. This sentiment was echoed by 35% of the interviewees (n = 12), who indicated that inmates often feel apprehensive about associating with terrorists due to their notoriety and the potential stigma it could bring. There is a fear that being linked with TACT offenders could draw negative attention from both authorities and fellow inmates (Brandon, 2009b: 7), undermining criminals' efforts to stay undetected and avoid law enforcement scrutiny. Figure 10 illustrates the three areas within reluctance identified during this analysis which reinforce the individualistic nature of these interactions within the crime-terror nexus.

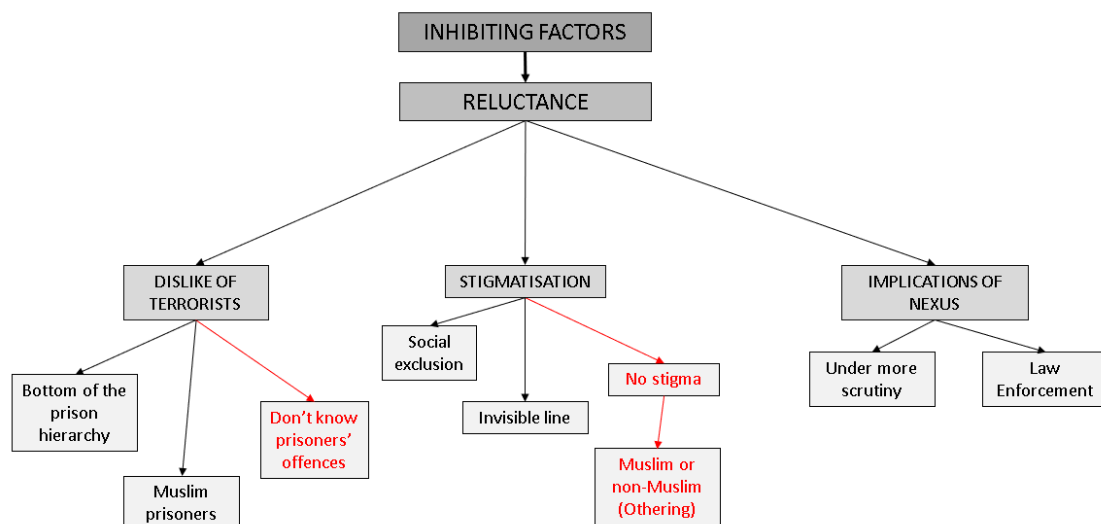


Figure 10: Reluctance. The red sub-themes represent the opposing viewpoint (Author's Own)

Within this sub-theme, racism and the process of categorising Muslim prisoners as outsiders ('othering'), both by fellow inmates and staff members, will be considered. This is prompted by the recognition that the data analysis revealed a more profound issue than simply a reluctance to associate. This discussion holds particular relevance considering the issue of racism within prisons, prominently highlighted by significant events like the murder of Zahib Mubarek in Feltham YOI (Bhui and Fossi, 2008: 49) and recent reviews such as the Thematic Review of 'The experiences of adult black male prisoners and black prison staff' by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2022). Moreover, the complex interaction between various prisoner attributes

(race, religion etc) that collectively shape an inmate's experience makes this sub-theme notably intricate (Loden and Rosener, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991).

#### 5.3.3.1 Dislike of terrorists

Three interviewees and two prisoners (9% of the sample) claimed that terrorists/TACT offenders are more likely to be viewed unfavourably by fellow inmates and have a low-status position. Therefore, this research argues that *if* TACT offenders provoke negative attitudinal responses from fellow inmates, then it will be difficult for them to interact and associate with criminals in order to form a nexus. This finding echoes studies of public citizens linking terrorism with negative emotional responses like fear and anger.<sup>26</sup> For example, Gregory (Debriefee with 33 years' experience) provides proactive and efficient questioning of prisoners in order to gather intelligence. He argued that, from his experience, the 'majority' of 'prisoners wouldn't want to socialise and associate with terrorist prisoners'. To build rapport with some inmates during debriefs, Gregory and the prisoner may discuss their mutual hatred for paedophiles<sup>27</sup> and terrorists. Numerous prisoners have disclosed to Gregory that they hate these two groups of offenders, who usually reside at the bottom of the prisoner hierarchy. Gregory provided an example of when the authorities had concerns about a specific prisoner, with knowledge of how to reactivate guns, forming a nexus with a terrorist. However, no nexus occurred because this prisoner 'hated' terrorists.

Furthermore, as a result of Islamist extremism currently being the largest terror threat faced by the UK in terms of volume and severity (HM Government, 2023a: 24) and due to misrepresentations of Muslims associated with violence and terrorism in Western media (Dunn, 2001; Shaheen, 2009; Rana, 2011), some prisoners disproportionately link 'terrorism' with 'Muslims'. This can result in prejudice and discrimination against Muslim inmates, whether they are terrorists or not (Cinnirella, 2012: 181; Marcus, 2015). The landscape of Muslim identity within Britain and Western societies has been shaped by the events of 9/11 and the aftermath (Modood, 2005: 199; Rana, 2011). Muslims have come to be perceived as the 'Other'—threatening British society, partly due to a widespread culture of intolerance and institutional racism towards Muslims (Marranci, 2009; Abbas, 2011; Rana, 2011; Wintle, 2016: 42; Silva, 2017). Hence, the findings identified that many establishments experience significant tension between Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners.<sup>28</sup> For instance, Gregory gave the example of the Piranha Gang, a loose collective of inmates within prisons in Liverpool and

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<sup>26</sup> See Dumont et al. 2003; Goodwin et al. 2005.

<sup>27</sup> In particular, there is negative stigma towards paedophiles because the victims are minors (Sapp and Vaughn, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> For discussions on this topic see Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008; Marcus, 2009; Liebling et al. 2012; Williams and Liebling, 2022.

Manchester who actively seek out Islamic offenders in order to assault them.<sup>29</sup> Gregory concluded that:

'From my experience though (and I am citing prisons here) 'ordinary' criminals have such distaste for terrorists that they are fundamentally opposed to assisting them.'

The analysis of the data revealed a more profound underlying phenomenon concerning the 'othering' of Muslim prisoners (Liebling et al. 2011: 17; Silva, 2017). The historical exclusion of Muslims from European societies, driven by perceived religious differences compared to Christians, remains significant for understanding the complexities faced by individuals marked as the 'other' (Modood, 2005; Selod and Embrick, 2013; Asfari et al. 2023: 366). The term 'Other' primarily refers to a member of a marginalised out-group, whose identity is perceived as being distinct from the dominant group (Shaker et al. 2021). The term 'Othering' is used to refer to phenomena of stereotyping and racialisation (Thomas-Olalade and Velho, 2011: 27). Arguably, the most extensively debated 'Other' in the modern European context is the Muslim 'Other', often framed in public discourse and debate as Europe's ultimate Other (Wintle, 2016). The data indicated the othering of Muslim prisoners—which constructs non-Muslims and Muslims as an us/them dichotomy (Richardson, 2004; Poole, 2011; Silva, 2017).

Equally, Adam, a Regional Prisons Coordinator, with extensive knowledge of prisons offered a similar argument to Gregory. He revealed that throughout his 19 years' experience in the police, he has spoken to some high-level criminals who informed him that they do not agree with terrorists talking about terrorism while inside prison. Adam said that these high-level criminals may 'cooperate [with terrorists] to make their life in prison better' but they will suffocate the opportunity for preaching, any 'terror activity' and conversations, such as 'going into the Trafford Centre and killing women and children', on the wings.

To supplement these interviewees, this study was able to gain insight into how some inmates see terrorists. In support of Adam and Gregory's argument, two prisoners expressed their hatred for terrorists when asked whether they socialise with prisoners convicted of terrorist related offences. Prisoner 51 viewed terrorists negatively. He argued that terrorists are 'fanatical' (Laqueur, 1999) and see themselves as elites of superior consciousness and perceptiveness (Borum, 2004):

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<sup>29</sup> This is the second known anti-Islam organisation set up in prisons. The first one is Death Before Dishonour.



3.1. Why? I SEE TERRORISTS AS SMALL HINDED TRUICS WHO SEE ONLY THEIR OWN VIEWPOINT AS RIGHT

YES		NO	
	To learn new things	✓	I don't want to socialise with them
	To transfer skills		No reason
	To teach them something	✓	No similar interests
	To benefit from a new relationship		Other: (please specify) THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS SUPERIOR OWNING RICHNESS AND OBLIVIOUS TO LOGIC OR REASON AND USUALLY FANATICAL.
	Because of similar interests		
	To obtain something		
	To gain something else		

(Prisoner 51)

Prisoner 39 thought all terrorists were 'vermin' which can be viewed as an offensive word for people who are unpleasant and harmful to society:

Terrorist are like  
Vermin in hiding like  
that of Rats. I have  
NO time for them.  
Male, Female, young  
or old.

(Prisoner 39)

Quite often, a rat is seen as unclean; as an inhabitant of earth's bowels and carriers of diseases (Biedermann, 1992: viii). This prisoner's dehumanising language takes the form of animal imagery that equates and reduces terrorism to sub-human behaviours. The remark evokes the rhetoric of extermination, in a metaphorical system within which the eradication of terrorists concerns hygiene. This degrading metaphor ('vermin') has also been used by the media to discuss terrorists and political leaders of majority-Muslim countries after September 11 (Steuter and Wills, 2010) which has the ability to affect public opinion and policy alike (Baum and Potter, 2008). If other inmates agree with this metaphor, the consequences may be more than rhetorical, instigating racism and prisoner abuse towards terrorists, who may also be Muslim.<sup>30</sup> This could lead to terrorists experiencing difficulty developing associations with criminals in order to form a PCTN.

<sup>30</sup> Such as the prisoner abuse documented at Abu Ghraib prison in Abū Ghurayb, Baghdad.

Nonetheless, some interviewees discredit this argument. In numerous European nations, imprisoned criminals interact with terrorists who frequently use false identities, concealing their true character from both fellow inmates and prison authorities (Cuthbertson, 2004; Shelley, 2014: 140). Some terrorists are convicted for criminal acts—so are able to thrive in prison, and recruit and train inmates (Cuthbertson, 2004: 19). Jennifer, an Intelligence Officer with 29 years' experience in the police, highlighted that most prisoners 'do not talk about their offences'. Similarly, she explained that if a prisoner is incarcerated for TACT offences, they do not usually admit their crimes, particularly 'if they've been in the system for a while and come into a new establishment'. Interestingly, three respondents (two in a Category C prison and one in a Category A prison) disclosed that they do not know other prisoners' offences and it is not something discussed openly. Therefore, these prisoners could not confirm whether they associate with terrorists. One of the prisoners revealed very honestly that:

'I do socialise with several foreigners who do not have a high opinion of the UK but to say they were terrorists—I cannot say'.

The Category A prisoner divulged that everyone is informed by reception that it could be 'dangerous' to reveal their conviction to other inmates. Therefore, many prisoners do not know other inmates' offences. Thus, even if prisoners dislike terrorists, they may be associating with them inadvertently whereby they are unaware they are interacting and possibly assisting a terrorist. Of note, some prisoners may use indirect cues as a basis for evaluation when they have little information on other inmates' convictions (Goffman, 1959). For instance, inmates may know of prisoners who have been detained in separation centres which may signal that they are a terrorist. Similarly, prisoners may read or watch the news which often publicises the details of individuals that have been convicted of terrorism offences. Likewise, it is important to consider that certain terrorists might be comfortable with revealing their convictions because of opportunities to preach in prison (Rushchenko, 2018).

#### 5.3.3.2 Stigmatisation

The findings from the data confirm that stigmatisation is important in shaping social dynamics within prisons, influencing how certain individuals or groups are perceived and treated by others. Prison systems are commonly seen as hierarchical institutions, in which life revolves around social hierarchies, with specific individuals or groups attaining elevated status positions compared to others (Tittle, 1972; Kalinich, 1980; Goodstein and Wright, 1989; Sapp and Vaughn, 1990; De Viggiani, 2007). Prisoner hierarchies are often based on inmates' perceived physical prowess, personality and offence (Clemmer, 1958; Sykes and Messinger, 1960; Winfree et al. 2002). For example, drug offenders and robbers usually have the highest levels of social status and acceptance within the prison institution, and sex offenders have the

lowest (Sapp and Vaughn, 1990: 4). If prisoners are to associate and form a nexus with terrorists, one would expect them to have a high social standing and be respected among inmates (Veldhuis, 2016).

Yet, in the midst of ongoing terrorism and the accompanying adverse emotional reactions such as othering, racism, Islamophobia<sup>31</sup> (Dumont et al. 2003; Goodwin et al. 2005; Rana, 2011), terrorists constitute a category that frequently encounters stigma and social exclusion (William, 2016: 23). Within the data, three interviewees explained that some prisoners are apprehensive about associating with terrorists (i.e., TACT offenders) because of their notoriety and fear that they might be stigmatised by other inmates (Brandon, 2009b: 7). For instance, Alex (Police Officer with 25 years' experience) suggested that some inmates display a sense of justice and moral values during their time in prison. Whilst the main objective for organised criminals is profit, Alex questioned whether there might be 'standards amongst criminals' as to who they will associate with and sell to, in order to make money. Alex stated anecdotally that just because these prisoners are 'in it for profit' it does not necessarily 'mean they will sell to anybody'. Equally, both Adam (Regional Prisons Coordinator) and Patrick (PIO) expressed their views by introducing the metaphor of an 'invisible line' that the majority of prisoners will not cross. They explained that criminals would 'help' terrorists—but there is a limit to what assistance and support they would provide. Adam stated that:

'I don't think it extends to OCG members being hand in hand, helping terrorists to commit terrorism. I don't... I think there's that invisible line that we don't see, where the majority of OCG members will not cross.'

To support this finding, a category A prisoner disclosed that he does not associate with terrorists because:

'Other prisoners think I will be radicalised and start having extremist views about how terrorism rule[s] the world'.

The notion of 'guilty by affiliation' can be inferred, suggesting that these prisoners could be unfairly linked to the attributes or actions of TACT offenders solely based on their association. This observation suggests that aligning with a stigmatised group, such as terrorists, could lead to unfavourable consequences, including stigma and social exclusion. Hence, some prisoners choose to avoid this stigmatised group to avert negative repercussions.

However, research shows that not everyone in a stigmatised group experiences negative responses, despite all being formally labelled with a stigmatised identity (Moore et al. 2016).

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<sup>31</sup> Islamophobia is the unjustified animosity towards Islam, leading to unfair discrimination against Muslims and their exclusion from mainstream political and social life (Asfari et al. 2023).

Three interviewees argued that terrorists often achieve an elevated status (O’Gara, 2021: 7; Hall, 2022), noting that there is not the same level of stigma around terrorists as there is with paedophiles. For example, when discussing the nexus with James (Senior Government Advisor), he revealed that it is ‘quite clear...TACT offenders and non-TACT offenders are associating’. James explained that in his naivety he thought that terrorists in prison ‘would be the lowest of the low, like a paedophile’. However, James discovered during his career as a Senior Government Advisor that terrorists often have a ‘certain status’. James described some terrorists as:

‘Intriguing because... they’ve done something which isn’t just for grubby pecuniary motives, and they exercise a sort of fascination and a degree of influence.’

It is important to acknowledge that the varying perspectives on whether a terrorist holds social status in prison may be attributed to the distinct characteristics of each establishment (see discussion below on contextual factors). Factors such as prison culture, and the inmate population can have a significant impact (see Liebling et al. 2012). In prisons with strong macho cultures and aggressive social norms, terrorists might enjoy elevated social standing. Conversely, in prisons with more conciliatory norms that discourage offensive and aggressive behaviour, being perceived as dangerous could diminish one’s status and result in social exclusion (Veldhuis, 2016: 73).

Furthermore, Natasha disclosed from her experience as a PIO that there used to be some stigmatisation around terrorists because they committed horrendous crimes and were given a very long sentence. She suggested that there is not a stigma around terrorists, which is similar to sex offenders. Natasha and Larry (Police Intelligence Officer) broached the topic of the motivations for why organised criminals conduct criminality explaining that most criminals will work with ‘anyone’ as long as they achieve their aims (profit). They suggested that any association and nexus ‘comes down to money’.

Intriguingly, two prisoners provided support for the lack of stigmatisation around terrorists. A prisoner argued that inmates are encouraged to associate with ‘all’ prisoners and the demands of the various dominant social groups seem unavoidable for learning, safety and survival:

There are No Restrictions To prevent Socialising  
and Some Learn Things From them.  
Some prisoners Associate with Terrorist Prisoners  
To Get protection, essentials ie food, vapes etc...  
You are encouraged to mix with all prisoners  
The Far right Terrorist Stick To their own kind  
Whereas other Terrorists mix with everyone  
and anyone They push Their luck and Look  
for foot Soldiers.

(Prisoner 46)

Arguably, this comment, which is supported by the literature (Sykes, 1958; Corley, 2001; Powis et al. 2019; Ruschenko, 2019), implies that in most prisons, inmates cannot avoid others and escape the demands of the prison environment. Social interaction and belonging to a group, helps inmates escape some of the pains of imprisonment despite certain terrorists attempting to recruit 'foot soldiers' (analogous to arguments in Section 6.2.2). This comment also highlights the tendency of far-right terrorists to remain insular within their own group whilst potentially exhibiting discrimination and racism against others, assuming this might apply to Islamic terrorists.

Similarly, an inmate from a category A prison explained that an offender's conviction is irrelevant when determining their social standing inside prison. Rather, any status and association concerns religion and in particular, whether you are Muslim or non-Muslim. He continued by using dualistic terms (Pilkington, 2001; Marranci, 2009: 109) to explain that associations and social status concerns religion:

We All get by on A daily basis but if  
Push comes to Shove it's All About muslim  
and non-muslim Prison violence, before coming  
to dispersal i never seen religion run A Prison  
like now Adays but it All Comes down to Personal  
experiences

(Prisoner 30)

This prisoner's comment demonstrates that terrorists are not automatically at the bottom of the inmate hierarchy, thus may not face stigma and social exclusion. Instead, it depends on other social categories, such as religion. This has been noted in previous research as relating

to race relations in penal settings, whereby the over-representation of specific groups may lead to certain forms of prisoner unity (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001). Although academics highlight a lack of understanding of the central tenets of intersectionality (Bauer et al. 2021), the prisoner's comment helps to demonstrate that inmates are shaped by simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories, such as religion, ethnicity and their criminal offence (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality posits that when considering just a single category (such as race, religion, or class) it fails to address the complexities of any issue (Crenshaw, 1991: 61; Bowleg, 2012).

Furthermore, the above comment helps to confirm that religion is an extremely important part of a prisoners' identity, which can affect everyday life (Spalek, 2002; Beckford et al. 2005; Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007; Marranci, 2009: 79). Within certain maximum-security prisons, a heightened level of violence towards Muslims, frequently seen as the 'other' is owed to the perception that the religion of Islam has become synonymous with acts of terrorism (Rana, 2011). Therefore, Muslim prisoners become the targets of discrimination and prejudice, sometimes by other inmates (Ansari, 2004; Marcus, 2009; Marranci, 2009; Liebling et al. 2012; Veldhuis, 2016; Williams and Liebling, 2022). A survey by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2010) revealed that Muslims are frustrated about high levels of discrimination and social rejection as well as being stereotypically portrayed as violent extremists. Such levels of racism and othering is often due to concerns about Islamic radicalisation in prison, and particular animosities held toward members of the Muslim faith.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, some scholars argue that journalistic narratives concerning 'Muslim terrorism' (Karim, 2003: 81) emphasise stereotypes of Muslims and advance limited and often inaccurate information about Islam (Marranci, 2009; Steuter and Willis, 2009). Arguably, there has been a level of moral panic and systematic dehumanisation of Muslims since 9/11 (Kuttab, 2007; Esses et. al. 2008; Rana, 2011: 50; Nobel, 2012). Hence, when reflecting on the data, one could argue that specific inmates might continue to harbour negative attitudes about some terrorists, particularly when they perceive them to be of the Muslim faith.<sup>33</sup>

#### 5.3.3.3 Implications from the authorities

Criminals may be reluctant to cooperate with terrorists due to their differing operational goals and the risks involved. Criminals typically seek to operate under the radar, maintaining secrecy to avoid law enforcement detection, whereas terrorists often aim to draw public attention to

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<sup>32</sup> Numerous interviewees voiced concerns at the growing Muslim population gaining dominant positions in the prison hierarchy and the tension between Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners. Interest in Muslim prisoners is quite recent (Ammar et al. 2004) and arguably in response to of the mass media's focus upon the issue of radicalisation (Marranci, 2009: 74). This is a complex issue which will not be fully unravelled in this study. For further information see literature such as Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008; Marcus, 2009; Marranci, 2009; Abbas, 2011; Liebling et al, 2012; Williams and Liebling, 2022.

<sup>33</sup> See HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2010) for further discussions.

further their political objectives (Dishman, 2001; Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Sanderson, 2004; Wang, 2010; Hoffman, 2017). This fundamental difference in approach creates a natural reluctance among criminals to associate with terrorists, as any affiliation could bring heightened law enforcement scrutiny. Given the severe harm that terrorist activities can cause and the significant pressure on nations to combat terrorism (Sanderson, 2004), authorities tend to prioritise CT efforts, particularly in the aftermath of major attacks. For instance, following the terrorist attacks in 2019 and 2020,<sup>34</sup> the UK government implemented the most extensive overhaul of terrorist sentencing and supervision in decades to enhance public safety (MoJ, 2022e). The introduction of stringent disruptive measures for those posing a security threat (Home Office, 2023) further amplifies the risks of association. As a result, criminals may avoid collaboration with terrorists to steer clear of unwanted attention and potential repercussions, both in the community and within prison environments.

Twenty-six percent of interviewees (n = 9) and a prisoner explained that in cases where TACT offenders are known, some inmates will not associate with them because of the fears of repercussions from the authorities. The findings identified that if criminals interact or converge with terrorists it tends to draw unwelcome law enforcement attention to their illicit activities (Sanderson, 2004; Alda and Sala, 2014). For instance, an inmate in a category A prison wrote that one of the reasons he would not associate with terrorist offenders is because he:

'[does not] want the hassle of being tormented and harassed by the authority'.

Likewise, interviewees Patrick (PIO) and Terry (Senior CT Intelligence Manager) explained that criminals will 'socially distance' themselves from TACT offenders if it will bring attention to them and their profits. Significantly, there has been a recent push to clamp down on terrorist activity in prisons in England and Wales following the report by Jonathan Hall KC (MoJ, 2022b). Thus, Ivan (Prison Intelligence Manager), Jeffrey (Senior Police Officer) and Mark (Senior Police Officer) conveyed that terrorists are under more scrutiny than organised criminals inside prison. When Ivan was deliberating on the distinct types of crime-terror nexus, he argued that most terrorists are 'too closely monitored' inside prison. Therefore, criminals would only associate and work with terrorists that were 'flying under the radar'. Similarly, Mark queried why organised criminals would want to be involved with terrorists given the heightened 'scrutiny' and use of 'intrusive tactics' (such as covert surveillance, property interference, undercover policing, etc) to disrupt terrorist activity in prison.

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<sup>34</sup> E.g., London Bridge stabbing, Manchester shopping centre, Streatham, and Reading Park.

Furthermore, a jihadist prisoner convicted of a TACT offence revealed his experience of associating with inmates when answering the open question in the questionnaire. He divulged that it could stunt prisoners' 'progression' if they socialise with him:

- My experience with associations has been an eye opener. Staff have had verbal discussions with NON TACT prisoners to not socialise with myself because of my offence. As this could impact the non-TACT prisoners progression.

(Prisoner 27)

This comment, from a category A prisoner, demonstrates that staff will actively discourage non-TACT inmates to socialise with terrorists because it could have implications on their (non-TACT) development and enhancement within the prison estate. This comment provides further evidence of racism and the process of othering of Muslim prisoners. The linking of TACT offences to the Muslim faith has led to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes that unfairly associate Muslim prisoners with extremism and terrorism. This unfair generalisation creates an atmosphere wherein inmates, solely due to their religious affiliation, face unwarranted suspicion and discrimination, ostensibly in the name of national security, even when they have had no direct engagement with TACT offences (Selod and Embrick, 2013: 652). This is similar to the discussion in Chapter 7, where certain prison guards intentionally overlook particular activities to maintain the prison's operational stability. This prisoner then disclosed that prison staff would never reveal this information because it would be viewed as 'discriminatory'.

This sub-theme was particularly prevalent when discussing criminals supplying firearms to terrorists. Joseph used the example of the 2015 Paris terror attacks to support his argument. He explained that the individuals who supplied the weapons for the Paris terrorist attacks were 'hunted down relentlessly' by law enforcement. This transmitted a warning to criminals not to conduct business with terrorists. Therefore, Joseph argued that criminals may be reluctant to assist radicalised individuals due to the repercussions from authorities. Equally, when Robert disclosed that he had experienced some terrorists acquiring a firearm from their criminal connections in prison, he divulged that this was rarely the case in the community. Robert explained that these criminals were usually aware that the buyers were radicalised individuals, and they hesitated to supply weapons, fearing they would become an accessory to any attack. Consequently, the nexus between crime and terrorism within the UK is often unintentional, as criminals may be unaware that they are assisting a terrorist.



### 5.3.4 Profit versus ideology dichotomy

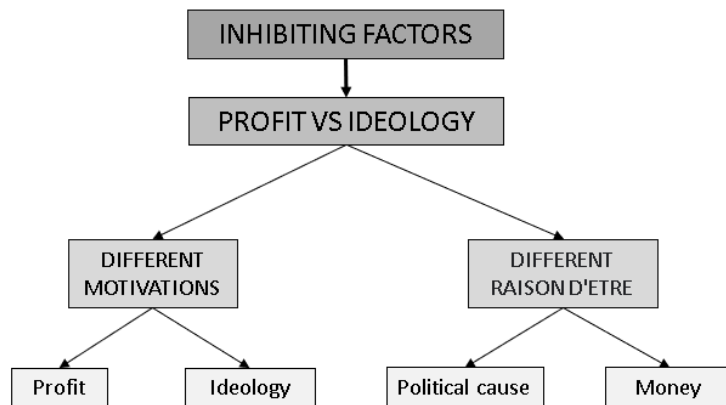
The final sub-theme under individualistic is the 'profit versus ideology' dichotomy:<sup>35</sup> criminals are typically seen as prioritising financial gain, while terrorists are motivated primarily by political and ideological factors (Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Hoffman, 2017). Historically, criminals and terrorists have been perceived as distinct entities due to their differences in culture, operations, and motivations (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Dishman, 2001; Sanderson, 2004; Shelley et al, 2005; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007; Omelicheva and Markowitz, 2021b). This divergence is often pronounced, with specific terrorist groups driven by strong religious or ideological convictions that differ markedly from the values or affiliations seen in OCGs. For instance, there may be significant discord between an Islamic jihadist group and a Catholic mafia (Contegiacomo, 2007). Although certain criminals may employ terrorism as a tactic and some terrorists might engage in criminal activities for funding, this fundamental disparity between profit-driven and ideology-driven actors has traditionally hindered full convergence (Dishman, 2001) or symbiotic cooperation (Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Sanderson, 2004; Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007).

Given this background, the 'profit versus ideology' dichotomy is a key concept underpinning most theoretical models of the crime-terror nexus. Crime is generally viewed as a non-ideological and non-political phenomenon, while terrorism incorporates a significant ideological component (Ballina, 2011). This separation reinforces the perception of criminals as profit-maximising individuals and terrorists as ideologically motivated actors. However, the dichotomy's impact is not absolute; its influence varies among individuals, making the formation of the crime-terror nexus an inherently individualistic phenomenon. Furthermore, as Dishman (2005) notes, when organisational structures disintegrate, these networks may fragment, increasing the likelihood of actors attempting to bridge the gap between crime and terrorism.

As illustrated in Figure 11, the interviewees discussed the differences in motivations and *raison d'être* between criminals and terrorists, highlighting how these divergent aims serve as a barrier for some inmates, while others may choose to overlook them depending on their personal circumstances and goals. This variability contributes to the individualistic nature of the PCTN, where the extent to which the profit vs ideology distinction influences decisions to collaborate, is highly dependent on the perspectives of the individual actors involved.

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<sup>35</sup> It is also known as the greed versus grievance debate (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Petrich, 2022).



*Figure 11: Profit vs Ideology Dichotomy (Author's Own)*

#### 5.3.4.1 Different motivations

Four interviewees considered the differing motivations of criminals and terrorists inhibiting any nexus inside prison. For instance, Patrick, a PIO at a Category A prison, has not witnessed any skills transfer from criminals to terrorists because of their differing aims. Patrick observed that the divergent goals between criminals ('to make lots of money') and terrorists ('spreading the word') limit collaboration, suggesting that organised crime groups (OCGs) may only support terrorists up to a point, as deeper involvement would attract unwanted law enforcement attention:

'In some areas you think the two worlds wouldn't get on. So, I think the OCG side would help, but up to a limit. I don't think they'd start--- hypothetically speaking, if they were passing on firearms to be used by CT people, they know they would have the world on them very, very quickly.'

(Patrick, PIO)

Similarly, Robert suggested that criminals are interested in money, and terrorists are motivated by ideology. He explained that during his lengthy career, he rarely encountered the crime-terror nexus because 'terrorists operate differently and are motivated entirely by different motives'. He noted, however, that the unique environment of UK prisons is one environment where he did witness some form of collaboration. This observation highlights that the profit vs ideology dichotomy may not always hold in prison settings, where different social dynamics can facilitate unexpected associations.

#### 5.3.4.2 Different raison d'etre

A few of the interviewees pointed out the contrasting reasons for existence between criminals and terrorists. To clarify, these groups or individuals are committed to their fundamental convictions, ensuring that their central principle, or *raison d'être*, continues to hold strategic

significance (Phillips and Kamen, 2014). Robert said that the two actors are 'fundamentally different'. Jeffrey (Senior Police Officer) explicitly stated that 'SOC nominals and CT nominals are very, very different': terrorists are motivated by ideology and criminals are driven by profit and power. Additionally, Marcus unequivocally referred to Makarenko's 'convergence thesis' (2004) when arguing that it is important to acknowledge that terrorists are not *just* criminals; they are *individuals* with a political cause which is 'part [of] their raison d'etre' or organising principle. Marcus is a Senior Police Officer with 26 years' experience in the field and possesses exceptional knowledge on the crime-terror nexus. Marcus argued that despite terrorists' ideological motivations, interactions with profit-driven criminals can still occur. He acknowledged that terrorists possess a political cause integral to their identity, unlike ordinary criminals whose actions are primarily driven by financial gain. He concluded by saying that:

'You have to acknowledge that their [terrorist's] motivation is not just about money, which for organised criminals it largely is.'

This illustrates that the profit vs ideology dichotomy does not always prevent the formation of a crime-terror nexus, as some individuals may overlook these differing motivations in specific contexts.

The profit vs ideology dichotomy may oversimplify the complex and individualistic nature of criminal behaviour, especially within the unique context of prisons. Many criminal actions are influenced by emotional, expressive, or situational factors, highlighting the complex interplay of human psychology in criminal conduct. While some inmates may strictly adhere to the profit vs ideology separation, viewing it as a barrier to collaboration, others may overlook these differences, finding common ground based on personal circumstances, shared experiences, or opportunistic reasoning. This can blur the lines between profit and ideology. Thus, the PCTN emerges as a highly individualistic phenomenon.

To summarise, this research highlights that the PCTN is a complex, individualistic phenomenon shaped by personal traits, shared similarities, reluctance to associate, and differing motivations. It is not a static occurrence but rather a product of personal and situational dynamics within prisons. Shared traits like nationality, religion, or criminal background often underpin relationships, while biases and prejudices influence interactions, with some inmates avoiding terrorists while others engage unknowingly. The profit-versus-ideology dichotomy, traditionally a barrier to collaboration, is blurred in prisons, where shared grievances (see Section 5.4.1) or opportunistic reasoning (see Section 6.3) foster alliances, making the nexus a flexible and individualistic phenomenon.

## 5.4 Contextual

In July 2019, the UN Security Council acknowledged in Resolution UNSC 2482 (2019: 1) that 'the nature and scope of the linkages between terrorism and OC, whether domestic or transnational, **vary by context**'. This highlights that the crime-terror nexus is context-specific capable of manifesting in various situations (Keen and Moiseienko, 2018). Analysis of the data identified that in addition to individualistic, the PCTN is contextual, meaning it adapts and presents itself differently depending on the unique circumstances and surroundings in which it operates. This argument reflects interactionism, a resolution to the person-situation debate, which emphasises the continuous interaction between individual traits and situational factors in shaping behaviour (Magnusson and Endler, 1977; Fleeson, 2004). In the context of the PCTN, both individual traits and contextual conditions contribute to interactions and relationships. Senior CT Officer, Tony, most effectively highlighted the complexity of these associations by suggesting that they arise from a variety of reasons, rather than a single, defined purpose. He noted that:

'These people are thrown together in that space and it's inevitable that they're going to continue to associate in one-way shape or form [co-locate]. It's sort of context specific and individual specific to a degree.'

To support the contextual nature of the PCTN, the analysis revealed three underlying areas (refer to Figure 12).

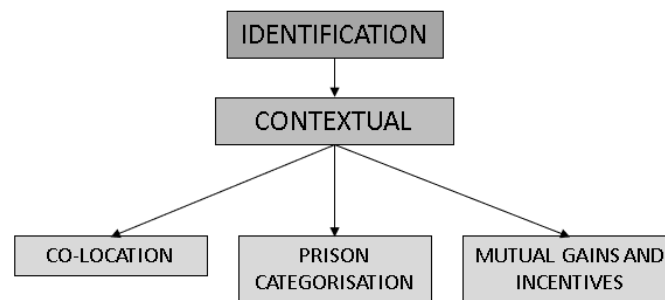


Figure 12: Contextual (Author's Own)

### 5.4.1 Co-location

Drawing on Basra and Neumann's *new* crime-terror nexus (2016) and Felson's offender convergence settings theory (2006), this research argues that where criminals and terrorists are co-located in areas where there is a shared grievance towards the state, it is convenient, if not inevitable, to interact (Shelley et al. 2005; 2014; Felson, 2006; Asal et al. 2016; Patel, 2023: 61). In other words, the prison setting acts as a convergence point where these two individuals are almost inevitably led to interact. The forced intimacy of the prison environment,

as Waldram (2012: 76) described it, creates ‘unintentional communities’ which is in contrast to the outside world, where individuals typically have multiple friends to rely on, encounters between these two groups or individuals are rare, and the presence of the crime-terror nexus is less pronounced within the UK.

This research has borrowed the label ‘co-location’ from Shelley et al (2005) and Shelley (2014). In settings where petty or organised criminals interact with terrorists such as in prisons, ‘there is more shared behaviour and a process of mutual learning’ (Shelley et al. 2005: 34). The concept of co-location within the crime-terror nexus highlights the unique environment of prisons, where criminals and terrorists, who would otherwise rarely interact in the outside world, are brought into close proximity. This research argues that prisons, so-called ‘melting pots’ (Shelley et al. 2005; Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019), lead to greater interactions between criminals and terrorists due to their shared space, grievances towards the state, and limited choices of association.

Empirical evidence from this research supports the co-location phenomenon, with 65% of interviewees (n = 22) observing that the prison setting brings together criminal and terrorist milieus, creating opportunities for interaction and networking that are rare outside of prison (Podmore, 2012: 137; Sinai, 2014; Basra and Neumann, 2019). This co-location creates a form of forced intimacy—where a single personal relationship may be called upon to sustain various functions (Cohen and Taylor, 1972: 75-6). Anthony, a Prison Intelligence Manager, noted that these interactions often manifest as ‘relationships of proximity’, describing the concept using ‘six degrees of separation’, indicating that within the confined prison environment, individuals are connected by chains of acquaintances.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Jerry highlighted the reduced surveillance inside prison, contrasting it with the ‘goal surveillance culture’ outside, which allows for closer and often unchecked interactions among inmates. Jerry is a former Prison Governor with 25 years’ experience and extensive knowledge of prison establishments. This expert knowledge enhances the credibility of his remark as it can be characterised by a high degree of reflexivity of coherence (Bogner et al. 2018: 655).

This argument aligns with the observations of Petrich (2021) and Forest (2022), who note that geographical proximity, like that found in sub-Saharan Africa or European prisons, naturally facilitates the crime-terror nexus. Interviewees Adam, Patrick, and Dennis described these prison interactions as forms of ‘cooperation’, where criminals and terrorists utilise each other’s resources and expertise, as long as it serves their individual interests (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Dennis (PIO) remarked on this dynamic, stating, ‘they [criminals and terrorists] will

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<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, this could also be applied to the potentials of corruption and association between prisoners and staff.

cooperate with each other better than the police and HMPPS give them credit for,' suggesting that authorities underestimate such associations. Likewise, David, a Ports Officer, observed that the nexus is often 'a loose collection of dispersed separate relationships,' suggesting that these relationships are formed more out of convenience, or happenstance, than deliberate strategy.

Furthermore, shared grievances towards the state can foster a sense of 'dirty togetherness' (Shelley, 2014), where ideological differences become secondary to the common goal of undermining government authorities (Hesterman, 2013). Likewise, O'Donnell (2023) observed that in the H Blocks, prisoners came together in opposition to what they viewed as a shared enemy. The prison environment served as a continuation of their broader struggle, reinforced by strong community support from outside the institution. Thus, the data highlighted that the PCTN is strongly driven by a shared grievance not just towards the state, but also towards the authorities and the prison service (Powis et al. 2021). Isaac (Senior Government Advisor) noted that 'prisons are ideal incubators for the development of grievance', emphasising how imprisonment serves to unite individuals in opposition to law and order. Patrick (PIO) similarly pointed out that while criminals and terrorists would typically not associate with each other outside prison, their proximity in confinement, coupled with the shared hostility towards the prison service, often leads to cooperation. Patrick stated:

'On the streets they [terrorists and criminals] wouldn't speak to each other, and they would have no time of day for each other. But because they are in such a close confinement and the prison service is the joint enemy, then that's why they will cooperate and get on.'

This research contends that prisons can be identified as 'offender convergence settings' (Felson, 2006; Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019), where co-location and a shared grievance towards the authorities, create fundamental environmental conditions that drive the crime-terror nexus. As Hesterman (2013: 170) notes, 'ideology is no concern when the shared enemy is the state,' implying that cooperation between the two groups or individuals can occur even in the absence of ideological alignment. However, while Felson's concept of offender convergence is valuable, it can be seen as somewhat one-dimensional. Felson's theory assumes that individuals will act uniformly based on their immediate social context, potentially neglecting the influence of personal histories, individual ideologies, and life experiences in shaping behaviour. This critique calls for a more nuanced understanding of the nexus, one that accounts for both the environmental conditions *and* the individual factors (as discussed in Section 5.3) that contribute to the dynamics of criminal and terrorist interactions within the prison context.

### 5.4.2 Different prison security categorisation

Every prison is different (Crewe, 2009; Liebling, 2004; Ugelvik and Dullum, 2012). Thirty-two interviewees (97%) unanimously agreed that each prison operates as a microcosm of society, reflecting distinct social, cultural, and operational characteristics (Sykes, 1958; Fludernik, 2019; South, 2023). Liebling et al. (2011) compared public and private sector prisons, finding that public sector prisons tend to be ‘heavy’ and oppressive. This atmosphere, according to prisoners, was produced by the attitudes and behaviour of uniformed staff. Compared to their private sector counterparts, uniformed staff in public sector prisons exhibited more punitive, cynical, and disrespectful attitudes towards prisoners, with a stronger sense that prisoners were undeserving, irredeemable, and unworthy of respect. This contrast highlights some of the differences between prison environments and how these can influence prison culture and dynamics. For instance, drawing upon metaphorical language, Scott and Matthew (both PIOs) likened prisons to ‘the Vatican’, suggesting an environment of unique structure and influence. Jim (PIO) characterised prisons as a ‘small village’, complete with their own internal dynamics including a ‘health care’, a ‘police force’, and a ‘judiciary’. These distinctions create unique contexts that influence the dynamics of prisoner interactions, including the potential for the crime-terror nexus.

In particular, the security category of a prison shapes the dynamics of the crime-terror nexus. Prisons have four categories of security,<sup>37</sup> as originally outlined in the Mountbatten Report (MoJ, 2020), with each category reflecting differing levels of risk and governance. For example, high-security Category A prisons, housing long-term and high-risk inmates, differ profoundly from the open environments of Category D prisons, where inmates can engage with the community unescorted (James, 2005). Reflecting on these variations, seven interviewees specifically linked the presence and nature of the PCTN to the security category of the institution. For example, when presented with a question regarding the occurrence of the PCTN, Christopher (Prison Prevent Lead [PPL]) expressed the complexity of the matter, deeming it a ‘really difficult question’ because any existence of the nexus varies in each establishment depending on the prison security categorisation.

Furthermore, Matthew (PIO) (echoed by interviewees Christopher, Jim and Daniel) explained that Category A prisons, with their higher density of TACT offenders serving long sentences, create an environment where interaction between criminals and terrorists is more likely. This observation supports the argument that high-security prisons are particularly susceptible to fostering the crime-terror nexus due to their unique conditions. As Thomas and Zaitzow (2004) and Hamm (2007) found, maximum-security prisons are more likely to produce radicalised

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<sup>37</sup> Category A (holding the most dangerous prisoners), B, C and D (low security conditions [MoJ, 2020]).

prisoners than lower security institutions, largely because they tend to have more serious gang problems and politically charged living spaces (Williams and Liebling, 2023). These factors create a ‘Petri dish’ in which terrorism can grow and prosper, amplifying the complexity of managing such environments (Hamm, 2007: 110).

In contrast, lower-category prisons, such as Categories C and D, have less TACT offenders and thus fewer opportunities for direct interaction between terrorists and criminals. Daniel (PIO) highlighted this difference, suggesting that the coexistence of these groups is less frequent in such settings. Nonetheless, as demonstrated by the case of Khairi Saadallah—the 2020 Reading terrorist attacker who was exposed to Islamist radicalisation in a Category C prison (Ehsan, 2021)—the nexus is not entirely absent in lower-security environments given the presence of extremist inmates convicted of crime-related offences (see section 5.3.1.2; Cuthbertson, 2004). Thus, whereas high-security prisons may provide a more concentrated setting for interactions due to the higher density of TACT offenders, lower-security environments are not immune to this phenomenon. The unique dynamics within each prison category reflect how situational factors—such as the composition of the inmate population and the level of institutional oversight (see Chapter 7)—interact with individual traits to shape any PCTN.

To summarise, the PCTN is shaped by the categorisation and operational dynamics of each prison. High-security prisons may amplify opportunities for interaction through the co-location of TACT offenders and SOC criminals, while lower-category establishments still present risks, albeit less frequently. Building on this, Chapter 9 will explore the intersection between ‘black hole prisons’ (as discussed in Chapter 7) and prison security categorisation to provide a framework to help identify which prisons are most likely to promote the PCTN.

### **5.4.3 Mutual gains and incentives**

The final sub-theme within contextual factors highlights that, as indicated by eight interviewees, the nature of relationships between criminal and terrorist prisoners can be influenced by what each party has to offer or gain (Makarenko, 2004; Dishman, 2005; Horgan, 2005; Felson, 2006). Matthew suggested that a prisoner might support a terrorist inmate when it serves their criminal objectives. Likewise, Ivan explained that the dynamics of any nexus depend on what an individual has ‘got to offer’. These remarks imply that involvement in the crime-terror nexus is influenced by the incentives and opportunities available to individuals within the prison environment.

Four other interviewees highlighted that inmates may be more inclined to engage in the nexus if they perceive a tangible benefit or resource that serves their interests. Joseph described this collaboration as a form of ‘synergy’, where mutual advantages drive interactions. Equally,



Adam emphasised that the nexus thrives when inmates assist and benefit one another, framing this cooperation as a key component of the nexus. Liebling and Maruna (2005) highlight how such interactions are often rooted in the structural and relational dynamics of the prison environment, where negotiations and exchanges have a significant impact. These findings reinforce the idea that the PCTN is context-specific, determined by the mutual gains perceived by those involved.

The theme of contextual factors points out the adaptive and situational nature of the PCTN, which evolves based on the specific circumstances and environments in which it operates. Drawing on Felson's theory of 'offender convergence settings,' this research identifies prisons as spaces where co-location and shared grievances against the state create fertile conditions for interaction. These conditions, particularly pronounced in high-security establishments, shape the opportunities and drivers for collaboration between criminals and terrorist offenders. Moreover, the analysis highlights that such alliances are often guided by pragmatic considerations, where mutual gains and incentives override ideological divides. Together, these findings emphasise that the PCTN is not a uniform phenomenon but a complex, context-dependent interaction of environmental, structural, and individual factors.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has laid the foundation for defining the PCTN, addressing a significant gap in the literature by presenting an original, data-driven understanding of this phenomenon. The analysis reveals that the PCTN is neither static nor universal but instead a highly individualistic and contextual phenomenon, shaped by the unique traits of prisoners and the specific conditions within each prison environment.

A key finding is the individualistic nature of the PCTN, where the unique characteristics, motivations, and circumstances of prisoners have a pivotal role. As highlighted, prisoners are not a homogenous group; their interactions are shaped by factors such as their personal backgrounds, shared similarities (e.g., nationality, religion, or criminal history), and the incentives they perceive. The profit versus ideology dichotomy further highlights the variability in prisoner behaviour. While criminals often prioritise financial gain and terrorists are driven by ideological goals, some prisoners find ways to align these differing motivations, forming opportunistic alliances based on mutual benefit. Conversely, reluctance to associate with terrorists—due to stigma, moral objections, or fear of repercussions—demonstrates that the nexus does not form uniformly but depends heavily on individual preferences and perceptions.

Additionally, the presence of extremist inmates convicted of crime-related offences complicates the dynamics of the PCTN. These individuals, who are not formally classified as terrorists but exhibit extremist tendencies whilst exhibiting a lower profile with reduced scrutiny,

can have a significant role in fostering the nexus by interacting with both criminal and terrorist prisoners. However, I have decided not to include extremist inmates convicted of crime-related offences in the definition of the PCTN (see Section 9.2.3).

The findings also reveal the contextual nature of the PCTN, shaped by co-location, prison security categorisation, and mutual incentives. The forced proximity of criminals and terrorist prisoners, particularly in high-security establishments, fosters opportunities for interaction. Shared grievances against the authorities and pragmatic considerations often override ideological divides, facilitating collaboration. This situational variability highlights the importance of prison environments in shaping the dynamics of the PCTN.

Building on these findings, this chapter offers a data-driven definition of the PCTN as:

A context-dependent phenomenon within prison environments, characterised by six distinct types of interaction between criminals (SOC and non-SOC) and terrorist prisoners (any ideology). The PCTN is shaped by individual traits, mutual incentives, and the specific situational factors of each prison establishment.

Chapter 9 will deepen the discussion around this definition, exploring how the intersection of prison security categorisation and the concept of 'failed state' prisons shapes the conditions for the PCTN. This chapter thus represents the first step in systematically defining and understanding the PCTN. The next chapter explores the factors that facilitate the formation of a nexus between criminal and terrorist prisoners, identifying and classifying two main categories of interaction.

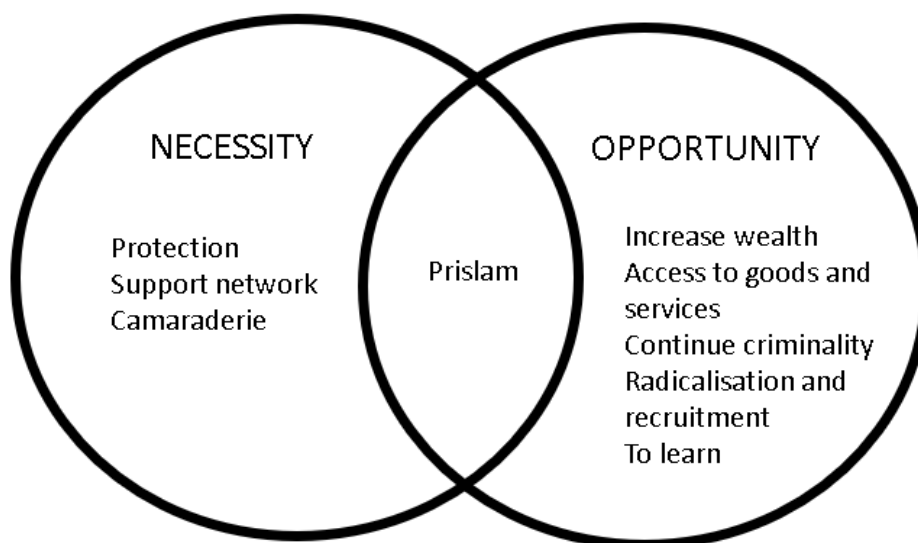
## **Chapter 6 PRISON CRIME-TERROR NEXUS INTERACTIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines what promotes the Prison Crime-Terror Nexus (PCTN), classifying two primary types of interaction which appear to incentivise criminal and terrorist prisoners forming a nexus, based on data gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and letters. The central argument presented in the previous chapter were that the PCTN is a highly individualistic and contextual phenomenon, shaped by the distinct traits of prisoners and the specific conditions within each prison environment. Having established a clear working definition of the PCTN, this chapter now explores the factors that may drive criminals and terrorists to network and details the two distinct types of PCTN interactions.

The concept of a crime-terror nexus first emerged in the 1990s, with Makarenko (2004) arguing that this time period marked the consolidation of the nexus. However, identifying the interactions between (organised) crime and terrorism remains challenging due to the evolving nature of both phenomena and the difficulty in accessing reliable data on clandestine organisations. Furthermore, there is no consensus on the nature of the nexus, as local contexts heavily influence its manifestations (see previous chapter; Rocha, 2024). Since the 1990s, several researchers have proposed taxonomies to clarify the often ambiguous interactions between OC and terrorism (see for example Makarenko, 2012; Rollins and Sun Wyler, 2013; Mullins and Wither, 2016; Schmid, 2018; Paoli et al. 2022). However, existing theories may not fully capture the complexity and dynamism of crime-terror interactions, particularly in certain environments, necessitating the development of new frameworks.

This thesis proposes a new taxonomy to conceptualise interactions between criminals and terrorists in prison: Necessity and Opportunity. Unstable, dangerous prison environments often isolate and alienate inmates, leading them to seek protection, purpose, and belonging, which may drive them to explore new beliefs and affiliations. Opportunity-based theories suggest that interactions between criminals and terrorists may occur for mutual gain and convenience, without necessarily transforming their attitudes (Mincheva and Gurr, 2013; Shaw, 2019). The findings highlight that the prison environment allows criminals and terrorists to exploit conditions and engage with others to further their objectives. This study presents an original 'Necessity-Opportunity Matrix' to illustrate how different types of crime-terror interactions manifest in prison settings (see Figure 13).



*Figure 13: Interactions (Author's Own)*

The remainder of this chapter is structured in the following way: for each section, I outline the key themes and sub-themes, to which the interviewees referred, as factors that may drive criminals and terrorists to network before discussing them in greater detail. To supplement these findings, I include any supporting and opposing comments in the data from the prisoner questionnaires and letters. There is an engagement with the literature to provide a detailed analysis of the two main different types of interactions which appear to incentivise criminal and terrorist prisoners forming a nexus.

The insider-outsider debate is a critical focus of this chapter, particularly in the context of my insider status. This position facilitated access to a professional group and enabled in-depth interactions with several high-profile individuals, significantly enhancing the quality of the findings presented. The ability to engage with Senior Government Advisors, a former Commander at New Scotland Yard, and Senior Police Officers exemplifies the advantages of insider status. Gaining access to such high-level experts is typically challenging, as they often present themselves as inaccessible (Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Littig, 2009; Pfadenhauer, 2009). Additionally, organisations like HMPPS and the MoJ, known for their closed nature and defensive culture (see Section 8.4.3), may be wary of engaging with outsiders due to concerns about reputational risk and exposure of sensitive issues. As an insider, I did not need to convince gatekeepers of my integrity or the need to protect the profession (Taylor et al. 2016: 44). It was expected that I would be conscientious about what I published, given the potential implications for the profession's reputation. Moreover, having security clearance allowed me to navigate any unintentional disclosures or ethical concerns effectively (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018: 465). Thus, my insider status was not only vital in gaining access to these high-profile

interviewees but also contributed to the methodological rigor, ethical research practices, and transparency of the study, enhancing its overall quality and impact (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

## 6.2 Necessity

Scholarly work usually focuses on economic necessity as a promoting factor of the crime-terror nexus (Hausken and Gupta, 2016). A prevalent theme that emerged from the data is that prisoners' involvement in the crime-terror nexus is driven by necessity, but contrary to the literature, not for economic means.<sup>38</sup> Contrastingly, the findings from this study identified that the majority of interviewees (n = 28) primarily think that criminals and terrorists may interact because they *need* protection and a connection to a social network which are *necessary* for survival in an unstable environment (Corley, 2001; Hamm, 2007; 2009; Brandon, 2009a). For example, Natasha expressed empathetically that prison is a 'scary place' so having protection from the dominant group is important. This arguably feminine, compassionate response for why criminals interact with each other, corroborates the observation that the characteristics of the prison environment are heightened threat and a fear of violence (discussed in Chapter 7, Liebling and Arnold, 2012). More significantly, Natasha is a PIO with over 13 years' experience in the field. Her opinion is borne out of a depth of knowledge and familiarity with prisoners and that the prison culture breeds masculine toughness and insensitivity (Sim 1994; Carrabine and Longhurst, 1998; Sabo et al. 2001: 7).

Additionally, Isaac highlighted that the prison environment, marked by violence, instability, and the presence of a drugs economy, represents a 'destabilised environment' with significant safety concerns. These conditions influence the dynamics between crime and terrorism, shaping pragmatic choices related to affiliations, gang involvement, and self-protection, while also enabling 'all sorts of unlikely alliances' between criminals and terrorists (Powis et al. 2019; Ruschenko, 2019). Prisoner 51 corroborated Isaac's point by stating that whilst he was in HMP Pentonville, he encountered gangs:

'...some [are] just violent who see power in numbers and revert to bullying and extortion to get what they demand.'

Given this situation, interviewees suggested that prisoners would feel that they have 'to survive in here' so will associate with anyone that can provide protection (Isaac). Correspondingly, Patrick, a CT PIO, suggested that:

'This is their... lives and a lot of them will do anything literally to survive. I know that sounds really drastic, but that's their daily world'.

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<sup>38</sup> The findings identified that the crime-terror nexus is driven by an *opportunity* to increase wealth rather than a necessity.

Hence, the 'main motive' for the nexus would be to serve the individual's interests by obtaining 'backup', 'support and protection' (Natasha), as it is common within the prison environment for inmates to form acquaintances with like-minded individuals to gain reassurance and a sense of solidarity (Crewe, 2009; Phillips, 2012b). Based on the information provided by the interviewees and prisoners in this study, I divided these factors into 1) protection and 2) a support network (see Figure 14). Fundamentally, terrorist and criminal prisoners may interact to make prison life feel safer and easier and reduce threat, risk and harm.

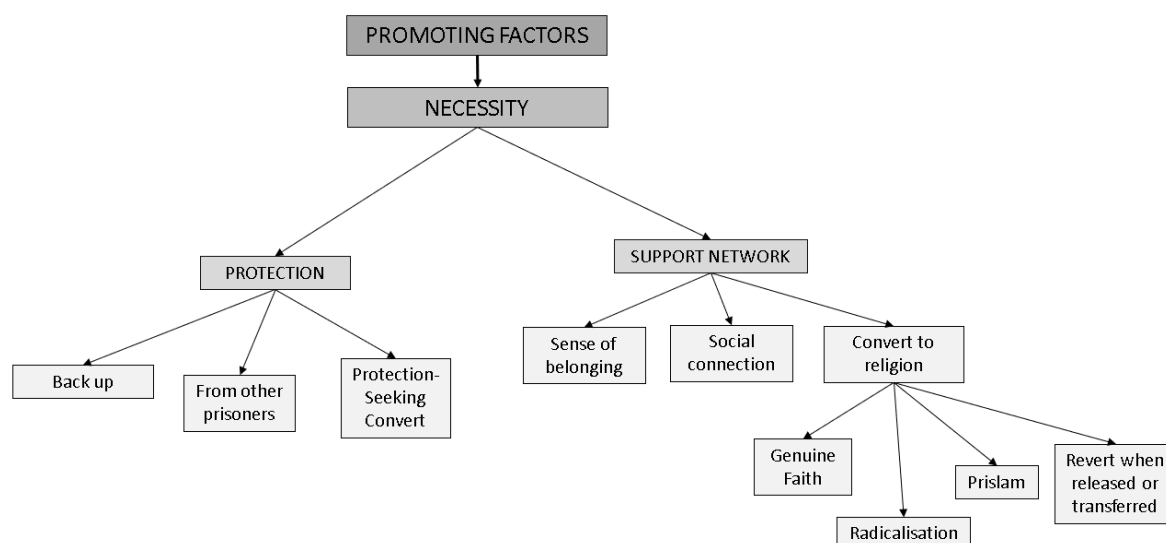


Figure 14: Necessity (Author's Own)

### 6.2.1 Protection

Twenty-six percent of interviewees' (n = 9) engagement with prisoners meant that they gained an insight into inmates affiliating with each other for protective reasons (Shrivastava, 1973; Hamm, 2007). Many interviewees conveyed that in prisons today, fear, violence and gangs are common characteristics so being part of a group or associated with particular prisoners can provide protection (Powis et al. 2019: 13; Ruschenko, 2019); it is likely that these groups will look after their members and retaliate against attacks (Irwin, 1980). Daniel, a PIO, recalled how prisoners want to be associated with a group because it brings 'safety' and 'security', and 'people that are willing to back them up.' It is worth drawing attention to whether the masculinity of the prison environment and the interviewees in this study influenced the findings. Throughout the research, interviewees were preoccupied with power, violence and gang behaviour which is reflective of prisons being a crucial institution for the development of hegemonic masculinity (Sabo et al. 2001). It can be argued that male interviewees may focus more on prisoner's expressing masculine ideals than female participants. Given the research sample was mostly male and all male questionnaire respondents, it could be argued that there

is a gender bias in the sample that has potentially influenced the findings, with a preoccupation on masculine issues.

Despite this potential influence, it may still be a valid finding that certain inmates are forced to group together or traverse racial and religious lines for protection (Marranci, 2009; Ballas, 2010; Maitra, 2016). Larry confirmed that ‘a lot of the relationships with extremists is about protection and fear of those individuals.’ Larry went on to disclose how he had witnessed ‘young vulnerable prisoners’ seeking out someone who is a strong person for protection and that these individuals may have had to do something they did not want (e.g., Ramadan), but ‘this is worth it due to the protection’. Aligning with this, Connell’s (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to subordinate masculinities (i.e., homosexual, weak, and minority ethnic groups) and the social setting (Messerschmidt, 2001: 70).<sup>39</sup> Regarding the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity in prison, it can be argued that the ‘vulnerable prisoners’ are the subordinate males (see Section 7.2.2 for further discussion on vulnerable prisoners). For instance, one interviewee had reported witnessing vulnerable, isolated prisoners associating with whichever group they can for protection because of their offence (e.g., ‘abusing children or robbing grannies’, Adam, Regional Prisons Coordinator; Murray, 2023).

Thus, a prisoner’s crime is likely to determine their position in prison hierarchies (Emery, 1970; Evans and Wallace, 2008; Phillips, 2012a; Carlsson, 2013). For example, it can be argued that Levi Bellfield, the high-profile child sex offender, failed to achieve revered prison masculinities and was thus at the bottom of the hierarchy (O’Donnell and Edgar, 1999; Levins and Crewe, 2015; Maguire, 2021). Additionally, an overt rejection of perpetrators of taboo crimes, which includes predatory sexual offending, is a core ethos of the inmate code (Faulkner and Faulkner, 1997: 62; Kupers, 2001; Maguire, 2021: 507). The inmate code serves an important function for prisoners as it protects them from the psychological effects of rejection by society and the various deprivations of prison life (Sykes and Messinger, 1960; Butler et al. 2018). Despite some inmates having committed atrocious acts, they tend to place rankings on criminality, based on the crime’s morality, reflecting outside cultural and social values (Emery, 1970). Therefore, sexual offences or violence against children are regarded as immoral and tend to be denigrated by inmates. Bellfield was assaulted by another prisoner in 2014 and repeatedly complained about his personal security. The willingness of Muslim prisoners to accept sex offenders provides an unconventional means of securing safety in a hostile environment (Skarbek, 2020). Therefore, Bellfield converted to Islam whilst in prison in

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<sup>39</sup> For example, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ may be very different in an open prison than that of a high-security prison (Sim, 1994: 103), and between adult and juvenile prison violence (Gooch, 2017).

2016.<sup>40</sup> Notwithstanding the sensationalism editorial tactic, Bellfield's conversion, according to the press, was 'to impress the extremists he had trouble with' (Daily Mail, 2011). This case demonstrates the extreme measures that prisoners will go to in order to secure the much-needed trust and protection for surviving everyday challenges (Marranci, 2009: 105; South, 2023: 24).

Therefore, the findings in this study confirm that certain prisoners become involved in religion to seek protection from other inmates (Irwin, 1980; Hamm, 2007; Spalek, 2007: 199; Marranci, 2009; HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2010; Williams and Liebling, 2022). This contradicts the argument that it potentially exposes them to more harassment (Dix-Richardson and Close, 2002). Prisoner 25 disclosed that the reasons prisoners get radicalised is because they think that the 'Muslim Brothers' will support them. As demonstrated in the next chapter, prisons are inherently violent environments, so prisoners' need for protection is heightened. Christian, a Prevent Supervisor working on addressing radicalisation and terrorism, mentioned encountering 'plenty' of prisoners who claimed to have converted to Islam in prison solely for protection without any genuine interest in the religion. While there is mounting evidence of terrorist prisoners deceiving professionals (Acheson and Paul, 2021; Shawcross, 2023: 72), it is possible that these inmates were selective in sharing information with Christian to avoid further scrutiny. Nevertheless, other interviewees (Jennifer, Melissa, Daniel, Sean and Adam) noted observing prisoners adopting a faith, often Islam, for protection in a specific prison but abandoning it when transferred to a different establishment.

These prisoners that affiliate to a religious group out of necessity in particular establishments (Cilluffo et al. 2007) can be classified as a 'Protection-Seeking Convert' (Hamm, 2007). The male culture within prison places an emphasis on violence which can create a prison characterised by exaggerated displays of masculinity (Morse and Wright, 2019: 3; De Viggiani, 2012). Thus, as a tactic to mask admitting fear, appearing weak and being a victim of violence (Sabo et al. 2001), these prisoners attempt to present a tough façade and display hyper-masculinity by joining a religious group which serves as protection (Sykes, 1958; Faulkner and Faulkner, 1997: 60; Powis et al. 2021). Such acts may allow the inmate to move higher up the prison hierarchy (Spalek, 2007: 199) and make them less likely to be the target of victimisation (Levan, 2012). Consequently, the findings recognise that once prisoners have sought protection by converting, they are able to use this to lessen any threat, risk and harm, soften the pains of imprisonment and live in inmate solidarity (Sykes, 1958: 107).

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<sup>40</sup> During the Fishmongers' Inquest, John Crilly gave evidence which details terrorist prisoners allowing sex offenders to attend the main wings as long as they converted to their religion (Clarke, 2021).



### 6.2.2 Support network

Alongside protection, analysis of the data identified that criminals and terrorists may interact because they need a connection to a social network, in order to lessen the 'pains of imprisonment', as others can offer support, protection and camaraderie (Sykes, 1958; Hamm, 2007; Roberts, 2016; Maitra, 2023). Prisons can be unstable and violent environments, where inmates are stripped of their identity and social networks (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017; O'Gara, 2021: 10). Hence, thirteen interviewees and three prisoners indicated that some inmates need a sense of belonging or a social network (Marranci, 2009; Roberts, 2016) as this will 'facilitate a better and easier life within the prison' (Scott, PIO). Consistent with several research studies (e.g. Crenshaw, 1981; Shelley et al. 2005; Contegiacomo, 2007; Phillips and Schiele, 2023), the findings appear to have identified that some prisoners are rational actors and choose a course of action that is most consistent with their own self-interest and desired outcomes (Becker 1968; Cornish and Clarke, 1986). For instance, Prisoner 32 wrote 'I think perhaps some inmates are attracted to these groups to have a sense of belonging and are less prone to bullying from others'. Despite the hesitation in the prisoners' observations, some inmates make a measured decision of whether to interact with a criminal or a terrorist based on the anticipated benefit. Acknowledging prisoners' disconnection from regular contact with friends and family (Sykes, 1958; Duwe and Clark, 2013), their existing loyalties and friendships may be disrupted (Hunt et al. 1993: 398). Prisoners are forced to adapt to a new, possibly lonely and harsh, lifestyle which can make them feel alienated and disconnected from society (Sinai, 2014: 38). As an individualistic response, inmates may acquire 'a network of adaptive solutions' (Bondeson, 2011: 32) to establish a sense of belonging (Sentse et al. 2021) and cope with the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958). Consequently, offenders may find themselves forming bonds with fellow prisoners they would not typically choose, due to limited options and time available to make the decision (Cornish and Clarke; 1986).

These findings are best demonstrated by two prisoners who responded to the questionnaires. Prisoner 51 wrote that:

'Homo sapiens is a gregarious and tribal animal none more than in prison'.

By using the word 'gregarious', the prisoner infers that inmates tend to associate with each other and want to be part of a social group. Sykes (1958) recognised that prisoner relationships may ease the pains of imprisonment, although not guaranteed. Hence, rather than prisoners being solely concerned with their own interests, they may desire emotional and cooperative close ties to others (Agnew, 2011). Additionally, Prisoner 47 expressed his experience of socialising inside prison with a poem about memories of his best friend who has

died or left prison, which emphasises the need for personal and emotional contact inside prison:

etc.) *All You Left*  
I sweep the leaves that autumn leaves  
And remove the weeds that have grown  
I'm down on my knees with my old memories  
Feeling a pain that I've never shown  
  
All that we breathe is all that we leave  
When the best leaves, what's left is alone  
But some that depart get left in a heart  
But the heart that is left has lost its own  
  
Now there's nothing left to see but an old memory  
and a name that I loved set in stone  
I try not to cry as I kneel where you lie  
And remember the best friend I've known.

#### 6.2.2.1 Genuine faith

Moreover, the data analysis identified that many inmates turn to religion as a genuine expression of faith, seeking a sense of belonging and a supportive community during their time in prison. Imprisonment is a personal crisis for many inmates (Thomas and Zaitzow, 2004; Neumann, 2023), they are cut off from their social networks, in an unfamiliar, violent environment. This can create circumstances in which inmates become more receptive to extremist ideologies and groups offering a sense of belonging and purpose within prison (Liebling et al. 2011; Shelley, 2014; Basra et al. 2016). Some are mentally and physically vulnerable and may experience a 'cognitive opening' (Wiktorowicz, 2005) or 'unfreezing' (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011)—the willingness and desire to identify with new ideas, beliefs, and social groups (Horgan, 2005; Klandermans and Mayer, 2006; Basra et al. 2016: 30; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017; Acheson and Paul, 2019: 101). Additionally, the majority of religions necessitate congregational participation and host celebrations that prisoners can attend (Marranci, 2009: 69).

According to interview data, Alex highlighted that some prisoners are drawn to religious conversion to fulfil a need for social connection. This is particularly true for those who previously found a sense of belonging in street gangs. The strong social bonds within prison gangs and religious groups can offer a sense of identity and protection, which many inmates are searching for during their time in custody (Cottee and Hayward, 2011; Liebling et al. 2011;

Roberts, 2016).<sup>41</sup> Alex, and eighteen interviewees (53%), discussed that for some prisoners, converting to a religion, particularly Islam, provides a way to feel part of something larger and to realise a sense of group identity and mutual support (Beckford et al. 2005; Sinai: 2014).

Hamm (2007) similarly found that the most prevalent type of conversion in his research was among ‘searchers’—those inmates who embarked on a spiritual quest motivated by a desire to find identity and meaning in their lives. These inmates often assumed and discarded a succession of convert roles as part of their journey. For certain prisoners, religious conversion offers a way of coping with the challenges of imprisonment, providing them with a structured framework for self-reflection, moral guidance, and the opportunity to form meaningful social bonds with others who share their beliefs (Thomas and Zaitzow, 2004).

#### 6.2.2.2 Radicalisation

However, the same desire for belonging and community can make some inmates vulnerable to radicalisation. Scholars, law enforcement practitioners, and recent case studies have raised growing concerns about the increasing risk of radicalization toward extremist interpretations of Islam within prisons (Arasli, 2011). While prisoners’ initial conversion may be sincere, the prison environment can expose them to extremist ideologies and individuals who exploit their search for identity and support (Hamm, 2013). Alex expressed concerns that inmates who convert to Islam, often to access the social bonds and support networks within Muslim groups, may be exposed to extremist ideologies. The need for belonging and the desire to ‘feel part of something’ can lead some prisoners to interact with individuals holding radical views, thereby increasing the risk of involvement in terrorist activities. For example, whilst the 2020 Reading terrorist attacker, Khairi Saadallah, was imprisoned for violent offences—he spent a significant amount of time with an Islamist radicaliser (Ehsan, 2021). Isaac argued that Saadallah was a ‘troubled young man’ who sought meaning and identity from sophisticated groomers (i.e., Abu Izzadeen, a long-time member of ALM) whilst inside prison. This research suggests that while many prisoners convert to religion for a sense of belonging and protection, there is also a risk of radicalisation within these settings (Yaacoub, 2018).

Thus, it is important to note that this nexus can be a coincidental or accidental occurrence, where the association between inmates and terrorists with extremist ideologies is not intentionally sought but emerges as a result of the complex dynamics and vulnerabilities present in the prison environment. Research in psychology and religious studies suggests that cognitive dissonance—the discomfort of holding conflicting beliefs—may push newly

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<sup>41</sup> Despite the UK not having the same type of organised and violent gangs along racial lines as American prisons (Phillips, 2012b; Gooch and Treadwell, 2021), sometimes these clusters can be referred to as gangs (Jones, 2014: 80). However, all prisons are different, as some display a greater propensity for gang problems than others (Jones, 2014).

converted inmates toward more rigid or extreme interpretations (Spearlt, 2012; Jang et al. 2017). Faced with the fear that rejecting extremist narratives may be seen as a denial of their newfound faith, some inmates may gradually align with such ideologies rather than making an active, deliberate commitment (Wiktorowicz, 2005).

#### 6.2.2.3 Prislam

Furthermore, in the UK, Muslim prisoner groupings have gained attention due to their often-unified stance (Maitra, 2016: 224), which can intimidate non-Muslim inmates (Phillips 2008; Phillips 2012b; Earle and Phillips 2013). Some prisons have reported issues involving 'Muslim gangs' using religious symbols and selective Quranic verses to legitimise their violent activities, both inside and outside prison (Liebling et al. 2011; Hamm, 2013: 14; Hiller, 2015). This phenomenon has led to the emergence of 'Prison Islam' or 'Prislam', a unique brand of Islam practised within prisons, often associated with gang loyalty and violence (Hamm, 2013; Sinai, 2014; Marcus, 2015). Once 'Prislam' groups have formed, the cycle of radicalisation, alongside religiously motivated violence inside or outside prison, can eventually occur (Hiller, 2015: 159). Prislam was discussed by 50% of the interviewees. Although this sub-theme has been grouped under 'necessity', I am cognisant that it could also be opportunistic and/or convenient to convert to Islam inside prison to achieve a social connection or benefit (Hiller, 2015: 159).

Within this theme, the data analysis identified that religious intentions or a belief in radical Salafist ideology appeared noticeably absent in prison conversions and that instead, prisoners used Prislam for superficial reasons, such as special privileges, benefits and better food (Thomas and Zaitzow, 2004; Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007; Jones, 2014: 81; Yaacoub, 2018: 81). These prisoners can be classified as 'Manipulating Converts' (Hamm, 2007). For example, Prisoner 46 revealed that:

'Some prisoners associate with terrorist prisoners to get protection, essentials i.e., food, vapes etc...'.  
'

Natasha (PIO) recalled several cases of Prislam with one example of a prison convert telling her that he 'snuck a bacon sandwich in' without the other Muslim prisoners knowing. Equally, Gregory's role has allowed him to speak to several prisoners who have been on the radar for CTP. Gregory divulged that some prisoners have said they are only involved in Islam 'for the perceived perks.' Gregory convincingly explained that there are benefits of being a 'temporary Muslim' inside prison. Gregory has 33 years' experience in this field, is a subject matter expert in Salafi jihadism and a skilled debriefer. His professional intuition and judgement are highly relevant to this study. However, it is essential to acknowledge that some extremists exhibit the ability to condition others to 'establish and sustain a façade of cooperation' (Acheson and Paul,

2021: 3). Consequently, some of the inmates Gregory spoke with, may have chosen to disclose information selectively to evade scrutiny and hide their actual motives (Acheson and Paul, 2021: 4).

Furthermore, a prominent topic discussed within this theme was that many of those who adopt radical ideologies in prison, whether out of conviction or for more pragmatic reasons (i.e., better food, protection), often discard their extremist beliefs on their return to mainstream society (Brandon, 2009a: 4). This is similar to what Hamm found in his 2007 study, exemplified in the case of Marcus—a prisoner who embraced radical ideologies while incarcerated but displayed no interest in his mosque or international affairs upon release, instead reverting to a preoccupation with materialistic pursuits (Hamm, 2007: 66). Hamm's (2007) research highlights how such transformations are often survival strategies shaped by the prison environment, with many individuals prioritising day-to-day existence over ideological commitments. This feature of prisoner subcultures was similarly observed by numerous administrators in Hamm's (2007) study, reinforcing the notion that these ideologies are frequently situational and not enduring.

Within this study, Jim (PIO) explained, these prisoners 'very rarely' continue their religion on the outside and very few attend a Mosque or associate with people of concern. Instead, 'they generally return to the crime that they were initially incarcerated for'. In other words, prison Islam is considered convenient at the time. During analysis, Kimberly's (PIO) comment that she regards these prisoners as 'chameleons' highlighted the adaptability and versatility of these individuals. Kimberly argued that:

'Essentially, when they [prisoners] are outside, they adapt to their environment and when they go back inside, they adapt and fit with what they are faced with.'

This criminal-terrorist duality which Dishman (2001) describes as 'political by day but criminal by night', evokes Janine Wedel's concept of the 'flexians' (2009). Flexians float in and out of different identities as the circumstances demand and their ability to do this is crucial to their success. Illustrative of the way the illegitimate world mirrors the licit, the findings reveal that prisoners often prove to be the ultimate flexians.

In summary, the findings indicate that prisoners, unable to consistently rely on state protection, often turn to the crime-terror nexus as an alternative source of security and support. Strategies related to belonging, group membership, and social cohesion within the prison environment appear to serve the individual's interests, with inmates sometimes interacting with terrorists or converting to a religion, such as Islam, to access protection and social connections (Hamm, 2008; 2009). Prislam reflects a form of extremist religio-ideology rooted in the need for social networks and protection, similar to the motivations behind joining gangs inside and outside of

prison (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Taylor, 2009; Goldman, 2014). As Skarbek's (2014) research highlights, prison groups often serve as 'extra-legal governance', stepping in where official protection is weak by providing security when inmates cannot rely on the state (Williams, 2016). This dynamic contributes to the rise of prison gangs, as observed in the US, where diminished institutional governance leads to an increased demand for gang protection (Skarbek, 2014). However, despite Prislam being grouped under necessity, it is also crucial to recognise that prisoners exploit the opportunities within the prison environment, adapting their identities as needed. Applying Wedel's concept of the 'flexians' (2009), some inmates act as chameleons, shifting seamlessly between criminal and terrorist roles depending on what best serves their interests. However, relying solely on necessity to explain the formation of the crime-terror nexus may overlook these strategic behaviours, emphasising the importance of examining the opportunities that the prison environment provides in fostering this nexus.

### 6.3 Opportunity

Some literature describes the links between crime and terrorism as opportunistic (Omelycheva and Markowitz, 2021a). Mincheva and Gurr (2013) and Shaw (2019) discuss opportunity-based approaches, through describing aspects of an opportunity structure that facilitate and enable the crime-terror nexus. This opportunity-based approach can be applied to the prison environment. Thirty interviewees (88%) discussed the idea that criminals and terrorists have the opportunity to interact. The patterns in the data suggest that such interactions can potentially yield more opportunities than what either group, or individual, could access when operating independently (Corley, 2001; Mincheva and Gurr, 2013: 4). As with necessity, the findings appear to have identified that certain prisoners are rational actors and choose a course of action that is most consistent with their own self-interest (Becker 1968; Cornish and Clarke 1986). Rather than inmate solidarity (Sykes, 1958), some prisoners take advantage of each other and adopt a self-interested, competitive response (Gooch, 2022). Hence, aspects of free-market subjectivities, particularly individualism and the symbolic value of entrepreneurship, represent a powerful explanatory framework.

Being an insider was a significant advantage when discussing opportunity as a type of interaction of the PCTN. Alex, Kenneth and Adam were all willing and comfortable sharing their cynical, yet experienced, view that prisoners may 'capitalise' on opportunities on a 'case by case basis'. Kenneth, an experienced Intelligence Officer, recalled that in his 41 years' experience of knowing criminals they will always:

'Use something to their advantage and make it work for them, particularly if you are doing a 35-year sentence and you're going to use it, *aren't you*? That is my experience. That's what makes criminals, organised criminals tick in my view.'

Despite it being commonly advised for researchers to remain in a neutral position (Fleming, 2018: 313), Kenneth sought confirmation from the interviewer. In insider research, the participant may ask questions of the researcher and seek confirmation as they would in an everyday conversation (Mercer, 2007; Fleming, 2018). Consequently, a level of trust and rapport with the participant is developed (Mercer, 2007; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009); and if one is going to interview successfully—trust is imperative (Hwang, 2023: 119). Within this research, these insider conversations also generated a greater level of candour and were viewed as part of the reciprocal nature of the research process (Mercer, 2007). Thus, the expediency of rapport building enabled Kenneth to feel comfortable sharing his mostly cynical perception of prisoners with someone who ‘understands’ (Fleming, 2018: 313). Similarly, Adam spoke candidly about his experience of prisoners and the nexus as a Regional Prisons Coordinator. He openly disclosed that ‘there are isolated incidents where certain OCG members will work with terrorists... for their gain in prison.’ Based on the information provided by the interviewees and prisoners in this study, I divided these opportunistic factors into four broad categories as shown in Figure 15.

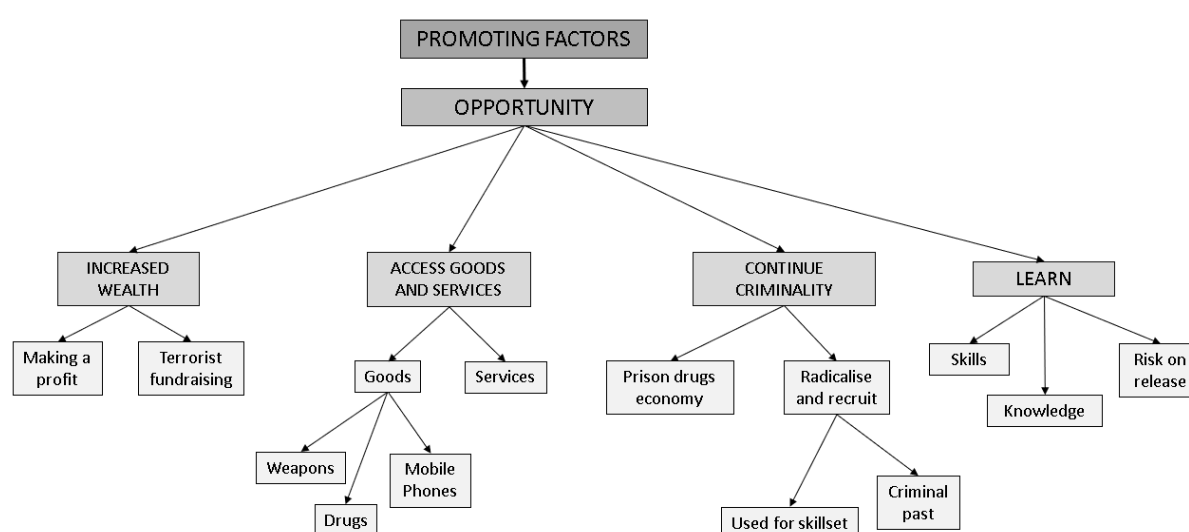


Figure 15: Opportunity (Author's Own)

### 6.3.1 Opportunity to increase wealth

A prevalent theme that emerged from the data is that prisoner's involvement in the crime-terror nexus is driven by an *opportunity* to increase wealth rather than a *necessity*. Just under half of the interviewees (n = 14) discussed any crime-terror interaction being driven by an opportunity for individuals to make money and/or raise funds for their political cause. These interviewees generally held a cynical perspective on prisoners, suggesting that inmates often seek to exploit their time in custody rather than focus on desistance and rehabilitation. For example, Daniel and Natasha, who work as PIOs, shared anecdotes indicating that criminals

and terrorists interact primarily to serve a shared objective, often centred around capitalising on their prison experiences. Notably, it is worth drawing attention to the similarity of interviewees and their occupation and whether this has influenced the findings. Some interviewees' roles may have motivated them towards punitive attitudes, favouring a 'tough on crime' stance, and fostering a generally pessimistic outlook on prisoners and rehabilitation efforts. Some interviewees expressed frustration with the limited resources and funding for effective prisoner rehabilitation. Consequently, the challenges of facilitating change in prisoners within constrained financial conditions appeared to contribute to the development of notably cynical viewpoints toward both prisoners and the prison system for certain interviewees (Arnold, 2016).

Despite this potential influence, the study still argues that interactions between terrorism and crime within prison establishments is driven by an opportunity to increase wealth. Prisoner 48 wrote 'MONEY!' when answering the question about why prisoners might be part of a gang. Despite this question within the questionnaire not explicitly classifying criminal and terrorist gangs or interaction, this inmates' attitude towards being part of a group helps to corroborate the interview data; that some prisoners are perceived to be profiting from their time inside prison and the opportunity to make money (profit or fundraise) is a crucial factor of being part of a group. This reinforcement strengthens the robust explanatory framework rooted in free-market subjectivities like individualism and entrepreneurship, highlighting that prisoners are often inclined to advance their interests when presented with the chance to make money.

Moreover, much of the crime-terror nexus literature supports the profit vs. ideology dichotomy—that criminal groups are primarily profit driven, while terrorist groups retain ideological aims (Shelley and Picarelli, 2002; Shelley, 2014 Hoffman, 2017). Hence, analogous to the literature findings in Section 3.5.1, most interviewees emphasise that there is a fundamental distinction between criminals *making a profit* and terrorists *fundraising*, with more interviewees discussing the latter.

#### 6.3.1.1 Criminals making a profit

Scholarly literature emphasises that the primary motivation of OC is usually financial gain (Holmes, 2016: 14) and therefore, criminals (particularly organised criminals) may use violence as a tactic for negotiating their presence on markets, or work with a terrorist (group) for profit (Ruggiero, 2019: 34). Correspondingly, data analysis confirmed that if criminals can make a profit from their time in prison by interacting with a terrorist prisoner or using terrorist tactics they will, because as Adam (Regional Prisons Coordinator) described it, 'there's a lot of money to be made in prison.' Likewise, Larry, a Police Intelligence Officer, explained that



'most criminals don't care. They are just making money.' Again, these interviewees exhibited negative and cynical views about people in custody and their ability to support them.

The finding of criminals making a profit is best illustrated by Ivan, a Prison Intelligence Manager with over 32 years' experience in the police which has included several different job roles in the prison domain. He explained that the nexus is about how criminals and terrorists mutually support each other to deliver on their own individual or organisational objectives (i.e., criminals making money). This could be supplying goods and services to terrorist prisoners, learning how to launder money, or obtaining information about LE activity so they can increase their profits (Schmid, 2005).

#### 6.3.1.2 Terrorist fundraising

Over the past few decades, undeniable evidence has indicated that terrorists are engaging with criminals and/or criminality to finance their activity after the decline in state sponsorship (Sanderson, 2004; Schmid, 2005; Grabosky and Stohl, 2010; Hausken and Gupta, 2016; Gallagher, 2019; Ruggiero, 2019). For example, Al-Qaeda has engaged in credit card fraud and the group that carried out the 2004 Madrid train bombing had to finance its operations by dealing in illegal drugs (Hausken and Gupta, 2016: 72). This research has revealed that a key driver of the PCTN is the opportunity for terrorists to raise funds for their political objectives, often by engaging with criminals or exploiting criminal activities (Dishman, 2001; Makarenko, 2004; Schmid, 2005; Basra and Neumann, 2016; Neumann and De Frias, 2017; Kupatadze and Argomaniz, 2019). Given the extremely lucrative drugs market inside prison, criminal enterprises, such as drugs trafficking, largely drives terrorist prisoner activities within establishments (Sinai, 2014: 41).

Several interviewees indicated that terrorist prisoners may exploit opportunities to increase their wealth by leveraging the skills and knowledge of other inmates. This is best demonstrated, by both Jennifer (Intelligence Officer) and Dennis (PIO) who claim that the nexus would happen if terrorist prisoners had an opportunity to raise funds and then launder the money. Dennis continued to explain that if a terrorist prisoner had a 'network with the crime side on the inside, they would use them.' Although this research involved predominantly male interviewees, Jennifer made a very similar remark to the male interviewees and regards prisoner's motivations cynically, to a certain extent. It could, however, be argued that Jennifer has become institutionalised and focuses predominantly on these masculine ideals because she has worked in this 'ultra-masculine world' for over 29 years (Fielding, 1994; Sabo et al. 2001: 3). Similarly, Marcus, a Senior Police Officer and expert in this field, stated that:

'Terrorists need money. It's as simple as that. You need to fund terrorism, so the links that have been made in jail are two-way and that you're ascertaining new

methods, new methodologies. So, if you are a terrorist, you're ascertaining new methodologies to utilise to make funds on your release, or in fact *probably* while you are still in jail.'

Marcus has 26 years' experience in the field and exceptional knowledge and academic credentials in OC and terrorism. Additionally, he has worked in both operational and strategic roles during his policing career thus has practical, local knowledge from professional as well as private experiences (Meuser and Nagel, 2009). Given Marcus's experience and similar comments from other interviewees, this research has regarded his observation as more empirical than anecdotal despite the tentativeness demonstrated at the end of his remark. Therefore, this research argues that an opportunity for terrorists to interact with criminals to fundraise is a driver of the PCTN. Just as opportunity to increase wealth is a motivational driver of the PCTN, it is no surprise that it also facilitates a chance to access goods and services.

### **6.3.2 Opportunity to access goods (and services)**

There is a reasonable agreement among criminologists that OC is about illicit markets, notably, the provision of certain illegal goods and services (Albanese, 2011: 3). Kupatadze and Argomaniz (2019) use Felson's 'convergence settings' as a conceptual framework to argue that functional confluence (skills exchange, social learning and provision of services) is one dimension of the crime-terror nexus. However, inside contemporary prisons there is a deprivation of material goods and services (Gooch, 2022). Hence, twenty-four interviewees (71%) discussed the PCTN being an opportunity for individuals to access goods, such as weapons and mobile phones, and three participants mentioned access to services. One questionnaire respondent ticked the 'to obtain something' answer to socialising with individuals convicted of terrorist related offences. Dennis, a PIO at a Category A prison, believed that despite the 'religious split' between terrorism and crime, 'the criminality linked across both'. Therefore, if there was a mutual benefit in working together to access something, Dennis believed it would happen.

Significantly, numerous interviewees felt comfortable expressing their perspectives on individuals exploiting opportunities within the prison environment because I work in a related field. This dynamic influenced the nature of the responses obtained (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Ivan illuminated this best when he expressed his opinion to me as an insider to his world:

'I think the relationship is dependent on [*short pause*] what that person's got to offer... It's about access to commodities. Access to information. Insider knowledge... it's commodity and service, isn't it?'

Being an insider facilitated a collaboration with Ivan's narration of experiences in the service and expediated an excellent level of trust and rapport (Allen and Walker, 2000: 29). The conversation was frank and honest, and several 'off the record' comments were made. I believe that Ivan felt comfortable sharing his real-life experiences and views with an insider. As demonstrated in the statement above, Ivan regularly asked questions and sought confirmation, given my position as an insider (Mercer, 2007; Fleming, 2018). In correlation with Ivan's comment, the findings fall into two broad categories: goods (commodities) and services (information).

#### 6.3.2.1 Goods

A common theme the interviewees discussed was that the opportunity to access goods is a driver of the PCTN. Many interviewees described terrorist and criminals exchanging commodities for mutual benefit, such as trading drugs or money for weapons (Grabosky and Stohl, 2010) and acquiring material goods such as mobile phones.

#### Weapons

Ninety-four percent of interviewees (n = 32) primarily included the words 'firearm' or 'weapon' with reference to the crime-terror nexus. Isaac explained that inside prison, extremist inmates with the capacity to do 'great harm' can interact with someone who has the 'capability to supply logistics, weapons, and assistance to do the harm'. Isaac continued by stating that this interaction could be a 'pragmatic ongoing relationship' or merely a 'transaction for gain'. Similarly, Sean, a Police Officer, provided empirical evidence from his experience:

'There's always kind of intelligence suggesting that people are trying to have discussions or talking to people who have a crime background and not necessarily imprisoned for any sort of ideological or CT reasons who have access to firearms. So, you do see those connections being made.'

Likewise, both Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) and Robert revealed personal experiences of terrorist offenders attempting to use their criminal connections to obtain a firearm. Robert, a former Commander at New Scotland Yard, even recollects 'a few times' during his lengthy career when he witnessed this happen. However, Anthony disclosed that this threat did not come to fruition potentially because they 'intervene[d] so quickly and kept them apart'.<sup>42</sup> Despite the complex nature of the topic, both Anthony and Robert were able to speak freely about their experiences and use specialist terminology facilitated by my insider knowledge and high level of expertise in this area. Additionally, the interviewees and I shared

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<sup>42</sup> The effect of law enforcement involvement on the PCTN will be discussed in Chapter 7.

a common understanding of the social relevance of the research so further explanation and clarifications were largely eliminated (Bogner et al. 2009: 2).

Contrastingly, Jerry, a former Prison Governor and Mark, a Senior Police Officer provided more subjective remarks. Mark expressed that prisoners will be 'making friends and associates that can... give them access to firearms unlike before'. Jerry said he believes that if there is a mutual advantage then 'SOC criminals are not necessarily going to be disinclined to provide weapons to a terrorist'. These subjective viewpoints underline the potential collaboration between criminals and terrorists, highlighting a willingness to engage in transactions that could involve the provision of weapons. A primary incentive for OCG prisoners is in the prospect of trade expansion and commercial benefit through collaboration with terrorists. This alignment of interests emerges as a significant advantage for OCG prisoners, emphasising the potential for mutual gains and commercial opportunities within the crime-terror nexus. Despite the subjectivity in some of the statements, there was a clear consensus amongst the interviewees that the crime-terror nexus may provide terrorists with access to firearms or weapons. This finding echoes Basra and Neumann's (2016: 35) claim, that individuals with a criminal past tend to have easier access to weapons.

Additionally, all the interviewees that discussed the crime-terror nexus providing the opportunity for extremist prisoners to access weapons referred to the risks and implications this could produce. Specifically, Tony, a Senior CT Officer with 35 years' experience, and James, a Senior Government Advisor with extensive experience in this field, explained that the most worrying threat from the crime-terror nexus is a terrorist gaining access to a firearm from their connections with the criminal fraternity inside prison. More specifically, interviewees discussed this access to firearms as more of a 'threat on release' (Christopher, PPL). Robert spoke generously about his extensive experience and practical knowledge developed from his professional experiences of the nexus (Meuser and Nagel, 2009). He suggested that there is an absence of a crime-terror nexus in the UK, but that the one exception is in prison. Concern evident, Robert stated that when a terrorist is released from prison, they have potentially got access to a firearm 'that they didn't have before they went in'.

#### Illicit mobile technology

Inside prison, the availability of desired items is restricted (Treadwell et al. 2019: 12), thus acquiring material goods drives crime-terror interactions. In particular, the findings identified that prisoners having access to illicit mobile technology for communication is a pervasive issue. Mobile technology offers both communication with the outside world, so that prisoners can continue to run their criminality, and communication with the inside (Ellison et al. 2018; Treadwell et al. 2019)—for example, for 'a terrorist who wants to behead a prison officer and

show it on a video' (Jerry). Interviewees voiced an infuriation that prisoners were able to access devices that facilitated ongoing criminality and several revealed to an insider, already well-aware of the problem, that more action was needed to tackle the issue (Treadwell et al. 2019: 22). Such views concur with Gooch and Treadwell (2021) who offer an analysis of the extent and nature of ongoing criminality in prison. They explain that prisoners can run operations from their prison cell using digital technology which has made OCGs and criminal activities predominant features of prison life.

These interviewees divulged that terrorist and criminal interactions inside prison may provide access to illicit mobile technology so long as they can both benefit. For example, one interviewee stated that criminals and terrorists may work together to convey 'a phone into a prison establishment for joint power and reward' (Dennis). Craig, a CT Intelligence Officer, said that he could not provide any exact details, but voiced his frustration at recently experiencing issues with 'Islamic radicalisers' using SOC type criminals to facilitate the conveyancing of USBs with rhetoric and TACT material into the prison (see Hall, 2022). Isaac echoed these concerns by saying that:

'It's quite clear that even in the most secure prisons, even in the most secure places within them, there's a proliferation of the use of mobile technology to radicalise people, to network, to enhance that prison crime nexus to a dangerous level.'

Thus, illicit mobile technology plays a key role in enabling both criminal and terrorist activities within prisons. It allows inmates to maintain connections with the outside world and facilitates ongoing illegal activities.

#### 6.3.2.2 Services

Accessing specialised services, such as money laundering, was also highlighted as a motivating factor of the PCTN by some interviewees (Cuthbertson, 2004: 22; Schmid, 2005). Peripheral tasks such as money laundering, can bring enormous risks for terrorists due to a lack of skills or inexperience (Desouza and Hensgen, 2007: 599). Therefore, by engaging in crime-terror interactions, terrorists can outsource nonessential tasks (e.g. Phillips and Schiele, 2023: 5). Echoing several empirical studies (see Picarelli, 2006; Roth and Sever, 2006; Gallagher, 2016; Ruggiero, 2019), Robert openly recounted numerous covert operations in which radicalised prisoners planning attacks were collaborating with criminal inmates who possessed the capabilities to advance their political objectives. Additionally, Ivan argued that it might be more subtle services, such as 'finding out where a garage can be... or where they can train in the Lake District.' Therefore, rather than increasing the risk of detection by developing in-house capabilities, terrorists may cooperate with experts in these fields, namely criminals and OCGs (Phillips and Schiele, 2023: 5).

Therefore, one can conclude that both criminals and terrorists exploit the opportunities within the prison environment to engage in interactions for accessing goods and services. This opportunity is usually advancing the interests of the individual, such as an exchange of drugs for weapons or the joint use of criminal services (Europol, 2022a). Consequently, the opportunities created by the prison environment to interact to access goods and services enables these prisoners to continue their criminality.

### **6.3.3 Opportunity to continue criminality**

Significantly, rather than being places of safety and strict supervision (Van der Laan, 2012: 135), most interviewees voiced the opinion that prisons are dangerous spaces, where criminals can continue to run their criminal business and terrorists are able to radicalise and recruit other prisoners (Williams, 2010; Basra and Neumann, 2016; Rushchenko, 2019; and Gooch and Treadwell, 2021). During his interview, Patrick emphasised that when a suspect is sentenced to imprisonment 'it is very apparent that criminality does not stop' and that imprisonment 'is merely the tip of the iceberg' (Hesterman, 2013: 80). Given that Patrick is a PIO at a Category A prison (the highest security establishments where the most dangerous prisoners reside), it is quite concerning that rather than being places of law and order, he felt that prison establishments allow criminals to sustain their criminality. Patrick continued by explaining that in some cases, the criminality can be made worse due to 'the connections and associations prisoners can make whilst serving their sentence'. This was reaffirmed by Craig and Joseph when they very confidently expressed that the crime-terror nexus is 'definitely evident' inside prison, and it is in relation to 'associations' and 'forming an allegiance' to further criminal intentions from both a criminal and terrorist perspective.

#### **6.3.3.1 Criminals**

In comparison to literature on prison and OC, there is very little research regarding *criminals* continuing their criminality inside prison. Research conducted by Gooch and Treadwell (2021: 16) specifically argues that there is a continuation of very serious, and quite organised, criminality going on inside prison; and that the flourishing prison illicit economy has enabled criminal groups to take advantage of market opportunities. Comparably, the findings from the data reveal that criminals' interaction with terrorists usually concerns the illicit market, particularly drugs. Four interviewees discussed criminals using either *terrorism* or *terrorists*, to control the drugs market. More specifically, Craig voiced frustration at criminals using 'terrorism and the Islamic threat as a means of facilitating their crime'. He provided empirical evidence that some criminals will attend Friday prayers because 'they can supply [drugs] easier'. Additionally, Isaac supported Dishman's (2001) description of the criminal-terrorist as 'political by day but criminal by night' by disclosing that inside prison there will be 'poly criminals or hybrid criminals' that use both crime and terrorism to continue their criminality.

The nexus between OCGs and terrorists presents a significant opportunity for criminals, as evidenced by a potential for trade expansion and commercial benefit. However, not all OCGs may be aligned on such collaborations, as some would hesitate, for instance, in trading firearms with certain terrorists (discussed in Section 5.3.3).

#### 6.3.3.2 Terrorists

Moreover, a common theme discussed by interviewees was the issue of terrorist radicalisation and recruitment inside prison to continue their criminality (Schmid, 2005: 6; Shelley et al. 2005; Hesterman, 2013; Basra and Neumann, 2016; Rushchenko, 2019). Of note, some interviewees claimed that they had *not* observed the nexus inside prison. Instead, they discussed issues of terrorist radicalisation and recruitment. However, depending on how the crime-terror nexus is being framed and defined, radicalisation and recruitment can be seen as a form of the phenomenon. Ivan (and others) very explicitly clarified that criminals meeting terrorists and then being radicalised inside prison *is* a form of the crime-terror nexus. Ivan has extensive experience in this field which was an important characteristic of the sample. Although experience alone cannot be the defining criterion of expertise (Collins and Evans, 2002: 251). Ivan also has academic and practical knowledge developed throughout his career and has worked in strategic positions involving decision-making processes (Meuser and Nagel, 1991). Collectively, this has helped to make Ivan's account more credible and authentic as his opinion can be characterised by a high degree of reflexivity of certainty and reliability (Bogner et al. 2018: 655). It was this defining and framing of the crime-terror nexus which encouraged me to follow up and ask the interviewees, *what is their understanding of the crime-terror nexus?*—discussed in Chapter 5.

This research includes *radicalisation* and *recruitment* as a type of interaction between crime and terrorism (Neumann and Basra, 2022: 99). Despite radicalisation in prison being a fiercely contested debate in the literature (Cilluffo et al. 2007; Hamm, 2008; Jones, 2014; Yaacoub, 2018; Schulz et al. 2021; Williams and Liebling, 2022), the opportunity for terrorists to radicalise and recruit criminal prisoners is a motivational driver of crime-terror interaction (Basra and Neumann, 2016). Radicalisation and recruitment were mentioned by most of the interviewees (n = 32) as criminals may become increasingly politicised and eventually convert to terrorism (Grabosky and Stohl 2010; Ruggiero, 2019). For example, Paul, a former Police Officer with over 30 years' experience, divulged that some terrorist prisoners 'don't shy away from trying to recruit or radicalise others'. Similarly, Prisoner 32 in a Category C prison stated that from his personal experience 'radicalisation is rife in England[ish] prisons'. Prisoner 29 expressed that Muslim prisoners are always trying to convert weaker minded prisoners by falsifying comparable interests; and Prisoner 46 disclosed that some terrorists 'search for foot soldiers inside prison'. With reference to work by Gooch and Treadwell (2019: 30)—foot

soldiers work at the 'behest' of the individuals orchestrating the illicit economy and 'may be acting under duress'.

As discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4, radicalisation in prison is nothing new. Prisons have always been incubators for radical ideas (Goldman, 2014; Rushchenko, 2019) and remain a fertile ground for radicalisation, often facilitated by the relationships created between prisoners (Basra and Neumann, 2019; Europol, 2022: 20). Interviewees James (Senior Government Advisor) and David emphasised that certain environments, for example prisons, give terrorist offenders the opportunity to transmit some of their ideology and radicalise criminals. This is corroborated by responses received from several prisoners who completed the questionnaires and letters, exemplified by Prisoner 51 in a Category C prison, who revealed his observations of Muslim prisoners radicalising fellow inmates:

(write, draw, poem, etc.)  
Whilst in HMP PENTONVILLE I have encountered gangs,  
some just violent who see power in numbers and revert to  
BULLYING AND EXTORTION to get what they demand. I saw  
others again mostly Muslim fanatics who use similar  
tactics and ideology.

Certain interviewees (n = 3) recalled first-hand examples of when criminals have gone into prison and converted to a form of radical Islam. Christian, a Prevent Supervisor, is involved with prevent referrals and prison releases. He shared empirical evidence of prisoners being radicalised and then being released with a newly acquired, extremist mindset. Due to my insider status, Christian felt comfortable sharing information that very recently an individual had converted to Islam while in prison and was subsequently released after serving time for manslaughter. This individual was a 'real concern' because his ideology was quite violent and radical. Likewise, Dennis (PIO) discussed radicalisation in relation to the terrorist attack on Prison Officer Neil Trundle at HMP Whitemoor by Brusthom Ziamani and Baz Hockton on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Both prisoners became close associates within the high-security prison, and it is reported that Ziamani befriended and radicalised Hockton. Dennis pointed out that:

'Ziamani was obviously a TACT criminal and Hockton was basically just an OC thug. But he was drafted in to carry out a specific act, turned and used and I think that does happen on various basis. Used for a skill set that they need.'

Finally, it became clear during the research stage that terrorist prisoners may be radicalising and recruiting criminals because of their skills and experience in crime. This perspective aligns with Basra and Neumann's (2016: 35) assertion that individuals with prior criminal backgrounds can offer tangible benefits to terrorist groups. Gregory used the example of a



firearm reactivator to explain that a criminal's expertise in a particular paradigm will be useful to a terrorist offender.

#### **6.3.4 Opportunity to learn**

Amongst criminologists there is a general agreement that contemporary criminal and terrorist groups are always learning from their mistakes and improving techniques that they may have developed in outmanoeuvring law enforcement (Hesterman, 2013; Forest, 2022; Ruggiero, 2019). The lessons learnt, and improvements can be shared amongst criminals and terrorists alike, especially those with niche capabilities, who gladly sell or trade expertise (Grabosky and Stohl, 2010; Hesterman, 2013: 170; Stevanović, 2021: 157). Relevant to this study, when Neumann and Basra formed the 'New' Crime-Terror Nexus (2016), they identified that prisons offer an environment for skills-transfer and networking amongst criminals and terrorists. In support of this, twenty interviewees (59%) explained that prisons provide the perfect environment for criminals and terrorists to learn skills and obtain knowledge through their newly acquired network. These individuals and groups are copying successful tactics and learning from each other's mistakes (Hesterman: 2013).

To provide some examples, several interviewees explained that prison can be described as a 'crime university' (David) or 'pool of expertise' (Isaac), as they provide a readymade network of knowledge for criminals to exploit (Patrick). Gregory, a debriefer with 33 years' experience, provided an empirical perspective by disclosing that he has interviewed prisoners that have been approached by other inmates for their skills and knowledge, such as using the Dark Web or fraud. An argument could be made that these interviewees chose to share this information due to my insider status, as they may have anticipated a level of discretion, mindful of the potential impact on their profession's reputation.

Prisons are often monotonous and dull, providing few legitimate opportunities for inmates to engage in meaningful activities (Sykes, 1958; Gooch et al. 2019: 14; Wang, 2022). This lack of stimulation and structure can create an environment where delinquency thrives, as individuals with unfettered time on their hands may turn to deviant behaviour (Merton, 1938; Hirschi, 1969). Conversely, Hirschi (1969: 22) argued that individuals engrossed in structured activities are 'simply too busy doing conventional things to find time to engage in deviant behaviour.' In the absence of such opportunities, over half the prisoners surveyed (n = 10) indicated that they have either learned new skills and tactics from other inmates or affiliated to terrorist prisoners to acquire knowledge or transfer expertise. Prisoner 31 wrote about how inside prison he has 'learnt how to access the Dark Web and how to bring items into the country without trace'. As well as how to use and acquire 'lethal missiles' and 'mobile phone activated detonators.' Despite not knowing whether this prisoner learnt these skills from a

terrorist inmate, the findings from the analysis help to substantiate evidence that prisons are 'a clear hot bed' for prisoners 'honing their skills' (Alex, Police Officer). This dynamic suggests that the lack of engaging and constructive activities within prisons can inadvertently create conditions where inmates seek out and share deviant knowledge and skills, exacerbating the risks associated with the PCTN.

More specifically to crime-terror interactions, Scott expressed subjectively that he feels the skills and network that an organised criminal may have developed can be useful to a terrorist. Equally, Robert recalled that the greater the effectiveness of his command in convicting terrorists, the higher the risk that these terrorists would form connections with organised criminals to acquire skills and establish a network of 'orthodox criminal contacts.' Robert said with a disappointed tone, that the nexus would make them 'better terrorists' and 'more of a threat', particularly on release (Basra and Neumann, 2019: 24). This disclosure may have been primarily attributed to my insider status.

To summarise, the findings from the data confirm that opportunities for increased wealth, access to goods, continued criminality and skills-transfer are drivers of PCTN interactions. Some criminals and terrorists are exploiting these opportunities and on occasions, creating fruitful partnerships in an environment where criminal markets allow illicit businesses to thrive.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter considered the insider-outsider dichotomy and how being an insider gave me access to individuals as well as data that would not have been revealed to an outsider. It also briefly discussed the masculinity and similarity of the interviewees. Additionally, this chapter identified two main distinct types of interactions which appear to incentivise criminal and terrorist prisoners forming a nexus. Prisons are often characterised by violence, overcrowding, and isolation which enables the first type of interaction: the necessity for certain inmates to interact for protection and to establish a support network, crucial for survival in this environment. Historically, groups have been a common feature of prison life, serving as a means for inmates to find protection and a sense of belonging (Hiller, 2015: 160). In some cases, prisoners may opt to join the largest group to ensure their safety, viewing it as an opportunity or matter of convenience. Alternatively, they may have experienced social exclusion and are now actively seeking a support network. This driver encompasses the presence of extremist social networks that offer both physical protection and social support, qualities sought after by certain prisoners (Sinai, 2014: 41). Consequently, criminals may choose to engage with these extremist social networks or even undergo religious conversion in exchange for protection and a sense of social connection. Within this theme, 'Prislam' was identified as an example of this type of interaction. Prislam is seen as convenient at the time—

as many criminals revert to no religion or their former faith when released or transferred to a different prison establishment

This chapter also presented the opportunity to collaborate with other prisoners to gain personal benefit as a type of interaction which appears to incentivise criminal and terrorist prisoners forming a nexus. As most prisons struggle with enduring issues of legitimacy (Cavadino and Dignan, 2005; Rushchenko, 2019) and a pervasive atmosphere of violence and fear (Liebling and Arnold, 2012), they inadvertently foster a climate of self-interested conduct among inmates. This environment compels prisoners to seek opportunities to exploit their circumstances and fellow inmates, often accentuating displays of masculine behaviour (Gooch, 2022: 212). This chapter elaborated on four overarching opportunistic drivers for the crime-terror nexus. It is important to note that these factors, as highlighted by the data, should not be considered in isolation but rather as integral components of an opportunity structure that fosters and facilitates the crime-terror nexus (Shaw, 2019: 591).

These two different types of interactions have been conceptualised into a model which will be presented and discussed in Chapter 9. This model seeks to explain the complex relationships between criminals and terrorists in prison, potentially contributing to broader theoretical understanding within this field. The next chapter addresses the contributory causes and indicators of the PCTN.

## **Chapter 7 CAUSES AND INDICATORS OF THE PRISON CRIME-TERROR NEXUS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the contributory causes and indicators of the Prison Crime-Terror Nexus (PCTN). The central argument presented in the previous chapter was that there are two primary interactions between criminals and terrorists within the prison estate: Necessity and Opportunity. Having established the factors that may drive criminals and terrorists to network, this chapter explores the structural contributory causes and indicators of the PCTN using data gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and letters. As other scholars, such as James Treadwell, Kate Gooch, and Alison Liebling, have identified individual-level factors (e.g., moral reasoning, climate, anger, etc.), it is important to acknowledge their contributions. However, due to the challenges in securing prison access and limitations of the sample in this study, this thesis cannot corroborate those findings. Instead, the data supports a focus on structural characteristics and the broader policing of prisons, rather than delving into specific individual motivations or factors. Consequently, the findings in this chapter will inform two key discussions in Chapter 9. The remainder of this chapter outlines the key themes and sub-themes identified by interviewees, supplemented by supporting and opposing data from questionnaires and letters.

### **7.2 Contributory Causes of the PCTN**

The PCTN is fundamentally rooted in structural and systemic weaknesses that create an environment conducive to collaboration between criminals and terrorist inmates. The contributory causes detailed below are factors that actively influence the likelihood, emergence, and severity of the PCTN. They are not merely background conditions but specific characteristics within the prison system that directly or indirectly facilitate the interactions and networks central to the nexus. In this study, four primary contributory causes have been identified: 1) corruption, 2) vulnerable prisoners, 3) weak governance, and 4) weak security (see Figure 16). Each of these factors contribute to the conditions that allow the PCTN to flourish and will be discussed in turn.

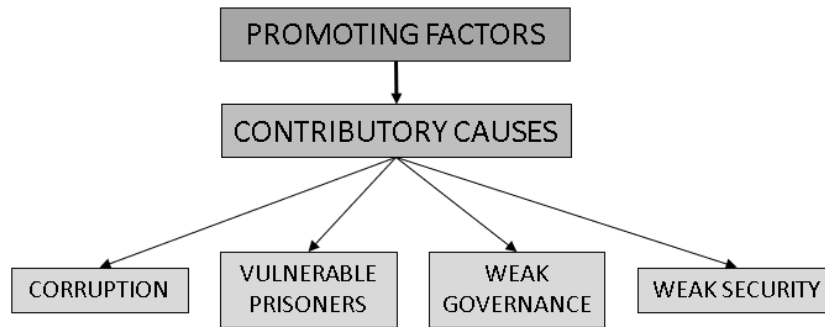


Figure 16: Contributory Causes (Author's Own)

### 7.2.1 Corruption

Corruption within the prison system is a significant contributory cause of the PCTN. Prisons create a fertile ground for corruption to flourish (Barrington et al. 2021: 46). Goldsmith et al. (2016) emphasised that when the potential gains from misconduct significantly outweigh the risks of being caught, it creates the perfect conditions for corruption to take root. Consequently, prisons bring together a diverse population for extended periods of time, often with a low-paid workforce and minimal training (Podmore, 2012; Fish, 2018). This environment can lead to what social psychologist Zimbardo coined as the 'Lucifer Effect' (2007) which illustrates the process through which individuals, initially good, can transform into evil actors when exposed to certain conditions.

However, the literature on corruption in prison is sparse (McCarthy, 1984; Goldsmith et al, 2016; Barrington et al. 2021). HMPPS (2022: 7) define corruption as a 'person in a position of authority or trust who abuses their position for benefit or gain for themselves or for another person'. For example, prison staff may steal and pilfer or traffic drugs, mobile phones and other illicit items into prisons. These practices are destructive and dangerous and severely impact and undermine the criminal justice system (McCarthy, 1984: 280; Treadwell et al. 2019: 25). Conversely, for the corrupt officer, these practices represent a lucrative, albeit illicit, way to supplement their income (McCarthy, 1984). Thirty-eight percent of interviewees (n = 13) discussed the issue of corruption. For instance, Alex said that 'corruption is a real problem in the prison estate' and that he has personally seen examples of it inside establishments. Similarly, Mark (Senior Police Officer) revealed that staff corruption is 'one of the biggest threats' prisons need to focus on. Prisoner 51 also disclosed that the 'justice system is corrupt'.

Additionally, some of these interviewees mentioned more subtle but equally corrupt practices, specifically, **conditioning** and **manipulation**. Prisoners are subjected to various levels of deprivations, commonly referred to as the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958). Interviewees noted that certain inmates employ manipulation tactics to improve their conditions and

sometimes attain positions of trust. Scott, a PIO at a Category C prison, cited an example of a model prisoner who held a 'privileged status' within the establishment. This prisoner was 'superficially compliant' (Morris and Morris, 1963; Treadwell et al. 2019: 27; South, 2023: 187) as they were heavily involved in illicit activities such as smuggling contraband into the prison and promoting radical extremism. Despite Scott's reports to the prison, this inmate continued to maintain order on the wings, making life easier for the staff (Macaulay, 2011). Scott revealed that staff conditioning influenced why this inmate was trusted, as some prison staff prioritised a stable regime and were willing to overlook minor offences (O'Donnell, 2023: 71). This situation aligns with Liebling's (2004) observations where excessive trust between staff and prisoners (such as HMP Doncaster) led to a blurring of boundaries and the development of informal relationships. Crewe et al. (2014) highlight how such 'light' forms of governance, though appreciated by prisoners, lacked legitimacy and often contributed to institutional instability. Scott's illustration reflects this dynamic, where the trust placed in an inmate who manipulates the system further destabilises the prison environment.

Similarly, Jerry disclosed that inmates who have established reputations for serious criminality and are recognised as OCG nominals are often at the top of the criminal hierarchy and selected as enhanced level prisoners—meaning they have demonstrated consistently high levels of good behaviour so get access to the greatest number of privileges available (Coyle, 2005: 148; Treadwell et al. 2019; South, 2023: 67; Gooch and Treadwell, 2020; 2023; 2024). Accordingly, these prisoners have privileges, such as more visits or a television in their cell. However, Jerry explained that one explanation for why they are 'enhanced' is due to offenders' ability to condition and manipulate staff. Thus, successful prison-based criminal entrepreneurs usually take control of key aspects of prison life and appear to be model inmates (Treadwell et al. 2019). These types of prisoners may adopt a deliberate policy of conditioning staff in order to reduce staff alertness or even get certain inmates into positions of trust. Historical contexts, such as the management of prisoners associated with the NI Troubles, provide a stark illustration of how corruption and inmate conditioning can contribute to broader security threats (Hennessey, 1984; Butler et al. 2018). The Maze Prison escape in 1983<sup>43</sup> and HMP Whitemoor escape in 1994 highlight the risks posed when prisoners manipulate staff or exploit systemic vulnerabilities to further their objectives. The Maze housed inmates in 'H-Block' facilities designed to isolate politically motivated prisoners, reflecting an early acknowledgment by the prison service of the dangers posed by mixing terrorist offenders with organised criminals. The subsequent Woodcock Report (1994) and literature such as O'Donnell's *Prison Life: Pain, Resistance, and Purpose* (2014), further emphasise how

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<sup>43</sup> The Maze Prison escape took place on 25 September 1983 in NI. HMP Maze was a maximum-security prison considered to be one of the most escape-proof prisons in Europe.

prisoner manipulation, conditioning, and the gradual erosion of staff authority can undermine institutional security and foster environments conducive to the PCTN.

Furthermore, some interviewees discussed **non-feasance**: referring to the failure to act according to one's responsibilities or the omission of an act that an official ought to perform (Gooch and Treadwell, 2021: 30; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Prison officers like a calm, ordered and hassle-free working environment (Cuthbertson, 2004; Podmore, 2012: 147). Therefore, interviewees suggested that some officers may selectively ignore inmate violations of institutional rules (McCarthy, 1984; Goldsmith, 2022: 155) particularly as a pragmatic response when weighed against serious disorder, staff assault and threats. However, this 'boiled frog' syndrome is the beginning of a gradual shift of power from officers to prisoners. Hence, inadvertently or indirectly, abdicating responsibility can be destructive and dangerous for the prison (Liebling et al. 2011) and subsequently, foster the PCTN. Paul, a former Police Officer with far-reaching expertise in CT and prisons, spoke openly and anecdotally. He stated that the 'overriding culture within the prison service is about maintaining order and control,' so 'any intrusive activity',<sup>44</sup> he suspects, is 'not happening as vigorously as it should because of the wish not to upset the apple cart, as it were.' As with some other interviewees, Paul can be honest about institutional failures given that there is no threat to his job security.

To supplement this finding, Prisoner 32 revealed that many 'good' prison staff become 'compliant' and 'turn a blind eye' to any victimisation and intimidation (Cuthbertson, 2004; Goldsmith et al. 2016). This phenomenon is echoed by Crewe et al. (2014), who, in their study found that in three private prisons where prisoners rated their quality of life as relatively poor, staff exhibited weaknesses in the use of authority ('absence'). Prisoners described instances where staff failed to intervene during minor disturbances or prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, instead relying on prisoners to act or exiting the wings entirely (Crewe et al. 2014: 398). This mirrors the 'turning a blind eye' dynamic, or 'omission of duty' (Liebling and Price, 2001: 124) identified in this study, where the absence of staff authority allows power to shift away from prison officers and into the hands of the prisoners (O'Donnell, 2023).

Similarly, Matthew is a PIO in a Category C prison. He explained that some prisoners (often prison drug dealers) are given positions of trust if they are polite and compliant in their daily interactions with staff as well as able to generate and control disorder (Crewe, 2005b). A disorderly, noisy, dirty cellblock reflects the staffs' inability to handle prisoners—so to an extent, prison officers are dependent on inmates for the satisfactory performance of their duties (Sykes, 1958). Given that these prisoners regulate and discourage disorder, they can make attractive partners for prison staff who may take advantage of the relative peace that is

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<sup>44</sup> Such as surveillance, covert tactics, phone seizures etc.

achieved when inmates are allowed to control the wings (Crewe, 2005b). In a sense, there is an innocuous encroachment of the prisoner on the officer's duties as some chores and responsibilities may gradually be transferred to the inmate given the position of trust. Therefore, Matthew questioned whether prison staff would punish these prisoners if they were involved in criminality, because officers may be conditioned into this level of 'self-policing' and do not want to disrupt the settled regime. Arguing from experience, Matthew maintained that these prisoners would likely get a 'slap on the wrist' and then quickly establish their 'position back again doing what [they were] doing with all the rights and privileges that [they] had before.'

Hence, the findings demonstrate that there are limits to the degree of compliance achieved through the prison organisations' control structure (Sykes, 1958; Cloward et al. 1960; Goldsmith et al. 2016). Therefore, any coercive power may need to be supplemented with informal exchange relations with inmates (McCarthy, 1984; Walker, 2016). As Prisoner 32 wrote—during his 16 years inside prison, he has 'seen the lines blurred between inmates and staff.' Hence, a level of self-policing and 'deals or trades' with the prisoners are used by some staff to control the prison and maintain the smooth functioning of the establishment (Sykes, 1958: 57; Cloward et al. 1960; Irwin, 1980; Goldsmith et al. 2016; Gooch, 2022: 212). 'Only by tolerating violations of minor' offences can the officers achieve compliance in major areas of the custodial regime (Sykes, 1958: 58; McCarthy, 1984). However, if some prisoners hold too much power, staff can become conditioned and the prison can be regarded as a lawless society where victimisation, exploitation and drugs are visible and occur with impunity (Gooch and Treadwell, 2019: 62). Hence, there is often a fraught balance of power and control between officers and prisoners in order to maintain an uneasy peace (Crewe et al. 2011: 112; Walker, 2016; Gooch and Treadwell, 2019: 62; 2023). This is further supported by the below remark from a Category C prisoner:

There are two types of gangs in prisons  
One formed by inmates and the other formed  
by the staff and on some occasions those two  
gangs support each other.

(Prisoner 32)



Corruption's role as a contributory cause of the PCTN remains in its ability to compromise institutional integrity and promote criminal activity, creating a permissive environment where inmates can exploit vulnerable staff and systemic deficiencies. As Treadwell et al. (2019) argue, corrupt staff enable crime by compromising the integrity of the prison system. By blurring the lines between staff authority and inmate influence, it creates an environment where criminals and terrorists can exploit weaknesses, whether through manipulation, trafficking contraband, or non-feasance (Gooch and Treadwell, 2021: 32). The historical context of the NI Troubles, alongside contemporary findings, highlight how corruption fosters conditions that allow the PCTN to flourish within prison establishments.

### **7.2.2 Vulnerable prisoners**

The second contributory cause of the PCTN is the number of vulnerable inmates exposed due to prison instability and the enduring crisis of safety. These inmates form 'captive audiences' (Sykes, 1958) for recruitment by terrorist offenders, and exploitation by powerful individuals who wish to continue their criminal operations without fear of repercussion from the authorities (Cilluffo et al. 2007; Hannah et al. 2008; Gooch, 2022: 207; Santorso and Rizzuti, 2024: 10). Certain prisoners are more vulnerable due to their personal characteristics, such as physical weakness or psychological distress (Finkelhor and Asdigian, 1996; Wilcox et al. 2003), and often lack adequate education, come from under-privileged backgrounds and need protection from the 'pains of imprisonment' (Neumann, 2010). This sub-theme of vulnerable prisoners also links into the weak governance and security sub-themes, where a laissez-faire approach to policing the wings—characteristic of 'light-absent' prisons (Crewe et al. 2014)—creates more opportunities for violence and exploitation. This environment not only increases risks for vulnerable prisoners but also provides fertile ground for the development of the PCTN.

Before continuing, it is worth emphasising that in the context of this study, vulnerable prisoners refer to individuals within mainstream prisons who can be influenced or exploited due to factors such as threats, a need for safety, and their desire for elevated status (Powis et al. 2021). The more regularised term refers to prisoners (predominantly sex offenders) who are housed in a Vulnerable Prisoner Unit, separated from ordinary wings (Mann, 2016; South, 2023).

Seventy-six percent of interviewees (n = 26) referred to the considerable number of vulnerable individuals in prison when discussing the PCTN. For instance, Melissa, a Police Officer with over 25 years' experience, stated that 'there are significant number[s] of vulnerable people' inside prison and Jeffrey (Senior Police Officer) explained that criminals may use vulnerable prisoners 'to look after mobile phones for them', so they can continue their criminality. The following quote captures collective attitudes:

'Stronger, influential prisoners will pick on vulnerable people that are either in debt or have drug issues or drug dependent, alcohol dependent, whatever it might be, and they will use them, extort them, get them to orchestrate throw overs, site visits for them to get the contraband into the prison.'

(Daniel, PIO)

To supplement these findings, Prisoner 32 wrote:

There is lots of bullying in prisons from other prisoners and prison staff particularly towards individuals who may appear weak or vulnerable.

It is important to acknowledge that some interviewees were quite emotional when voicing concerns for the manipulation and exploitation of these vulnerable inmates. They conveyed the impression that prison is all about pain; the pains of separation, deprivations and human struggles (Liebling, 1999a), where vulnerable inmates are 'easily coaxed, forced, coerced' (Scott) and 'manipulated' (Natasha). I learned of uncomfortable truths about the state of prison security, the victimisation of prisoners by both fellow inmates and unethical staff (Marranci, 2009: 67), and the levels of criminality and harm prison inflicts on inmates. Additionally, the interviewees related the problems of the drugs economy and criminal networks to the prominent levels of victimisation and exploitation evident within some prisons.

To support their argument, some interviewees provided an account of their knowledge through experiences and real-world examples. Larry used the example of Lewis Ludlow, a vulnerable Muslim convert who was sentenced to a minimum term of 15 years for planning the Oxford Street terrorist attack. Ludlow is vulnerable because of his mental health difficulties, autism and depression (BBC, 2019). Larry argued that Ludlow's vulnerability and mental health issues played an important part in his susceptibility to radicalisation and exploitation. Likewise, Joseph is an Intelligence Officer with over 19 years' experience in this field and when discussing the large numbers of vulnerable inmates being an enabler to the PCTN, he used the example of Michael Coe (Mikaeel Ibrahim) who was radicalised whilst inside prison (Basra and Neumann, 2017; Yaacoub, 2018: 82). Joseph explained that Coe was a 'vulnerable petty criminal' looking for 'protection' and 'food.' Joseph revealed that Coe understood very little about Islam and only 'knew three [Islamic] words' but was recruited for his criminal 'expertise'. Initial relationships between Coe and extremist inmates concerned protection and fear of those

individuals because of the level of violence inside prison and Coe's vulnerability. As Jennifer (Intelligence Officer) stated:

'These types of people need to belong... [but] they are easily influenced'.

Thus, overtime, new beliefs and attitudes can develop—as with the Michael Coe example.

Furthermore, the presence of violence, prisoner exploitation, a substantial population of vulnerable inmates, and challenges for certain prison officers to establish their legitimacy among inmates create an environment where criminal and terrorist networks can flourish (Wooldredge, 2020). This, in turn, allows for the recruitment of a sizable pool of defenceless individuals (Basma et al. 2016). Adam, Christian (Prevent Supervisor) and Paul (former Police Officer) all explicitly stated that vulnerable individuals are more susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment which, according to this thesis, is a form of the crime-terror nexus. For example, Adam detailed, from his extensive experience in prisons, that OC prisoners sometimes 'use the terrorists in order to control the supply of drugs and target vulnerable people.' Christian manages Prevent referrals<sup>45</sup> and highlighted that many of the individuals referred to the program have 'complex needs', including mental health issues and prior trauma, which increases their vulnerability to radicalisation and recruitment. Likewise, Paul claimed that 'terrorist prisoners... don't shy away from trying to recruit or radicalise others'. This finding from the interview data is supported by an inmate in a Category A prison when he wrote:

Muslim prisoners ARE constantly trying to  
convert the weaker minded prisoners and  
with all the laws to protect their rights  
the staff can't do little.

(Prisoner 29)

The comments above demonstrate that vulnerable, weaker minded, inmates form captive audiences for recruitment by terrorist offenders. Whilst some inmates use solidarity as a solution to mitigate the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958: 82), others are more focused on a competitive and self-interested response (Crewe, 2005b) which facilitates their criminal or terrorist networks. Consequently, vulnerable prisoners are exploited and the illicit economy flourishes which contributes to violence, disorder and the performance of masculinity for

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<sup>45</sup> Anyone with concerns about radicalisation or terrorism involvement, whether for themselves or someone they know, can make a Prevent referral.

survival (Evans and Wallace, 2008; Crewe, 2014; Mitchell, 2018; Gooch, 2022: 194; Murray, 2023).

### **7.2.3 Weak governance**

A prevalent theme that emerged from the data is that prisons frequently suffer from weak governance, often being viewed as ineffective in controlling crime (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006: 72; Rushchenko, 2019: 301; Williams and Liebling, 2022: 98). The findings revealed that weak governance in prisons manifests through systemic issues, including ineffective supervision, staffing shortages, and inadequate training of prison staff (Gooch and Treadwell, 2021). These deficiencies result in inconsistent enforcement of rules, diminished oversight, and low staff morale, all of which compromise the ability of prisons to maintain order and legitimacy. Gooch and Treadwell (2021) highlight how inexperienced officers, and a lack of authority create opportunities for organised inmates to consolidate power and engage in illicit activities with impunity. Such environments reflect the governance imbalance described by Crewe et al.'s (2014) 'heavy-light, absent-present' four-quadrant framework, where authority is either excessively punitive, inconsistently applied, or entirely absent. For instance, overly 'light' or 'absent' authority can result in staff hesitating to challenge inmate misconduct, leaving prisoners to self-govern and enabling the rise of informal power structures (Skarbek, 2016).

While the UK is not a weak or failed state (Chislett, 2019; Fragile States Index, 2023), its prisons are not immune to governance failures (Skarbek, 2020). In well-managed institutions, prisons can serve as rehabilitative spaces that deter the PCTN. However, in establishments plagued by weak governance, these safeguards break down, allowing criminals and terrorists to exploit the absence of effective oversight. Nearly half of the interviewees (n = 15) described prisons as places where both criminals and terrorists can use the absence of effective governance to promulgate and prosper without fear of repercussion from the authorities. For example, Matthew, a CT PIO, explicitly stated that HMPPS, especially at management level, can be 'ineffective' (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019: 29). Additionally, whilst being conscious of the fact that prisoners may experience animosity towards the prison service, the following examples gave the impression of weak governance:

'Many staff are reluctant to challenge it [bullying] (too much paperwork)'

(Prisoner 32)

(write, draw, poem, etc.)

I got robbed by a gang in Prison in  
swaleside when I first arrived. And nothing  
was done. So I am not interested in a gang  
or violence. I hate it.

(Prisoner 34)

I MYSELF HAVE BEEN ASSAULTED TWICE, THE GOVERNOR STAND BACK  
AND DONE NOTHING  
YOU GOT 6 GOVERNOR'S IN THIS PRISON, IN MY OPINION A  
WASTE OF TAX-PAYERS MONEY

(Prisoner 28)

These observations suggest that governance within prisons is inadequate at controlling crime and victimisation (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006). Poorly managed prisons fail to tackle and prevent criminal activities such as bullying, which, when left unchecked, can increase the risks of inmates engaging in continued criminality (Williams, 2010: 45; Gooch and Treadwell, 2021) or radicalisation (Goldman, 2014: 56). This concept of weak governance parallels that of failed states, where structural deficiencies foster instability and undermine authority. Scholars such as Liebling (2015) and Hamm (2009; 2013) identify shared characteristics, including corruption, violence, overcrowding, and ineffective management, which create conditions ripe for radicalisation and underground networks.

#### 7.2.3.1 Staffing

Staffing issues emerged as a key aspect of weak governance within prisons, significantly influencing the conditions that enable the PCTN. Seventy percent of interviewees (n = 24) discussed prison staff's lack of experience, training, and knowledge regarding the PCTN. These deficiencies not only impact prison safety but also hinder effective reporting to the police and the mitigation of criminality within the prison environment. This aligns with Crewe et al.'s (2014) findings, which highlights that in 'light-absent' prisons, staff were often disengaged or lacked the expertise and life experience prisoners valued. In private sector establishments, factors such as younger staff, reduced staffing levels, and overly familiar interactions further weakened supportive yet professional relationships (Crewe et al. 2014: 401). This dynamic limited opportunities for personal growth and undermined the effectiveness of prison governance.

Although I have categorised the staffing issue into three distinct topics for clarity (Attride-Stirling, 2001), it is important to note that these areas are interconnected, and some remarks cut across all three. Additionally, the volume of data provided on staffing issues was substantial, and the topic consistently emerged during interviews with minimal or no probing. This helps to validate how central staffing issues are to the broader theme of weak governance, as the inability of staff to effectively manage or disrupt the dynamics within prisons directly contributes to the emergence and perpetuation of the PCTN.

#### Lack of experience

The high staff turnover in prisons, as highlighted in a recent Bromley Briefing<sup>46</sup> by the Prison Reform Trust (2022: 4-6), significantly weakens governance by depleting staff experience and competency (Podmore, 2012: 164). This issue has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which some officers entered the profession without prior exposure to a fully operational regime. The findings indicate a marked decline in jailcraft and the ability to interact effectively with offenders (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019; Williams and Liebling, 2022: 98; South, 2023). Both Kimberly (PIO) and Christopher (PPL) openly voiced that prisons have many 'young, inexperienced prison officers', which, in turn, enables criminals and terrorists to engage in unlawful activities without detection. Kimberly explained that these prison officers often lack the social skills, confidence and jailcraft of how to have a 'proper conversation with prisoners' so they can identify and notice changes in behaviour' (Crewe et al. 2011: 104; The Centre for Social Justice, 2019; South, 2023). She also implied that some new prison officers are naïve; thus, prisoners can manipulate them into feeling trusted by the inmates (Liebling, 2011: 491). Likewise, Jerry, a former Prison Governor with 25 years' experience, said that the 'new staff' have 'no prison experience, they have no management experience... no life experience'. Jerry revealed ironically that he used to call prisons 'Hogwarts',<sup>47</sup> because they were full of 'bright young things'. Given that Jerry is not working in the sector anymore, he can afford to be more honest about the problems and the daily difficulties prisons face. Jerry's candid remarks, afforded by his position outside the sector, underscore the critical challenges prisons face in ensuring competent governance. These findings confirm that inexperienced officers struggle to exercise and maintain authority on the wings (James et al. 1997; Crewe et al. 2011; Treadwell et al. 2019), a key characteristic of weak governance. This lack of authority creates opportunities for criminals and terrorists to operate without detection, further entrenching the PCTN.

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<sup>46</sup> This is one of the Prison Reform Trust's flagship publications which brings together the latest facts about prisons and the individuals within them.

<sup>47</sup> Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is a fictional boarding school of magic for students aged eleven to seventeen.

## Lack of training

This section links staffing issues to weak governance by highlighting the critical role of inadequate training and knowledge in undermining effective management within prisons. Thirty-five percent of interviewees (n = 12) discussed a lack of training for staff to understand violent extremism and recognise the signs of religious conversion, radicalisation and the PCTN. Even the interviewees that work, or previously worked, for the prison service displayed a sense of disappointment with the lack of resources and time the organisation invests into training their officers. This lack of preparation significantly weakens the ability of staff to maintain order and safety, accurately report concerns to law enforcement, and prevent criminality within prisons. The findings demonstrate that weak governance is exacerbated by an institutional failure to provide adequate resources, leaving staff underprepared and unsupported in their roles.

For example, Dennis, a PIO who works with prison staff on a daily basis, displayed disenchantment when he said that prison officers are:

‘Left to fend for themselves and hope for the best’.

Staff receive some initial training, but ‘more training’ is needed. Indeed, interviewees’ remarks on a lack of staff training were woven with feelings of disappointment and exasperation at how prison officers are somewhat neglected by the organisation. As the following quotations illustrate, some resent the prison service for not supporting and training their staff and investing in equipment and better processes:

‘I think Hannah, they’re overwhelmed by the lack of staff support. The lack of staff on the wing’.

(Christopher, PPL)

‘There is not enough computers, there’s not enough access, there is not enough time set aside for them to do a proper job’.

(Dennis, PIO)

‘The thing is, it’s easy to be terribly gloomy and negative. There are some really good people working in prisons, very dedicated people wanting to do the right thing. I think where they are let down, it is by the bureaucracy of the prisons structure’.

(Paul, former Police Officer).

These remarks highlighted how limited resources, such as insufficient access to technology and overly bureaucratic structures, hinder the ability of officers to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This systemic neglect contributes to a breakdown in governance, as officers feel overwhelmed and unsupported, resulting in diminished authority and operational control (Liebling et al. 2011).

Comments of this kind signal empathy and compassion for the prison staff as they are 'let down' by the prison service (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019). These remarks uncover a shift away from blaming staff and individuals to criticising the system. Some prison officers wish to make a difference but given the lack of training and support by management—this aspiration is difficult to achieve (Crawley, 2004; Gooch and Treadwell, 2023). The problems of the prison institution far transcend the employees, but it is difficult to unravel the structural features of a social organisation from the characteristics of the staff members (Sykes, 1958). The impact of policies, marked by austerity measures and attempts to cut government spending, further compounds these systemic issues.

Within this finding, the data provided convincing evidence that training and education of prison officers working with extremist inmates is crucial (UNODC, 2016; Vejvodová and Kolář, 2020: 552). Staff need to understand unfamiliar cultural and religious backgrounds and feel empowered to recognise the signs of radicalisation and the crime-terror nexus. The challenge of accurately detecting and identifying prisoners who represent a credible threat in terms of promoting, facilitating, or committing terrorism offences is difficult without appropriate training (Hamm, 2008; Council of Europe, 2016). For instance, Scott (PIO), Matthew (PIO) and Sean (Police Officer) disclosed that more training would provide officers with awareness of what 'they should be looking out for' and how to identify individuals of interest to the police (UNODC, 2016; Liebling and Williams, 2018). Furthermore, Gregory (debriefing and subject matter expert in Salafi jihadism) said, with annoyance, that there is not enough training on ideologies; thus, if prison officers 'don't understand... then how can it [radicalisation / crime-terror nexus] be identified'. In particular, Gregory articulated that there needs to be more training on 'certain words that give you an indication of someone's mindset' and the 'relevance' of certain phrases. Gregory provided two examples of when terrorist prisoners were planning terrorist attacks from their cell, but this was not easily identified because staff did not know the meaning of Arabic terms such as 'Taghut'.<sup>48</sup> Without training and familiarisation of certain terminology, Gregory argued, radicalisation and any existence of the PCTN can be overlooked or even mistaken.

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<sup>48</sup> Which refers to idols, a tyrant, an oracle or an enemy of Muhammad. Taghut means 'one who has crossed the limits', in plain language: a rebel. It is any power or being that rebels against Allah and demands loyalty and obedience (Drissner, 2017)



An interesting argument which was identified during analysis, is that there is a link between a lack of training and the misidentification and misinterpretation of mere friendship or manifestation of faith (Liebling et al. 2011: 177; UNODC, 2016: 31; Dean, 2022). Crucially, most people who convert or revert to Islam during imprisonment do so for peaceful motives and to bond with a group of other prisoners (Jones, 2014: 81; RAN, 2016: 3; Acheson and Paul, 2019: 102). Hence, the training of prison staff concerning how to distinguish between prisoners who might have (re)discovered their faith and people who have developed radical views is imperative (RAN, 2016). Aligning with a study by Liebling et al (2011), the data provided evidence that staff sometimes view any prisoner association or explicit expression of Islamic faith as evidence of radicalisation (Hamm, 2013; Wilkinson et al. 2021). Sean, a Police Officer, explained that some prisoners may associate or have conversations with an inmate in the cell next door, which is 'a natural thing to do'. If one of these prisoners is a TACT offender certain staff may write up security reports due to poor understanding and a lack of training. This then places the non-TACT prisoners under enhanced monitoring and scrutiny. Similarly, Kenneth (Intelligence Officer) displayed compassion for certain TACT offenders who want to honestly befriend another prisoner. Kenneth stated that:

'If you have a TACT offender in [omitted. Replaced with a category A prison] for arguments sake who has a tea or coffee with a non-TACT offender, and they will say it themselves if you speak to them, that staff immediately think that they're trying to radicalise them, that might be the case, but they might also just enjoy their company and have a nice cup of coffee and have something in common that they support, dare I say it, Manchester United or something like that.'

This finding, developed during analysis, is supported by a Category A prisoner convicted of a jihadist terrorist offence when he wrote:

Everyone gets along (both Terrorist & Non Terrorist prisoners), however there are much stereotyping towards convicted Terrorists as to there associations.

Ex: If two terrorist prisoners socialise, staffs presumption is there is a sinister motive behind this association.

- If a NON-TACT & TACT prisoner socialise, it is viewed as one is trying to 'radicalise' the other.

This prisoner's perception of discrimination and frustration arises from staff assuming they were engaging in proselytisation or radicalisation due to their TACT offender status. As a

result, some prison staff view TACT offenders through an extremism and terrorism lens, partly due to their lack of understanding of Islam (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2010; Kenneth, Intelligence Officer). Despite the good intentions and hard work of many staff members, their relative inexperience, limited training, and knowledge, can result in the misuse of force, victimisation, and low expectations of prisoners, ultimately impacting staff-prisoner relationships, which are central to the prison system (Crewe, 2011; Crewe et al, 2011; Gooch, 2022; South, 2023: 19). This stereotyping of prisoners by staff may inadvertently harm these relationships (Liebling et al. 2011: 175), and it can potentially reinforce criticism of approaches that risk undermining human rights and proving counterproductive, particularly when individuals are incorrectly identified as risks (Kessing and Anderson, 2019; Sageman, 2021). Hence, the findings provide clear evidence that a lack of training equates to unfamiliarity with religious practices and the crime-terror nexus being poorly understood by those who work in prison.

#### Lack of knowledge

Another significant theme that emerged is the lack of knowledge among prison staff, which undermines the prison's ability to maintain governance and control. Many prison officers lack knowledge and awareness of religious practices, radicalisation, extremism and the crime-terror nexus (Basra and Neumann, 2020). While interviewees acknowledged that staff do not need to be experts on specific ideologies or religions, they stressed the importance of equipping officers with sufficient knowledge about relevant religious and cultural backgrounds to recognise signs of radicalisation. This knowledge is crucial for preventing influential extremist prisoners from exerting control and proselytising to others (MoJ, 2016; RAN, 2016: 4; Dean, 2022). This sub-theme intersects closely with the lack of experience and training among staff, highlighting a critical dimension of weak governance.

Interviewees advocated for additional training to enhance staff awareness, enabling them to effectively recognise these issues and make informed judgments about the appropriateness of interventions (UNODC, 2016: 31). For instance, Matthew expressed frustration over the 'lack of understanding of extremism amongst officers on the wing.' He explained that staff may fail to recognise signs as 'relevant' and important because 'they don't know, what they don't know.'

Additionally, Jerry (former Prison Governor) voiced that the 'average prison officer has got little understanding of the Muslim culture, terrorist culture or radicalisation' and Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager), expressed annoyance at a lack of investment in staff understanding and mitigating any risk of the crime-terror nexus. Interviewees reported that enhanced knowledge would enable prison officers to recognise potential risks more

confidently, understand their role in mitigating the crime-terror nexus, and situate their work within the broader security framework. These findings align with studies conducted by Liebling (2011) and Crewe et al. (2011) which highlights that staff often lack confidence when dealing with prisoners who present ideological or cultural differences. This lack of confidence, combined with limited exposure to diverse communities (Paul, former Police Officer) or ideological motives (Bennett, 2016a), can lead to apprehension in addressing prisoners' behaviour and increases the risk of misjudging situations. For example, the difficulty in distinguishing between Islamist activity and orthodox Islamic practice (Basra et al. 2016; Shawcross, 2023) was cited as a recurrent challenge.

This study complements previously cited research in arguing that some prison officers lack the knowledge and confidence to deal with prisoners. The interviewees acknowledged the considerable challenges faced by prison officers in preserving order within a demanding environment characterised by resource constraints, staffing issues, and high staff turnover rates. Nevertheless, they emphasised the necessity for staff to receive training and support enabling them to detect signs of radicalisation, understand diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, and recognise expressions of extremist ideology (Vejvodová and Kolář, 2020: 556). While training is recognised as essential for enhancing governance, resource constraints and operational demands often deprioritise its delivery (Shawcross, 2023). Training sessions are frequently postponed, and newly recruited staff are left to acquire critical skills through on-the-job experience alongside the remaining, more experienced personnel (Coyle, 2005). These systemic challenges reflect broader governance failures that prevent staff from addressing risks effectively and contribute to the unchecked growth of the PCTN.

To summarise, by examining weak governance as a contributory cause, this analysis demonstrates how systemic deficiencies within prison institutions contribute to the emergence and perpetuation of the PCTN. Weak governance reflects the overarching failures in oversight, authority, and institutional support, creating environments where informal power structures and illicit activities thrive. Staffing issues, including high turnover and the prevalence of inexperienced officers, further exacerbate these challenges, leaving prisons without the capacity to maintain control. Similarly, insufficient training and a lack of knowledge about extremism, cultural practices, and the PCTN hinder prison officers' ability to detect and mitigate risks effectively. Together, these interconnected factors demonstrate how governance failures compromise prison safety and facilitate conditions conducive to the PCTN.

### 7.2.4 Weak security

Many interviewees (n = 15) described prisons as environments where both criminals and terrorists can exploit weak security, particularly the lack of proactive measures to prevent and disrupt their activities, allowing them to operate and thrive without fear of repercussions from the authorities. For example, Larry is a Police Intelligence Officer with 29 years' experience and has extensive knowledge and involvement in prisons. He explained that one of the issues within some establishments is that there is 'no control' over crime, so criminals are able to 'run their OCGs from prison and interfere with witnesses'. Likewise, Alex stated that the UK invests a lot of money into 'putting people into prison'. Thus, it has to be 'morally wrong' that prisoners can then 'continue their criminal activities unbounded whilst incarcerated'. Delving further into this comment, integrating the words 'morally wrong' to describe prisons allowing offenders to continue their criminality was felt to be powerful. Morally wrong implies an action is causing harm (harm-based monists) or it is unjust, disloyal, and disrespectful (moral pluralism; Graham et al. 2009). It can be inferred that the conduct of prisons and/or prison officers allowing offenders to continue their criminality is wrong, almost wilful, neglectful and intentional, rather than unintentional and a fact of poor management. It could even be that individuals are to blame rather than the structure, as it may involve a personal choice by prison staff to engage in behaviour that is clearly wrong and damaging (McCarthy, 1984). From this point of view, the problems of the prison institution are rooted in the inadequacies of the prison staff rather than flaws in the system itself (Sykes, 1958).

Moreover, Isaac disclosed that some prisons are 'out of control' and lack security, so rehabilitation is impossible. Isaac expressed a sense of urgency when he reported that 'chronic instability and [a] lack of safety' are central features to prison establishments that should be addressed. This aligns with Crewe et al.'s (2014) findings that prisons characterised as 'light-absent' lack the safety and staff support necessary for prisoners to develop. Instead of fostering rehabilitation, such environments force prisoners to focus on surviving the present rather than planning for the future. Beyond a certain threshold, the perceived benefit of 'lightness'—freedom from institutional power—becomes a significant hazard, as it deprives prisoners of the 'headspace' and assistance required for personal growth and rehabilitation (Liebling et al. 2011: 400). This reality is echoed by a prisoner in a Category C establishment when he wrote that 'prison is in no way an instrument of reform...as it is, it does more harm than good'. This remark directly challenges the famous French sociologist Foucault's (1977) classic work, on the notion of the prison as a form of state control, designed to accomplish the desires of society regarding convicted criminals (Sykes, 1958: 13). Instead of some prisons being an institution of state control, neoliberal governance and its cultural injunctions have

enabled prisons to become major loci for crime-terror interactions and instruments of the state's destruction (Shelley, 2014: 143).

Furthermore, Scott provided a recent example of when the prison service was ineffective and lacked security. He could not reveal too much information due to sensitivities but explained that he was investigating a prisoner who was involved in throw overs<sup>49</sup> and child sexual exploitation on the outside. Due to this information, the prison sent the prisoner to the segregation unit.<sup>50</sup> It was later identified that the prisoner had 'plugged' a phone<sup>51</sup> which the police wanted to seize. However, despite this being communicated—the prison allowed the prisoner access to an area where the prisoner could dispose of the phone. Hence, the police never retrieved the illicit mobile phone. Scott provided this example to illustrate how prisoners can operate without fear, exploiting weak security measures within the estate. He also conveyed his frustration at the ongoing struggle to align his organisation's priorities with the prison's actions (discussed further in Chapter 8).

#### 7.2.4.1 Lack of proactive policing

Analysis of the data identified that criminals and terrorists may interact because the prison and police are heavily reactive and do not proactively monitor and undertake surveillance within the estate (Treadwell et al. 2019: 43). Subsequently, criminals and terrorists are able to conduct criminality relatively unnoticed.

Twenty-six percent of interviewees (n = 9) specifically addressed how both organisations react to crises and problems as they emerged and modify their behaviour solely in reaction to incidents or shortcomings (Podmore, 2012: 26). For instance, Craig voiced that he finds both organisations 'wait for something to happen', such as 'a coroner report or the Fishmongers market',<sup>52</sup> before altering their priorities. Ivan said that 'both [the] police and the prison service only change in response to events when the wheels are coming off'. Ivan provided several examples of when both organisations have been reactive instead of proactive. For example, the prison debriefing<sup>53</sup> process only developed after allegations arose that prison officers were organising gladiator-style fights between inmates that led to the death of Zahid Mubarek by his cellmate. Thus, Ivan concluded that any proactive identification and tackling of the crime-

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<sup>49</sup> This is when an article or substance is projected or conveyed over or through a boundary of the prison to land inside the prison.

<sup>50</sup> Segregation is when prisoners are kept apart from other prisoners.

<sup>51</sup> This is when a phone is hidden inside the anus.

<sup>52</sup> On 29 November 2019, five people were stabbed at Fishmongers' Hall. The attacker, Usman Khan, had been released from prison in 2018 on licence after serving a sentence for terrorist offences.

<sup>53</sup> Debriefs provide proactive and efficient questioning of persons detained in prison to gather intelligence for various reasons usually to maximise opportunities to gain credible intelligence to support management to make informed operational decisions.

terror nexus would only occur in response to an event in the community that was confirmed as being orchestrated from within prison. For example:

‘If a carriage on a train was bombed and there was direct evidence that it came from Belmarsh. Then it will change.’

Additionally, these interviewees highlighted that within the prison estate there is not enough of the proactive ‘pursue’ element of the CONTEST strategy. CONTEST has 4 strands: PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT and PREPARE. The purpose of PURSUE is to stop OC and terrorism by detecting, prosecuting and disrupting those individuals (CONTEST, 2018). PURSUE is a pivotal strand of CONTEST for law enforcement agencies. Adam (Regional Prisons Coordinator), Paul (former Police Officer) and Natasha (PIO) articulated that the ‘response to crime within prisons is pretty patchy’; thus, there needs to be a more proactive, intelligence-led response that seeks to prevent crime inside prison (Treadwell et al. 2019: 43). Larry said that despite the ‘number one aim of the prison service [being] rehabilitation’, there needs to be an element of policing in prison because of the high levels of criminality and recidivism rates. Additionally, Jerry, a former Prison Governor, explained that ‘detection [and] surveillance in prison is random and ad hoc’. Whereas in the community, there is a ‘whole goal surveillance culture’ which brings more ‘scrutiny’ to criminals. Jerry’s comment implies that there is an absence of investigation and law enforcement inside prison which allows criminals and terrorists to prosper without fear of repercussion from the authorities. This acknowledgment also gives emphasis to the failure of the neoliberal approach to governance in effectively combating crime and reducing recidivism, particularly from cuts to public spending and investment.

The general contention amongst the interviewees was in favour of a greater role for police in prisons because they are better equipped and resourced to deal with any criminality. Interviewees suggested that proactive policing could involve expanding the use of CHIS and intelligence and behaviour-led surveillance, aligning with recommendations from a recent study by Acheson and Paul (2021: 10).

Equally James, a Senior Government Advisor, discussed several times during his interview, the need for the police to have a bigger role in prison. When he was asked whether the authorities are doing enough to tackle any PCTN, he stated ‘no’ and expressed mild disapproval when he said that some prison Governors have not got the:

‘Bandwidth or the incentive to get as involved as they probably should to stop this from happening’.

He stated that, instead, the 'police need to develop a pursue capability specifically in prison' which will involve:

'Sharing intelligence', an 'investigative mindset' and 'being more curious about things on the part of HMPPS'.

Likewise, Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) voiced that:

'Policing in prisons is... still an emerging trend'.

Hence, this lack of proactive policing and investigative mindset inside prisons is a factor which encourages weak and ineffective security. In turn, this allows criminals and terrorists to conduct criminality relatively unnoticed potentially promoting the PCTN.

#### 7.2.4.2 Out of sight out of mind

The next sub-theme within weak security is influenced by Podmore's '*Out of Sight, Out of Mind*' (2012) argument. The findings from the data revealed that despite the prison population soaring to over 82,000 in 2022 (MoJ, 2023: 11), these establishments and staff are easily forgotten about or even purposely ignored (South, 2023: 334). Fifty-five percent of interviewees (n = 19) felt that prisons at times are viewed as the 'poor cousin' in any relationship and therefore, prison staff feel they are a hidden service, out of sight and out of mind, viewed as numbers and unappreciated (Jeffrey; The Centre for Social Justice, 2019: 23). For instance, during discussions with Terry, a Senior CT Intelligence Manager in the Police, he explained that partner agencies were not always 'interested' in terrorism and the crime-terror nexus inside prison because the prisoners were 'locked up for another year' and did not 'pose a national security threat'.

Similarly, several interviewees used terms such as 'behind the four walls' (Craig), 'behind the gate' (Patrick) and a 'big concrete box' (Isaac) when describing how prisons are forgotten about and ignored. They suggested that the authorities (i.e., Police, Government) are not interested in what is happening inside the 'nice, big concrete box' because the offenders are already locked up and contained in quite strong material structures. Moreover, political considerations give emphasis to the contrast between public awareness of community crime, frequently highlighted by the media and politicians, and the limited public knowledge regarding criminality within prisons (Coyle, 2005: 104). Accordingly, certain offences within prisons may not be perceived by authorities as equally serious as those in the community (Treadwell et al. 2019: 44). This distinction allows law enforcement agencies to allocate their already stretched resources toward addressing offenders in the community.

Consequently, the interviewees revealed that prisons suffer from 'reductions to budgets' (Jeffrey) and a scarcity of resources (James) due to being viewed as low priority and largely

overlooked. Anthony expressed resentment, highlighting the lack of recognition for the 'importance of prisons in the criminal justice system.' This oversight translates into a dearth of necessary 'tools' and 'investment' to comprehensively understand and mitigate risks stemming from the crime-terror nexus. Subsequently, a lack of investment facilitates weak security (and governance) within the prison estate which allows the inmates to continue their criminality. Expanding the lens to consider the impact of neoliberal governance and its cultural injunctions on the prison estate, it becomes apparent that this approach to governance, marked by emphasis on privatisation, deregulation, and market-driven policies, has not only failed to address the root causes of criminal behaviour but has also exacerbated issues within the prison system. Anthony drew attention to this issue by stating:

'We know there's a problem because we've got people coming out [of prison] committing terror attacks. You've got criminals coming out that continue to offend. You have criminals in prison, continuing to offend, you've got serious organised criminals that call hits on people from their prison cell. So, it [prison] doesn't work.'

Within this sub-theme, several interviewees argued that having the mindset of 'out of sight, out of mind' is a dangerous and flawed approach. For example, Tony, a Senior CT Officer with over 35 years of law enforcement experience, voiced that:

'Once somebody's inside we can kind of forget about them and wait until they come out until we worry about them again. But if that ever was a strategy, defined or cultural, it's a flawed one.'

Tony's extensive experience lends weight to his statement, and as the research progressed, other interviewees echoed similar sentiments, indicating that this issue was widespread. When discussing detecting and prosecuting criminality inside prison, Isaac, a Senior Government Advisor, stated that putting people into prison and forgetting about them until they are released is 'lethally stupid and a dangerous way of thinking'. Again, given Isaac's wide-ranging experience working within the prison service and similar comments from other interviewees, this research has concluded these observations as more empirical than anecdotal.

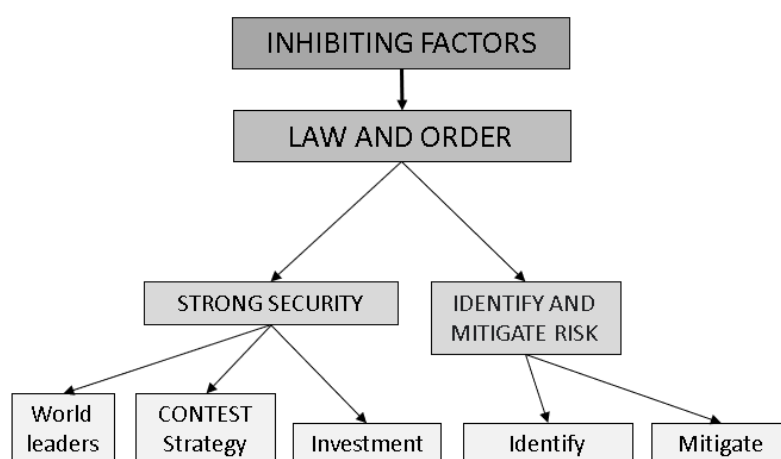
This section demonstrates that both criminals and terrorists exploit this weak security (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Liebling and Arnold, 2012; Gooch and Treadwell, 2021) and take advantage of the benefits of the crime-terror nexus. Reflecting on Makarenko's definition of a 'black hole'—some prison establishments can be described as a weak state because they demonstrate indicators which could easily translate to the concept of the 'failed state' and foster the convergence of criminals and terrorists. However, this research also revealed an opposing argument to weak security as a contributory cause of the PCTN. Many interviewees



contended that the law and order measures and security within prisons can actually inhibit the PCTN. Even though this section focuses on the contributory causes of the PCTN, the opposing argument must be included for transparency and to ensure a balanced and comprehensive analysis. Addressing these counterarguments helps to avoid bias and provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics within prisons. This perspective will be discussed next.

### 7.2.5 Law and order

Whilst the previous sub-themes provides an alarming picture of the prison environment, analysis of the data found evidence that the authorities are able to partially suppress any potential PCTN. The findings have been separated into two sub-themes: 1) strong security and 2) identification and mitigation of risk (see Figure 17).



*Figure 17: Law and Order (Author's Own)*

#### 7.2.5.1 Strong security

Eleven interviewees (32%) claimed that any development of the crime-terror nexus is inhibited by the strength of security and law and order within the prison estate. For example, Terry claimed that 'we are better [than other countries] in the security and policing network' and Matthew stated that 'we are good at what we do' and our processes are 'robust'. When Melissa (Police Officer) was asked why she felt there had been limited evidence of the crime-terror nexus inside prison, she argued that it was because:

'Our intelligence arrangements, our case management processes, our shared activities across all the agencies that work in the prison space are really strong in the UK.'

This appears contradictory to the arguments presented earlier, which highlighted shortcomings in prison governance and security which enable the crime-terror nexus.

However, this apparent contradiction supports my argument that every prison is different, and the dynamics within them can vary significantly (see Section 5.4). Using Crewe et al.'s (2014) four quadrants model, prisons range from heavy-present, with strong security and engaged staff, to light-absent, where weak governance and staff disengagement prevail. These variations illustrate the stark differences in governance and security across the prison estate. It is also worth mentioning that some interviewees might have expressed positive views about their organisation in order to shield both individuals and the security estate from negative criticism. This organisational loyalty and protective stance could be related to their employment status and their desire to maintain a positive image for their service. This is an interesting perspective to consider when interpreting the interview responses.

### World leaders

Despite some hesitancy in certain interviewees' language ('I'd like to think', 'probably', 'I might be entirely wrong' and 'hope'), several interviewees (n = 6) acknowledged that the UK are 'world leaders' in law enforcement and therefore, able to tackle any prison activity. Gregory (Debriefing) explained that the UK are 'ahead of the game' when it comes to CT and that the police and HMPPS are 'on top' of any prison activity. Thus, Gregory hoped that any risk or evidence of the PCTN would be identified and tackled. Likewise, Larry confirmed that the UK are 'world leaders in prison intelligence' by comparing the nation to other countries, especially Five Eyes partners.<sup>54</sup> Larry felt that the UK are 'far ahead' of these five countries within the crime and CT domain.

### CONTEST Strategy

The effective use of the PREVENT and PURSUE components of CONTEST by law enforcement agencies and HMPPS can partially inhibit the crime-terror nexus, both within the community and the prison system. Under CONTEST, the relevant agencies have a legislative duty to work towards the same goal by using the 4P model to mitigate terrorism and OC. Melissa thoroughly endorsed CONTEST during her interview:

'All the independent reviews and indeed again the OIR [Operational Improvement Review]<sup>55</sup> absolutely endorsed CONTEST as a comprehensive holistic approach.'

Melissa went on to explain that the CONTEST Strategy is 'equally... applicable in the prison environment' (Pickering, 2014). Therefore, it is clear prisons have to focus on preventing and safeguarding vulnerable inmates from harm (Melissa and Paul, former Police Officer).

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<sup>54</sup> United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

<sup>55</sup> MI5 and CTP initiated the Operational Improvement Review (OIR) in the wake of the 2017 Terror Attacks.

Additionally, Ivan voiced that CONTEST is so impressive, it has been hailed as one of the most comprehensive and wide-ranging approaches to tackling terrorism in the world (Brady, 2016). He supported his opinion by disclosing that several other countries have developed their own four strand strategy that emulate CONTEST.

Moreover, PREVENT has three important strands: firstly, to challenge extremist ideology and SOC; secondly, to disrupt those who promote extremism and SOC, and finally, to support the institutions where extremists and organised criminals are active, such as prisons (Awan, 2013: 371). PREVENT is a crucial pillar of the UK's CT architecture (Shawcross, 2023: 6), yet it has proved challenging and been highly criticised. An argument which has been most powerful and damaging to the key purpose of prevent is rooted in racism and Islamophobia (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2022: 3). However, a few interviewees (n = 5) conveyed very positive views of PREVENT and explained how its design is sophisticated and impressive. For instance, Matthew, a CT PIO, stated that:

'Prison PREVENT is excellent... but that's my experience.'

Due to its very nature, PREVENT usually operates in the 'pre-crime space' where no criminal activity has occurred. Consequently, covert methods are deemed unjustifiable and unwarranted (Bahadur Lamb, 2014: 187). In addition, PREVENT extends to prisons by supporting de-radicalisation efforts (Shawcross, 2023: 66). Four interviewees unequivocally discussed the PREVENT strand of CONTEST within the prison estate as a government intervention concerning inmates who have *yet* to form a PCTN (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2022). Christopher, in his role as a PPL, is responsible for safeguarding and supporting prisoners vulnerable to radicalisation, with the aim of preventing them from becoming terrorists or providing support to terrorism. Christopher revealed that 'prisoner networking takes place', but some interaction is inhibited by 'the prevent officer and the staff on the wings'. Christopher explained that when an intelligence report is received about a TACT offender mixing with other prisoners, all the inmates involved have to be discussed at a multi-agency Pathfinder meeting. Pathfinder is the process for identifying and ranking offenders who present a terrorist risk, and considering steps to reduce the risk (Hall, 2022). The Pathfinder process operates on intelligence reports filed by the prison and held by national and regional bodies (Hall, 2022: 43). Within Pathfinder meetings, Christopher, serving as a Prevent Lead, collaborates with representatives from various agencies to assess gathered intelligence and collectively determine the necessity for proactive measures to mitigate risks. Adam, in his capacity as a Prisons Regional Coordinator, commended the Pathfinder approach and expressed his faith in its efficacy for identifying inmates and presenting intervention possibilities.

In spite of these positive remarks, it is worth mentioning that Christopher highlighted that Pathfinder meetings are 'very hush, hush and discreet'. Therefore, the intelligence and information is not always disseminated to the staff, who work face-to-face with prisoners, who can assist with any intelligence collection and prevention of the nexus (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019). He also revealed that it was 'very difficult to get people to attend the meetings and engage with the process' because each department has their own agenda and interests. Nevertheless, the data provide evidence that the PREVENT strand contributes to the inhibition of any PCTN. The Pathfinder meetings themselves do not reduce terrorist risk or inhibit the crime-terror nexus, but any prevention and risk reduction comes when action is taken (Hall, 2022: 45).

### Investment

Moreover, within this sub-theme, the data analysis identified that there has been an increase in investment in HMPPS, which has strengthened the security and law and order within the prison estate. Historically, there has been under-investment in the prison estate in part because of the 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality (see Section 7.2.4.2); this has resulted in poor conditions; a decline in the quality of education; overcrowding and severe maintenance backlogs (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019; House of Commons, 2020; Acheson and Paul, 2019; 2021: 7; House of Commons, 2022). It has been argued that the poor prison conditions and overcrowding have contributed to high levels of violence and criminality (McGuire, 2018; Baggio et al. 2020; House of Commons, 2020). However, some interviewees (n = 3) revealed that there has been recent investment in the prison estate focusing on security and rehabilitation (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019: 17; MoJ, 2022f). Jeffrey said that despite improvements still being needed, the police and HMPPS have 'prioritised investment in prisons' and recently invested £100m in security. Therefore, security within the prison estate is 'in a reasonably good place' and any concerns around inmates networking can be mitigated. Likewise, Melissa explained that there has been 'significant investment' in the police and HMPPS around identifying any integration and risks between crime and terrorism in prison. This investment, these interviewees suggested, has subsequently inhibited the PCTN.

#### 7.2.5.2 The identification and mitigation of risk

The identification and mitigation of any risk associated with the PCTN was discussed by eleven interviewees (32%). For instance, Melissa claimed that the risk from any PCTN is 'bound to exist' but the relevant agencies have a '4P approach as per CONTEST to identify and respond'. Likewise, Isaac explained that the prison can identify inmates of concern, using intelligence, and take appropriate action, such as adjudication and segregation. Hence, this sub-theme is split into two categories: identify and mitigate (see Figure 18).

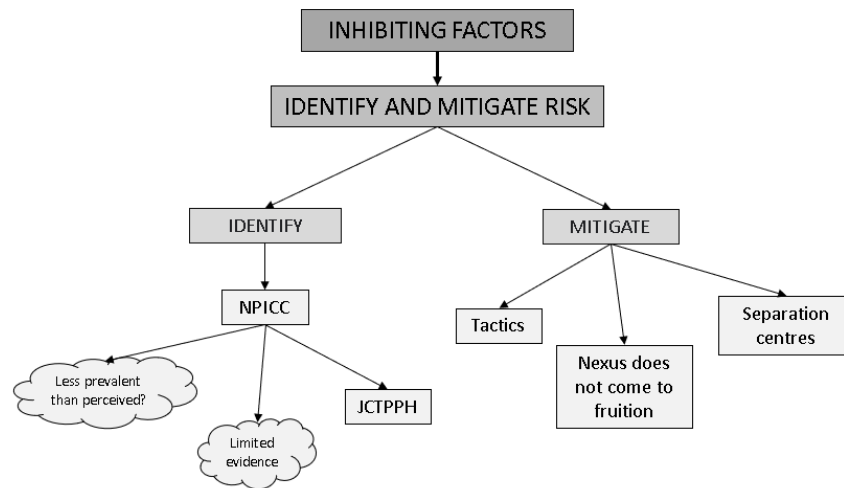


Figure 18: Identify and Mitigate Risk. The sub-themes in clouds are discussed further in Chapter 8 (Author's Own)

## Identify risk

Twenty-four percent of interviewees (n = 11) mentioned that the relevant agencies (i.e., HMPPS and the police) are able to identify any risk of the PCTN. Scott serves as a PIO specialising in SOC within a Category C establishment. He affirmed the effective risk identification efforts undertaken by both the prison and the police, highlighting the existence of multiple meetings to deliberate on potential risks and the use of tactics to detect any indications of the nexus between crime and terrorism. Scott conveyed his assurance in police processes that empower him to pinpoint individuals posing substantial risks to both the prison environment and the wider community. Similarly, Melissa is a Police Officer with expertise in prisons. Melissa revealed that there has not been the level of evidence to suggest the PCTN has come to fruition as previously perceived. When she was asked why it has not been evidenced, she disclosed that organisations are able to identify (and mitigate) any risk of the crime-terror nexus in prison:

'There's been quite significant investment in policing and in HMPPS around integration, having closer, closer focus on risks between crime and CT in prison... I think it's because everybody has organised themselves in a way that there is that opportunity to identify those risks.'

It is crucial to revisit the organisations that were mentioned by the interviewees as contributing to the identification of risk. Paul (former Police Officer) explained that when Theresa May was Home Secretary from 2010 until 2016, she was 'absolutely convinced that there was a link between OC and terrorism.' Therefore, NPICC was established in 2015 with a specific purpose of coordinating the response to the threat from all terrorist and OC prisoners across the UK and identifying any risk of the crime-terror nexus. As Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager)

stated, there were 'concerns around it [the crime-terror nexus] because that was why NPICC was created'. According to Joseph (Intelligence Officer), NPICC was 'revolutionary'; it 'lifted the prison service' and was highly successful at sharing intelligence and building relationships between CT and SOC. Notably, Melissa, and other interviewees disclosed, that NPICC identified limited evidence of any prison nexus (SOC/CT Crossover) and confirmed that it was less prevalent than perceived (discussed further in Section 8.2). Partly due to a lack of evidence for the crime-terror nexus in prison (Gregory), NPICC was disbanded, and replaced by JCTPPH in 2021 which solely focuses on CT (MoJ, 2022a:12). However, as Mark (Senior Police Officer) highlighted, the authorities continue to lack a comprehensive understanding of the connection between crime and terrorism in prisons. Therefore, Mark determined that:

'It feels like a backward step that NPICC are moving much more into CT as opposed to SOC. So, who's going to fill that space to understand that?'

Mark concluded by stating that without NPICC, the authorities' comprehension of any evidence of the PCTN will be even lower than their current level of understanding. Arguably, while agencies like HMPPS and the police have made significant strides in identifying and mitigating risks related to the PCTN, the disbanding of NPICC and its narrower replacement with JCTPPH have left critical gaps in understanding the nexus, raising concerns about the capacity to address this complex issue effectively in the future.

#### Mitigate risk

In addition to identifying the risk of any PCTN, eleven interviewees explained that the relevant agencies are able to mitigate this known risk. For instance, when Marcus (Senior Police Officer) provided examples of the 'connections' between crime and terrorism inside prison, he explained that the authorities are able to 'interdict' any nexus activity. Likewise, Scott and Matthew (both PIOs) demonstrated confidence in 'appropriate strategies' and 'fairly robust processes' to fully address any risk of the PCTN.

Data analysis identified a range of strategies and tactics which enhance the authorities' ability to mitigate any PCTN. Adam explained that Pathfinder helps to 'give options of interventions' such as Imams, chaplaincy and courses. Similarly, Marcus provided an example of when he used the local prison Imam to assist with mitigating the risk of a prisoner being radicalised. However, a critical perspective emerges from a 2016 study, clarifying the limitations of relying on prison imams for counter-radicalisation efforts. The study found that, on several occasions, prison imams lacked the requisite skills and, at times, the motivation to actively participate in identifying and disrupting a prisoner's transformation from a non-ideological offender to an extremist (Acheson, 2016). Moreover, Jeffrey disclosed that HMPPS now has a Sensitive Intelligence Unit (called Jupiter) equivalent to the police (MoJ, 2019: 6). Therefore, any

sensitive intelligence regarding the risk of the nexus is shared more openly between the police and HMPPS.

Most of the interviewees talked about the strategy of altering the prison population as a means to mitigate the risk of the crime-terror nexus (Powis et al. 2021). Once such risks are recognised, the primary tactic for disrupting this danger and averting nexus formation involves transferring the pertinent inmates to alternative establishments. Despite this approach potentially undermining 'the running and safety of other establishments' (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019: 41), Melissa revealed that this strategy is:

'A fairly safe approach that HMPPS take in terms of managing that crossover issue'.

Equally, Kimberly (PIO) explained that if there is any intelligence indicating a nexus, the prisoners can be moved so interactions are disrupted. Kimberly communicated her thoughts and reflection on this strategy during her interview. She argued that it might take time for prisoners to establish any nexus. Consequently, the process of moving inmates of concern, every few months, inevitably mitigates any nexus coming to fruition. This viewpoint is worth exploring further.

Several interviewees (n = 5) considered the notion of a *potential* PCTN within prisons; nevertheless, this risk has seldom materialised due to swift mitigation by the authorities. Sean (Police Officer) explained that if there was 'ever any evidence' of the nexus inside prison, it would be dealt with immediately. Therefore, Sean, and other interviewees, have never evidenced the PCTN. Furthermore, Anthony explained that the crime-terror nexus is 'such a high-risk issue' it would never be allowed to unfold without intervention. For instance, Anthony witnessed a terrorist offender attempting to use criminal connections to obtain a firearm. But divulged that this risk did not come to fruition because 'we intervened so quickly and kept them apart'. Anthony described the PCTN as a 'catch-22' because it exists as a concern, but he has never seen it materialise as a real issue. Anthony stated that:

'The agencies involved would quickly intervene to make sure it [the crime-terror nexus] didn't become an issue, whether it would or not, you would never know because you can't measure prevention.'

Similarly, Christian works in Prevent and receives intelligence about individuals of CT concern. Christian explained that any intelligence indicating there is a risk of the crime-terror nexus 'is unlikely to flash across prevents' radar because it concerns the PURSUE strand of CONTEST. Specifically, if the authorities obtain intelligence concerning a viable risk of the PCTN, it is managed instantly using the strategies and tactics available. Christian explained that when

intelligence is disseminated to the Prevent team, it has already been assessed and deemed as low risk. This intelligence then sits with PREVENT (in the 'pre-crime space') instead of PURSUE. Hence, the data provides convincing evidence that *there is a risk* of the PCTN, but any evidence of the nexus is identified and mitigated before it can materialise. As a result, the PCTN is less prevalent than perceived (discussed further in Chapter 8).

### Separation centres

As identified in Chapter 6, prisons frequently facilitate the spread of extremist ideology by providing inmates with a platform to forge alliances, transfer skills and recruit prisoners (Neumann, 2010; Rushchenko, 2019). Thus, the concept of separating criminals and terrorists in the UK can be traced to earlier approaches employed NI. During this period, internment camps and later segregated prison facilities, such as the H-Block prisons, were introduced to address the challenges posed by politically motivated prisoners.

Initially, internment camps mixed politically motivated prisoners with ordinary offenders, which inadvertently created opportunities for radicalisation and operational collaboration (McKee, 2009; O'Donnell, 2023). Authorities soon realised that this practice allowed paramilitary groups to influence and recruit ordinary prisoners, thus strengthening their networks. This led to the creation of segregated facilities, such as the Maze's H-Blocks, specifically designed to house politically motivated prisoners separately from ordinary offenders. The primary aim was to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideologies and disrupt the operational convergence of criminals and terrorists. Beresford, in *Ten Men Dead* (1987), highlights how segregation also sought to counteract the control exerted by paramilitary leaders over the prison environment, which had become a critical issue during the 1980s hunger strikes. This early acknowledgment of what is now recognised as the *crime-terror nexus* informed prison management strategies in NI and set a precedent for the use of separation as a counter-radicalisation measure.

Drawing on these lessons, the UK government introduced three separation centres following the Acheson Review. These centres were designed to accommodate the most extreme radicals who pose a risk to other inmates, but only after exhausting all other approaches to curtail radicalising behaviour (Shawcross, 2023: 77). As Ivan explained:

'There is a small core of people that are so dangerous, both to us and the prison service, that it [separation centres] would appear to be a necessary tactic.'

Separation centres were raised by sixty-one percent of the interviewees (n = 21). Some interviewees provided negative comments about the current referral policy being unnecessarily complex, uncertainty over the purpose of the centres and the loss of intelligence flow and penetrative coverage due to the difficulty of placing a CHIS with the establishments



(Powis et al. 2019; Acheson and Paul, 2021: 6; Hall, 2022). Despite the implementation of centres being 'patchy, to say the least' (Paul, former Police Officer), most interviewees welcomed separation as an approach to mitigating the PCTN. For instance, Joseph explained that Belgium had already taken steps in the direction of containment of radicalised inmates from the ordinary prison population (Rushchenko, 2018) and Italy applied the segregation technique with the Mafia (Williams, 2016). Therefore, Joseph felt that separation centres were a huge investment and certainly the right approach for the UK. Likewise, Adam (Regional Prisons Coordinator) stated:

'If you want to isolate someone and disrupt them, I think a separation centre is a fantastic way of getting someone away from all the other prisoners, I think it's really good.'

Several interviewees noted that the separation centres have more staff than other establishments, so monitoring inmates, gathering intelligence and noticing any subtle changes in the prisoner's behaviour were improved (Powis et al. 2019; Fairhurst, 2021).<sup>56</sup> Moreover, an inmate who is residing in an establishment which has a separation centre within the prison, stated that 'we have a prison inside a prison... all terrorists are put on a different wing and not allowed to socialise with us'.

Therefore, despite several limitations to the approach, the data provides some evidence that separation centres can be an effective means of inhibiting any PCTN. They disconnect inmates who pose a terrorist risk from the general prison population and make it impossible for them to exercise a malign influence on other prisoners (Hall, 2022: 65). Nevertheless, each prison is unique; the majority lack dedicated separation centres, and the strategies and tactics they employ vary. Similarly, it is important to note that there are extremists inside prison which have been convicted of criminal offences (see Section 5.3.1.2).

To summarise, four primary contributory causes have been identified. Corruption undermines the integrity of prison institutions, enabling the flow of contraband, illicit goods, and information that sustain criminal and terrorist operations. Scholars have long highlighted the corrosive effects of corruption, which not only compromise institutional authority but also facilitate networks that connect criminal and terrorist actors. This dynamic is particularly dangerous in prison environments, where corrupt practices can lead to the proliferation of violence and the expansion of illicit markets. Secondly, vulnerable prisoners serve as a significant contributory cause of the PCTN. These individuals, often characterised by physical weakness, psychological distress, or socioeconomic disadvantage, are prime targets for exploitation and

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<sup>56</sup> Of note, the separation centre at HMP Woodhill was severely short of officers when they were inspected in April 2022 by the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (Taylor, 2022: 5).

recruitment. Vulnerable inmates may align themselves with criminal or terrorist groups for protection, status, or resources, inadvertently reinforcing the nexus. Research has shown that such individuals are particularly susceptible in environments marked by instability and violence, further amplifying the risks associated with the PCTN (Finkelhor and Asdigian, 1996; Liebling et al. 2011).

Thirdly, weak governance refers to institutional deficiencies such as inadequate staffing, insufficient training, and ineffective supervision. These issues compromise the ability of prison authorities to maintain control, enforce rules, and establish a legitimate system of order. Poor governance also fosters distrust among prisoners and staff, further eroding the stability of the prison environment. When prisons operate without effective oversight, they become spaces where criminal and terrorist networks can thrive unimpeded. Distinct from weak governance, weak security pertains to the absence of proactive measures to monitor, prevent, and disrupt criminal activity within prisons. Scholars have noted that prisons often operate in a reactive rather than preventive manner, addressing issues only after they escalate (Podmore, 2012; Treadwell et al. 2019). Weak security measures allow inmates to engage in criminal enterprises with minimal fear of detection or repercussions, creating an operational safe haven for crime-terror interactions (Shelley, 2014).

Despite these challenges, relevant agencies have made strides in inhibiting the PCTN through policies, legislation, and strategies such as CONTEST, which is recognised as world-leading (HM Government, 2023b). Recent investments in HMPPS have bolstered security and order, with the Prevent strand identifying high-risk inmates and mitigating threats through targeted tactics. However, the diverse dynamics across prisons, ranging from heavy to light-absence models (Crewe et al. 2014), highlight the complexity of maintaining consistent governance and security within the prison estate.

### **7.3 Indicators of the PCTN**

Seventy-three percent of interviewees (n = 25) acknowledged that some prison environments are unstable and hostile settings where drug abuse and violence are regular features of daily life (Jones, 2014). With reference to the criminological theory of ‘broken windows’<sup>57</sup> (Wilson and Kelling, 1982), these chaotic and violent prison settings exhibit indicators that reflect broader dysfunction within the system. These indicators not only reveal instability but also embolden inmates with intentions of committing more severe crimes and causing disorder. Simultaneously, they disempower and undermine those prisoners and staff who want to lead productive and harmonious lives within the prison environment (The Centre for Social Justice,

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<sup>57</sup> The Broken Windows Theory of Criminology describes how visible signs of crime, anti-social behaviour, and civil disorder create an environment that encourages further crime and disorder.

2019: 32). This 'broken windows' theory assists in elucidating why certain prison settings display symptoms conducive to the emergence of the PCTN. Isaac, who has extensive experience in this field, highlighted the chronic instability and lack of safety present in many prisons, encapsulating the common sentiment of the interviewees (Acheson, 2024). He stated that the prison environment is about 'chronic instability and lack of safety' and went on to query the prospect of any meaningful rehabilitation:

'The idea that you can rehabilitate people in a place that is awash with violence, brutality and drugs, is ludicrous'.

This section discussed two key indicators of the PCTN. Indicators are the observable signs or symptoms that signal the presence and effects of the PCTN. Unlike contributory causes, which create the conditions that enable the PCTN, indicators are the outcomes or manifestations that arise as a result of these underlying causes. These symptoms point to the operational impact of the PCTN and help to identify where and how the nexus may be active. The two indicators identified from the data are 1) violence and 2) the drugs economy. Violence reflects the breakdown of order and the dominance of inmate-driven power structures, often tied to criminal and terrorist networks vying for control. Similarly, a thriving drugs economy highlights the prevalence of illicit markets that foster collaboration between criminals and terrorists, as both groups benefit from the trade in contraband and the profits it generates. These indicators are not only symptoms of the PCTN but also exacerbate its effects, contributing to a cycle of instability and further entrenching the conditions that allow the nexus to thrive. By examining violence and the drugs economy, this chapter provides insight into how the PCTN manifests and the operational challenges it presents for prison management and law enforcement.

Before discussing these themes further, it is worth drawing attention to whether the masculinity of the prison environment and the interviewees in this study have influenced the findings. Throughout the interviews there was a preoccupation with power, danger and violence which is reflective of prisons being a crucial institution for the development of hegemonic masculinity (Sabo et al. 2001). To clarify, the concept of hegemonic masculinity describes a position in the system of gender relations and the current ideology that serves to reproduce masculine domination (Connell, 1987; 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is a highly contested concept (see Collier, 1998; Hood-Williams, 2001; Jefferson, 2002; Beasley, 2008). A case in point is the examination of the drivers and motivations of men frequently involved in serious interpersonal violence. Rather than interpreting these behaviours as an exclusive expression of maleness or male privilege, it is argued that these individuals may have acquired such behavioural tools in response to feelings of shame and humiliation witnessed during culturally formative stages of their lives. Hall (2002) succinctly

captures the complexity by highlighting that the concept of hegemonic masculinity tends to overlook political economy and class power. This oversight suggests that it is somewhat detached from historical processes and material contexts, thereby raising questions about both the appropriateness of employing the term 'hegemony' and its ability to elucidate the noteworthy social patterns observed in male violence. Despite this critique, it can be argued that male interviewees may focus more on prisoners expressing masculine ideals than female participants. Given this research was, predominantly, with male interviewees (88%) and all male questionnaire respondents, in addition to focusing on an 'ultramasculine world' (Fielding, 1994; Sabo et al. 2001: 3; Phillips, 2012a; Michalski, 2015; Ricciardelli et al. 2015), it could be argued that this has the potential to influence the findings.

### 7.3.1 Violence

Penological studies have established that all inmates are affected by imprisonment. Irrespective of their offence or the prison environment, all prisoners are exposed to the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958; Walker, 1983). However, the extent of the offender's pain depends on the individual and prison environment (Sykes, 1958: 67). Several interviewees (n = 10) described violence as a pervasive feature of prison life, where inmates fear verbal abuse, physical attack and sexual assaults (Marranci, 2009: 67). Elevated levels of violence and intimidation serve as a prominent indicator of the PCTN, reflecting the destabilised and volatile nature of the prison environment. This atmosphere of fear and conflict can drive inmates to seek alliances with criminal or terrorist groups (or individuals) for protection, further perpetuating the nexus.

For instance, Daniel, a PIO at a Category B prison, stated that 'extortion and bullying are commonplace' inside prison and Jeffrey, a Senior Police Officer, said that 'prison is difficult and awful because of the gangs, your threats, [and] intimidation'. Likewise, Prisoner 37 wrote:

*When people socialise in prison a lot of prisoners  
tend to bully others.*

Such findings highlight that violence is not merely a feature of prison life but a symptom of the broader instability within the system (Sim, 1994). This instability amplifies the pains of imprisonment and fosters conditions where inmates are compelled to form alliances or join gangs as a survival mechanism. When individuals are imprisoned their 'prior loyalties, allegiances and friendships' are disrupted (Hunt et al. 1993: 398) and they can be isolated and vulnerable (Shelley, 2014: 140). In response, inmates may therefore develop new relationships with like-minded prisoners to cope with these violent, dangerous and isolating conditions (Bondeson, 2011: 32).

For instance, Isaac said that a destabilised prison environment ‘will affect any pragmatic decisions in terms of associations, joining gangs and to protect themselves’. Likewise, Marcus (Senior Police Officer), Larry (Police Intelligence Officer) and Sean (Police Officer) all disclosed that prisoners seek others for protection as prisons are ‘dangerous’ places. To supplement the interview data, two prisoners revealed that protection is an important reason to be part of a group/gang inside prison as:

‘There is lots of bullying in prisons both from other prisoners and prison staff’.

Notably, the word ‘gang’ was used by several interviewees and prisoners, as prison gangs have become an explanatory framework for elevated levels of prison disturbances, violence and rule violations in the UK (Maitra, 2016).

Violence within prisons is a critical indicator of the PCTN. Isolated, exposed, and removed from their support networks, prisoners may become susceptible to recruitment by criminal or terrorist groups (Shelley, 2014: 140). Although inmates may initially resist associating with terrorist offenders due to their notoriety or fear of stigmatisation (discussed further in Section 5.3.3), the need for protection can compel them to form alliances. Over time, these relationships may foster the adoption of new beliefs and attitudes, contributing to the emergence of like-minded clusters that reinforce the nexus (Jones, 2014: 93). Accordingly, the violent and unstable prison environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the social dynamics and affiliations among inmates, serving as a barometer of broader dysfunction and a signal of the PCTN's presence.

### **7.3.2 Prison drugs economy**

Furthermore, the data revealed that the prison drugs economy is a critical driver of the PCTN, reflecting systemic instability and providing opportunities for collaboration between criminal and terrorist inmates. Fifteen percent of interviewees (n = 5) highlighted the drugs economy's role in destabilising prison environments, escalating violence, and undermining security. For instance, Paul, a former Police Officer, candidly described many prisons as ‘awash with drugs’, leading to ‘immense’ levels of violence and creating a dangerous, uncontrolled environment. These insights align with the broader literature, which emphasises how the drugs trade enables offenders to gain power, status, and influence while perpetuating cycles of exploitation and violence (Gooch and Treadwell, 2020).

Several interviewees noted that the illicit drugs trade offers entrepreneurial inmates opportunities to profit significantly, with prison drugs often valued three to four times higher than on the street. This thriving economy has become a lucrative enterprise within prisons, amplifying instability and entrenching criminal networks. The availability of mobile phones and

online financial transactions exacerbates the issue, creating sophisticated, high-gain, low-risk systems that sustain the demand for illicit substances (Gooch and Treadwell, 2019). One interviewee remarked on the futility of rehabilitation efforts in such conditions, asserting that OC has a firm grip on the prison drugs market, making it nearly impossible to disrupt. The data also highlighted how the drug trade fosters power imbalances and reinforces individualistic behaviours among inmates. Vulnerable prisoners, in particular, accrue significant debts and face heightened risks of intimidation and violence. As noted by Crewe (2005b), drug dealing and consumption are often accepted as inevitable features of prison life, contributing to a self-serving, exploitative culture. This dynamic has transformed prison environments into arenas of manipulation and self-interest, further eroding solidarity and collective coping mechanisms among inmates.

In summary, the interview data highlights how the prison drugs economy destabilises institutions, fosters violence, and undermines rehabilitative initiatives. These findings draw attention to the chronic instability within prisons, which allows the PCTN to thrive by creating conditions ripe for exploitation and collaboration between criminal and terrorist networks.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter identifies the structural and systemic causes and indicators of the PCTN, framing prisons as environments where a convergence of characteristics enables the nexus to thrive. It emphasises structural causes over individual motivations, contributing to the broader policing and governance of prisons. While individual factors like moral reasoning or prisoner identity dynamics are acknowledged in the literature, this study centres on how macro-level systemic failures create conditions for the PCTN to emerge and persist. Firstly, corruption emerges as a significant enabler, blurring the lines between staff authority and prisoner influence. Practices like smuggling contraband, selective enforcement of rules, and staff conditioning by inmates erode the integrity of the prison system. These dynamics align with historical examples, such as the manipulation and escapes from high-security prisons, highlighting the role of corruption in sustaining the PCTN. Secondly, vulnerable prisoners often from disadvantaged backgrounds or experiencing psychological distress, represent prime targets for exploitation and radicalisation. Their susceptibility is heightened in unstable prison environments characterised by violence, overcrowding, and inadequate protective measures.

Thirdly, weak governance within prisons reflects systemic deficiencies, such as staffing shortages, lack of training, and inconsistent enforcement of rules. These issues create environments where informal power structures, such as gangs or extremist factions, fill the void left by ineffective institutional control. Such 'extra-legal governance' enables prisoners to self-regulate in ways that undermine formal authority, fostering conditions ripe for criminal and

terrorist networks to thrive. Next weak security was discussed because the lack of proactive security measures and a predominantly reactive approach to incidents within prisons exacerbate vulnerabilities. In some establishments, prisoners continue criminal operations or coordinate extremist activities with limited fear of detection or disruption. The 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality among policymakers and the public further compounds this issue, leading to under-resourced security frameworks.

This chapter also considered the indicators of the PCTN. Violence is a pervasive feature in poorly governed prisons, manifesting in bullying, gang conflicts, and acts of extremism. It serves both as a tool for control and a byproduct of systemic instability, perpetuating cycles of victimisation and criminality. Secondly, the prison drugs economy thrives in weakly managed environments, providing a financial and operational platform for both OC and terrorist activities. The illicit trade often operates with minimal disruption, further embedding criminal networks within the prison system.

Hence, the findings suggest that some prisons function as 'black hole' environments, as theorised by Makarenko (2004), where governance collapses and illicit networks flourish. This concept will be revisited in the last chapter, with particular focus on how systemic reforms in governance, security, and staff training could mitigate these dynamics. The chapter's exploration of contributory causes and indicators lays a foundation for discussing whether targeted interventions can address the structural weaknesses that promote the PCTN. The next chapter seeks to address the last research question by introducing the concept of the intelligence capability gap.

## Chapter 8 THE INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITY GAP

### 8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed research questions one and two by identifying what factors promote and inhibit the PCTN. The central arguments presented were that certain structural and systemic characteristics of the prison environment cause and indicate the PCTN. This chapter introduces a layer of complexity to the discussion by addressing the intricacies surrounding the identification of the PCTN (Research Question 3). Throughout data collection and analysis, intelligence consistently emerged as a crucial factor, with all interviewees stressing its importance in identifying any connection between imprisoned criminals and terrorists. Drawing insights revealed in the data, this chapter introduces and explores a concept which I have termed the 'intelligence capability gap'.

Intelligence-led policing emerged at the beginning of the century as a proactive strategy for preventing and detecting crime (Innes and Sheptycki, 2004; Tilley, 2012; Muir, 2020: 5). The importance of (criminal) intelligence for law enforcement cannot be understated. Intelligence enables uncertainty to be reduced and organisations to target their resources in the right areas (UNODC, 2015: 43). Prison environments are rich in intelligence as they provide a unique opportunity to gather information from some of the most villainous and notorious criminals and terrorists (Matthews, 2006; Barsh, 2012). Prisons are seldom effective deterrents to continued criminal behaviour (Rushchenko, 2019; Gooch and Treadwell, 2021), often being referred to as 'schools for crime' (Gendreau et al. 1999: 4–5; Cuthbertson, 2004). Consequently, intelligence derived from within prisons may become crucial for law enforcement operations in the community, given that offenders frequently continue criminal activities outside, such as managing terrorist operations, overseeing drug activities, and running OCGs (UNODC, 2015). HMPPS can share intelligence with law enforcement agencies and coordinate with PIOs overseeing intelligence requests (Muir, 2020: 7). Thus, it is imperative for all prisons to establish a structure and process for gathering high-quality intelligence to identify individuals involved in criminal activities (UNODC, 2016: 19).

Given the importance of prison intelligence, all interviewees discussed the subject, and how its gathering and dissemination are factors influencing the identification of the PCTN. Within this theme, three key areas were identified from the data: 1) an intelligence capability gap, 2) a reliance on prison officers and 3) a dependence on the prison (see Figure 19). Drawing on both empirical and anecdotal data, the following results in this chapter synthesise these observations to clarify the *factors influencing the identification of the PCTN* and introduce the 'intelligence capability gap'. As the research transitions from participant-led dialogues to a



more nuanced discourse, this chapter serves as a bridge leading to the discussion and conclusion chapter.

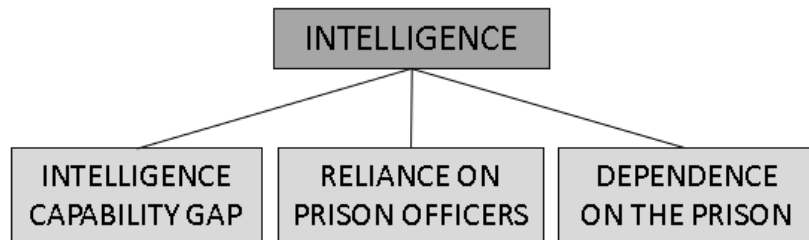


Figure 19: Identification (Author's Own)

## 8.2 Intelligence Capability Gap

Thirteen interviewees (38%) mentioned that some prisons lack the capability to collect intelligence. These interviewees contended that without a robust intelligence capability, it becomes challenging to assert with confidence that the authorities have a comprehensive understanding of whether the PCTN exists. Figure 20 details the three primary areas discussed below which all contribute to this intelligence capability gap.

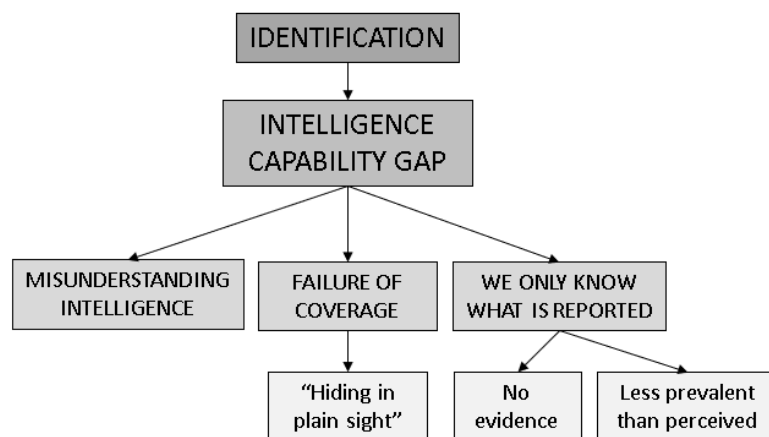


Figure 20: Intelligence Capability Gap (Author's Own)

### 8.2.1 Misunderstanding intelligence

As previously discussed, the crime-terror nexus has been described by numerous other partially overlapping terminologies and expressions. The nexus is sometimes referred to as 'links', 'network', 'relationships', 'collaboration', 'alliance' or even 'symbiosis' and 'convergence'—but no scholars have clearly defined these concepts (Schmid, 2018). This can lead to various interpretations and a lack of consensus about what the concept entails. Furthermore, this lack of a clear definition leads individuals to form their own subjective

opinion. For instance, when discussing the terminology with James (Senior Government Advisor), he felt that the word 'network, suggests something in addition to mere association' and that the 'crime-terror nexus sounds a funny way of describing one prisoner associating with another'. Hence, several interviewees claimed that the identification of the PCTN relies on an individual's understanding of the concept (see Section 5.2.2 for a discussion on this issue). This issue is similar to what Hamm (2007: 104) found with gaps in awareness and understanding among prison officials in *The Federal Experience*. An intelligence analyst for the Correctional Intelligence Initiative programme recognised that one of the critical problems in detecting, deterring, and disrupting prisoner radicalisation was 'simple awareness' (Hamm, 2007: 107). Despite efforts to disseminate information, not all prison officials were aware of the programme, which hindered its implementation. Without a foundational understanding of the concept or programme, effective identification and intervention become nearly impossible. Similarly, this lack of awareness in defining and recognising the PCTN presents a significant barrier to addressing the phenomenon.

Five interviewees argued that without a clear definition of what constitutes the crime-terror nexus—there is a risk of misinterpretation of the terminology and a misunderstanding of intelligence, potentially leading to debates over its existence. For example, some individuals might believe that the PCTN *only* exists if it resembles a recognisable mafia-like organisation openly functioning within a prison environment (Finchenauer, 2005). Whereas Isaac thought that the crime-terror nexus:

'Is simply an intersection of capacity and capability and everything else tying up in the middle'.

Similarly, Ivan noted that common perceptions of the nexus often revolve around the direct transfer of firearms from criminals to terrorists, while in reality, the nexus could involve subtler interactions, such as finding locations for terrorist training. In contrast, Larry, a Police Intelligence Officer, asserted that the acquisition of a firearm by a terrorist from an OCG *does not* indicate a crime-terror nexus. He argued that this specific scenario is solely an OCG providing a firearm to a terrorist, and the mere fact of its origin from a criminal source does not inherently establish a nexus. These contrasting comments above illustrate the diverse interpretations of what interviewees considered to constitute the crime-terror nexus; thus, impacting what intelligence they might classify as relevant.

#### 8.2.1.1 Evolution of language

Within this sub-theme, Ivan put forward the argument that 'language evolves'. Language changes over time, and the meanings of words can shift or broaden (Hollmann, 2009; Newman, 2016; Traugott, 2017). This can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of

concepts, as the original intent of a word and/or phrase might become diluted or even altered (Traugott, 2017). This is evident in the theoretical shift within crime-terror nexus literature, moving from a focus on organisations to individuals (see Section 3.3.2). Likewise, words can have multiple meanings (polysemy) and can be used in various contexts (Dubossarsky et al. 2017). Therefore, Ivan contended that where language has evolved and a precise definition is lacking, there is a possibility of information, which could potentially contribute to identifying a crime-terror nexus, being misinterpreted and misunderstood:

‘If you don’t have a proper definition, sometimes things might be collected which would actually support some form of crime-terror nexus, but because it’s not understood, it’s kind of put in another in tray’. (Ivan)

Several interviewees (n = 10) articulated claims supporting Ivan’s argument. For example, Christian said that ‘of course’ the crime-terror nexus exists, but most police and prison officers will not understand the phenomenon. Christian felt that if the officers involved in intelligence collection do not understand the nexus, they will misinterpret any intelligence. Gregory contended that without a full understanding of the crime-terror nexus, its identification becomes extremely challenging, and Mark (Senior Police Officer) claimed that while the nexus is potentially happening there is a lack of understanding and reporting to accurately identify and address the situation. Moreover, Jerry, a former Prison Governor with substantial experience during the era when the IRA posed a significant terrorist threat to Britain, conveyed that the typical prison officer possessed limited knowledge about the IRA and currently lacks an ‘understanding of the Muslim culture, terrorist culture or radicalisation.’ Therefore, prison staff often misunderstand terminology and intelligence which could indicate the PCTN is occurring. On a related but slightly tangential note, upon reflective analysis of the data, a notable observation emerged concerning some of the interviewees. They seem to display a degree of elitism or a self-perceived high level of knowledge, potentially conveying a dismissive stance toward prison officers. This is evident in their insinuation that these officers may lack comprehension or the inclination to understand the PCTN.

### **8.2.2 Failure of coverage**

The next sub-theme was discussed by seven interviewees and the label was taken from a comment by Mark, a Senior Police Officer. When discussing prison intelligence capabilities with Mark, he felt that it is improving; but was ‘brutally honest’ when he said that HMPPS do not ‘recognise what intelligence is or how to handle it and what to do with it’. Mark stated that he believes the crime-terror nexus is happening inside prison but there is a lack of ‘understanding, capturing, indexing, assessing, recording, and acting on intelligence effectively’ within HMPPS which stems from structural shortcomings linked to the lack of

training and development for staff (see Section 7.2.3.1 for staffing issues). Consequently, Mark argued that this '*failure of coverage*' implies that although the PCTN might be happening, deficiencies in the system's intelligence capabilities hinder a comprehensive understanding and identification of its existence (O'Brien, 2009: 911).

Likewise, when Dennis (PIO) was asked why other interviewees in similar roles do not think the crime-terror nexus is happening inside prison, he suggested that it could be due to insufficient intelligence within their establishment. Hence, any PCTN may be under-reported—as Paul (former Police Officer) claimed, 'there is a lot that is never reported'. Interviewees recognised that HMPPS is 'on a journey to build their intelligence capabilities' (Jeffrey), so intelligence reports are often poor quality and there is a general lack of recording. Regular, decent quality intelligence helps to ensure that prison establishments are safe and that prisoners are not continuing their criminality (UNODC, 2015: 2). Consequently, identifying and tackling any criminality, not to mention any PCTN, is difficult if the prison intelligence capability is inadequate.

James (Senior Government Advisor) employed the concept of 'Schrödinger's cat' as a metaphor to convey his argument. In this analogy, he likened the situation to a closed box containing a cat, where its vital status, whether alive or dead, remains uncertain until the box is opened. This analogy implies a state of ambiguity, suggesting that the existence of the PCTN is similarly uncertain, and one cannot definitively determine its presence until more information becomes known or an event confirms it (e.g., a terrorist attack with guns supplied by a former inmate). James highlighted the elusive nature of this issue, emphasising the need for additional intelligence and understanding to ascertain the existence of the PCTN.

However, it is important to consider that akin to OC, the crime-terror nexus might be '**hiding in plain sight**' (Isaac). According to Isaac, this phenomenon is often concealed and occurs in 'secrecy' (Gallagher, 2021) because the consequences, particularly for criminals that support terrorists, are 'pretty severe'. Terry and Sean emphasised the concept of 'disguised compliance' (see Acheson and Paul, 2019; Basra and Neumann, 2020) and Mark acknowledged that there is indeed information going 'under the radar' as he highlighted the covert nature of any potential PCTN. These observations collectively suggest that the complexities of gathering any intelligence on the PCTN might be exacerbated by the ability of individuals and groups to operate discreetly, making it challenging to detect their true intentions and activities.

#### 8.2.2.1 We only know what is reported

The data analysis identified a critical factor in understanding whether the crime-terror nexus is happening inside prison—the availability of intelligence. In other words, HMPPS and the

police can only act upon what they are aware of, and this depends on reported intelligence. If these organisations are not informed of a threat or issue, they remain unaware of the associated risks. Paul (former Police Officer) emphasised the complexity of the issue, comparing it to 'nailing jelly to the wall'. Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) raised a fundamental question:

'How can one analyse and understand the extent of the nexus without access to data?'

He emphasised the vital importance of a 'switched on' intelligence capability to know exactly whether the nexus was happening inside prison.

This sub-theme is relevant to what twelve interviewees expressed, that there is **no evidence** of the PCTN. This research maintains that the absence of evidence *may* be strongly linked to variations in intelligence gathering capability across the prison estate. Fundamentally, if a prison lacks the capability to gather and report intelligence effectively, any potential existence of the nexus may go unnoticed and therefore remain unreported. For instance, Jim (PIO) has not observed any instances of the PCTN; but he emphasised HMPPS's crucial role in reporting such occurrences and alluded to a lack of intelligence capability in certain prisons. Thus, without robust intelligence gathering and reporting systems, the PCTN may remain undetected, leaving organisations like HMPPS, the security services and the police unaware of its presence.

Furthermore, the data analysis revealed that some interviewees (n = 7) thought that the PCTN is **less prevalent operationally than perceived**. For instance, Melissa shared her perspective, stating:

'In my experience, I have not come across any evidence to indicate that the issues highlighted in research conducted back in 2015 are a major cause for concern. From my understanding, these issues are less common than they have historically and politically been portrayed.'

Gregory (Debriefing) expressed a similar sentiment:

'I do not believe that the crime-terror nexus is as widespread as it is often depicted. It exists to a minimal extent, but it is not pervasive.'

Natasha (PIO) added another layer to the discussion, emphasising that:

'It is crucial to consider that our knowledge is constrained by what is reported. There is always a possibility that such activities are occurring but are not being reported to the prison or the police.'

This raises an important question: could this 'less prevalent than perceived' perception be influenced by the intelligence capability gap? In other words, is the underestimation of the PCTN linked to a lack of adequate intelligence gathering, resulting in blind spots or misjudgements about its true prevalence? This argument finds support in the work of Podmore (2012: 159), who, noted that in 2012 the government believed there was little cause for concern and no evidence of problems such as OC, drugs, or mobile phones in prison. However, recent literature and evidence have contradicted this assumption (see Crewe, 2005b; Gooch and Treadwell, 2021; Gooch, 2022). This prompts the question of whether the perceived extent of the nexus reflects the operational reality or a result of a lack of identification and intelligence reporting.

In summary, this theme highlights that individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and understanding of the terminology related to the crime-terror nexus are crucial in identifying its presence within prisons. The absence of universally accepted definitions of terminology, coupled with the influence of subjective interpretations and individual conceptualisations, results in a situation where the criteria for identifying the presence of a PCTN remain undefined and ambiguous. Additionally, the notion of a 'failure of coverage' implies that, despite the potential existence of the PCTN, structural shortcomings in intelligence capabilities within the prison system hinder a comprehensive understanding and identification of this phenomenon.

### **8.3 A Reliance on Prison Officers**

Intelligence collection relies heavily on prison staff, who maintain direct contact with prisoners (UNODC, 2015: 59; The Centre for Social Justice, 2019). Unlike law enforcement personnel, prison officers are immersed in an environment with a uniquely high concentration of potential intelligence sources (Barsh, 2012: 66). If prison staff were trained to recognise key indicators, they could potentially gather information by overhearing conversations, noticing unusual activity, and observing patterns of association and behaviour (UNODC, 2015: 59). Several interviewees explicitly stated that any intelligence feed is dependent on staff because they are the 'eyes and ears' (Isaac) within prison and without a fully trained workforce, prison officers will not be confident in submitting and collecting intelligence to identify and combat any PCTN.

However, some interviewees claimed that if a prison officer does not understand the importance of intelligence and how valuable their information reports can be to law enforcement, any gathering of intelligence is deficient. Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) revealed that he has seen 'specific' and 'tangible evidence' that prison officers are not collecting intelligence on associations and any nexus because of 'a lack of training, culture, [and] capability'. This comment on culture and capability is particularly intriguing in light of

HMPPS's emphasis on rehabilitation, as staff members have to manage the ongoing challenge of balancing the competing priorities set forth by the MoJ.

Furthermore, Christopher is a PPL and has worked for HMPPS for over 23 years in a variety of roles. He was very open and frank in sharing his opinions on prison intelligence. Whilst quoting Donald Rumsfeld's 'unknown knowns' (2002)<sup>58</sup> he explained that the authorities can only act and understand any threat, harm and risk if they are obtaining the full intelligence picture. Throughout his interview, Christopher suggested that unless prisons inform and educate 'the people on the shop floor' so they know what to look out for and who to focus on, the authorities will never know whether the PCTN exists. In the excerpt below, Christopher voiced, in a disheartened, but empathetical, manner, that all organisations are eager for intelligence, but any information gathering is primarily through prison staff who are not trained and involved:

'The police are desperate for intel, the probation is desperate for intel and we [prison] are as well, but we can only get that intel from people on the 'shop floor' [slight laugh] that we don't seem to be wanting to engage as part of the process'.

The findings confirmed that if staff are not gathering and submitting relevant intelligence—the authorities are 'never going to have an accurate picture of the whole risk' (Anthony). Consequently, the authorities cannot analyse the extent of any crime-terror nexus if they 'don't have the data to work from' (Anthony). It is pertinent to note that the challenge extends beyond the absence of intelligence capabilities. Without a well-defined delineation of the characteristics of a crime-terror nexus (see Section 5.2), those tasked with intelligence gathering are left without a clear understanding of the phenomena they should be identifying.

To summarise, the identification of the PCTN is heavily reliant on prison officers, who serve as the primary source of intelligence due to their direct interaction with inmates. However, this intelligence gathering is often hindered by inadequate training, a lack of understanding about its importance, and the absence of clear guidance on the PCTN. Without fully equipped and engaged staff, authorities cannot obtain a complete picture of the potential risks, making it difficult to analyse or address the PCTN effectively.

## 8.4 A Dependence on the Prison

HMPPS manages a diverse portfolio of 120 prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), as well as a single Secure Training Centre (Beard, 2023: 8). These prisons vary—ranging

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<sup>58</sup> 'We know what we know  
We know what we don't know  
We don't know what we know  
We don't know what we don't know.'

from ownership (private or public) to operational style (closed or open) and geographical positioning, accommodating diverse populations with varying security classifications (Podmore, 2012: 145; Beard, 2023). Notably, prisons are deeply human environments, fostering pronounced challenges, moral dilemmas, intricate issues, and paradoxes (Jewkes and Wright, 2016). Bennett et al. (2008: 3) even argue that the practices and attitudes of prison officers vary enormously in different establishments.

Jeffrey (Senior Police Officer) equated the prison estate to a 'patchwork quilt', an analogy emphasising the diverse and cohesive nature of the prison estate as a whole (Koelsch, 2012: 823). Data analysis revealed a general suggestion that some prisons are likely to be better or worse at intelligence gathering. The effectiveness of intelligence capabilities—particularly in identifying the PCTN—depends not only on the establishment itself but also on the individuals operating within it. Factors such as staffing levels, prison culture, and the specific pressures unique to each institution are critical in determining how effectively intelligence is gathered. For instance, Anthony emphasised that identifying the nexus depends on a myriad of factors, including 'prison officers... jails... region... everything.' Additionally, Natasha, a PIO with 13 years' experience, emphasised the significant disparities in intelligence reporting practices among different prisons:

'Reporting is massively different from prison to prison, and you know which ones are your better prisons for reporting.'

Two interviewees compared the intelligence capability of higher and lower category establishments (see Section 5.4.2 for further discussion), noting that staff in Category A prisons tend to be more aware of extremism and intelligence reporting. However, Jennifer pointed out the challenges faced by prison officers in prioritising intelligence reporting amidst their numerous responsibilities, which often include

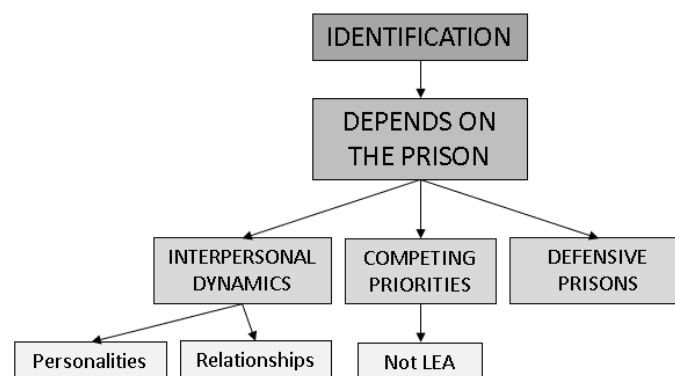
"Maintaining order and discipline... addressing mental health issues, managing drug-related problems, and dealing with violent individuals who are never, ever going to change."

She further elaborated on the demanding and stressful nature of prison work, explaining that staff are frequently overwhelmed and exhausted (Brough and Briggs, 2010). As a result, under-reporting of intelligence issues can occur, especially in establishments where staff are overworked. Jennifer also emphasised the pivotal role of PIOs who should foster strong relationships and actively engage with prison staff in order to collect intelligence. She echoed Kenneth's argument, recognising that in rural settings or within establishments where staff may have personal connections with local prisoners, such ties can sometimes result in a reluctance to acknowledge and report issues for the sake of maintaining a quiet and peaceful



environment. She emphasised that without an effective intelligence capability and strong relationships between staff across sectors (i.e. police, prison, probation), valuable knowledge remains unexploited, hindering efforts to identify any PCTN.

To illustrate the variability in prison intelligence capabilities, two distinct experiences were reported. Jennifer recounted an incident in her region where a young inmate immediately established close connections with influential figures in the prison. Concerned about the lack of background information on this prisoner, Jennifer's colleague requested intelligence checks, which revealed significant reporting while the inmate was in London, but a striking absence of reporting during his time in the intermediate prison. Jennifer attributed this inconsistency to variations in reporting across different prisons. In contrast, Adam highlighted a more cooperative intelligence-sharing environment where prison officers actively contributed valuable insights. He acknowledged the crucial role of PIOs for briefing prison staff on what to watch for, resulting in a substantial influx of intelligence reports. Adam also praised the willingness of prison governors to collect and share information. While he acknowledged occasional hurdles in information sharing among colleagues, his personal experience reflected an environment marked by transparency and collaboration within the prison estate. Hence, the findings from the data identified that the effectiveness of intelligence capability is contingent on the specific prison establishment and the individuals operating within the institution. The data has revealed three primary areas within this theme that influence the identification of the PCTN (see Figure 21).



*Figure 21: Depends on the Prison (Author's own)*

#### 8.4.1 Interpersonal dynamics

Twenty interviewees (59%) highlighted how individual personalities and relationships among relevant staff members influenced the identification of the PCTN. To discern any existence of the PCTN, the intelligence must be ascertained and reported by staff working in the prison. It then should be disseminated to the relevant individuals and authorities such as the Governor, police and/or PIOs. The data analysis identified that interpersonal dynamics (personalities and

relationships; Reiss and Kirtchuk, 2009: 462) can either facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of this process. Jeffrey expressed apprehension about the sharing of intelligence relying predominantly on personalities and relationships rather than adhering to formal structures and agreed policies (Santorso and Rizzuti, 2024). He revealed that this concern is shared among his colleagues in HMPPS. This further substantiates the earlier discussion regarding the absence of precise definitions and concepts (see Section 5.2). When there is an absence of well-defined terminology that serves as the foundation for coherent frameworks and standardised procedures, it becomes unrealistic to anticipate full compliance from staff members. Similarly, when Mark (Senior Police Officer) discussed the operational distinctions between the police and HMPPS, he divulged that any collaborative efforts depend on local relationships rather than national protocols or processes.

Nine interviewees specifically discussed the impact of individual's **personality** on the process of gathering and sharing intelligence; for instance, whether staff are productive in their roles (Griffith and Dunham, 2014: 47). Personality refers to an individual's traits that contribute to the continuity of their behaviour (Pervin, 1996; Funder, 1997: 1). Personalities shape individuals' career decisions (Furnham, 2002), levels of engagement (Woods and Sofat, 2013), and capacity to respond to and connect with others (De Janasz et al. 2002). This was reflected in the experiences of Patrick, a PIO in a Category A establishment, and Kenneth, an Intelligence Officer with experience across various prisons. Both highlighted that intelligence gathering is often contingent on the personalities of the staff involved and their ability and willingness to navigate complex interactions with prisoners and colleagues. However, this reliance on personality poses challenges for a consistent and effective intelligence capability across the prison system. Kenneth emphasised that while intelligence gathering should not solely depend on individual traits, this is the prevailing reality, as each staff member brings a distinct approach to their work. This creates erratic intelligence reporting, as those who are more proactive, observant, or naturally inclined to share information are more likely to engage in intelligence activities than others.

Furthermore, Dennis (PIO) and Anthony (Prison Intelligence Manager) drew attention to the contrast in personalities that can either facilitate or hinder the process of gathering intelligence to identify the PCTN. Their observations align somewhat with the Five-Factor Model (Tupes and Christal, 1961), often referred to as the 'Big Five'<sup>59</sup> (Goldberg, 1990), which represents a universally recognised hierarchical framework for understanding personality (McCrae and Costa, 2008). Both agreed that if the officer (i.e., PIOs) embodies a 'sociable person' (McCrae and Costa, 1997) who assumes 'a degree of ownership and proactivity' (Bateman and Crant,

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<sup>59</sup> Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience.

1993; Crant, 1995), they are likely to collect the necessary intelligence. Whereas, if the officer exhibits traits of being 'a bit of an ass', is characterised as 'lazy', lacks motivation, and refrains from acting on matters that could potentially strain relations between the police and HMPPS, they may not gather pertinent intelligence, even if it is readily available.<sup>60</sup>

Past research has provided valuable insights concerning the connection between personality and performance. For instance, specific personality characteristics (e.g., extraversion and agreeableness) prove to be significant for achieving effective job performance in professions that require high levels of social interaction (Goldberg, 1990; Barrick and Mount, 1991). Anthony stated that the most effective PIOs, to whom he referred as 'fantastic', possess an in-depth understanding of the inmates on Pathfinder. They actively engage with relevant prison officers to detect any changes and drive the development of intelligence. Additionally, Dennis emphasised the importance of having the 'right person in the job', as their presence or absence can determine whether the authorities gain or lose vital intelligence identifying any PCTN. Relying on personalities creates gaps, as those who are less naturally inclined or feel too overwhelmed by other responsibilities may overlook or under-report critical information. A mandate to report intelligence should be established and supported by policies and guidance on practice, making it a necessary and standardised aspect of staff duties. Staff should be required to report any relevant intelligence, rather than relying on their individual discretion or engagement levels. This would create a more uniform approach, ensuring that important intelligence does not slip through the cracks simply because a staff member lacks the time or motivation to report it.

Specifically, three interviewees discussed the importance of the role of the prison governor. These leaders enforce the harshest state punishment and exercise substantial personal authority within their establishment (Bryans, 2012). Nonetheless, in their study of maintaining order within prisons, Sparks et al. (1996: 136-137) contend that 'power is not absolute'. Instead, they described a process of negotiation among various individuals. Prison management, they argued, requires a delicate balance, akin to 'walking a tightrope', where conflicting priorities and concerns must be reconciled while facing various constraints (Bennett, 2016b). Larry suggested that if a governor expresses reluctance toward law enforcement involvement within their prison, it can pose significant challenges for the flow of intelligence. Correspondingly, Ivan recounted a personal anecdote illustrating how he could effectively gather intelligence in certain prisons, but as soon as the governor changed, his operations became untenable. He explained that some governors even actively encouraged and supported his intelligence collection efforts within their prison establishment. His

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<sup>60</sup> This is potentially connected to the themes explored in Chapters 7; specifically, instances where staff refrain from acting on information in order to maintain a peaceful and stable prison environment.

frustration stemmed from the reality that the effectiveness of intelligence gathering depended on individual personalities and the governor's priorities at the time. Additionally, the frequent rotation of prison governors often made it exceedingly difficult to establish and sustain long-term stability within the establishment (The Centre for Social Justice, 2019: 62). Hence, Ivan claimed that there is a need for intelligence flows to be resilient enough to 'survive personalities'.

While collegial **relationships** represent one of the most prevalent forms of interpersonal connections, they have received minimal philosophical consideration (Betzler and Löschke, 2021). Fourteen interviewees emphasised the significance of strong staff collegial relationships for the purpose of gathering and exchanging intelligence, citing it as a factor that impacts the identification of any PCTN. Collaborative efforts and the development of collegial bonds among staff enhance the capabilities, practices, and professional experiences of those involved (Ayo and Fraser, 2008: 64). Joseph, an Intelligence Officer with an extensive 19-year career collaborating with HMPPS staff, shared a valuable insight into the dynamics of his profession. According to Joseph, the crucial aspect of his career was relationships, emphasising that they constituted 'half the battle.' This perspective highlights the profound significance of interpersonal connections within the context of intelligence, suggesting that the effectiveness of intelligence efforts is frequently contingent upon the quality and strength of relationships cultivated over time. Joseph's revelation implies that, in the complicated landscape of intelligence gathering and collaboration with HMPPS staff, the relational dimension surpasses the mere operational aspects of the prison service. It suggests that successful intelligence gathering depends not only on technical proficiency, but equally on the ability to establish and nurture meaningful alliances with personnel within the prison environment. Similarly, Scott, Daniel (both PIOs) and James (Senior Government Advisor) elaborated on the idea that the dissemination of intelligence from the prison relies heavily on the quality of relationships. James further clarified that when relationships among the police, HMPPS, and security agencies are positive and built on trust, intelligence flows smoothly. These interviewees illustrate the nuanced nature of intelligence operations, where interpersonal skills, trust, and effective communication are critical to achieving successful outcomes.

Conversely, in instances where relationships are strained and trust is lacking, the sharing of intelligence may be compromised. Kimberly (PIO) demonstrated the necessity for positive relationships through a personal illustration. She revealed that a colleague has a strained relationship with the Governor and Security Governor of the prison they work at, resulting in significant complications in their professional capacity. However, Kimberly acknowledged that

relationships vary from one prison to another and expressed gratitude for the prisons that value and appreciate the gathering and sharing of intelligence.

Additionally, Jennifer highlighted her positive interactions with PIOs who maintain exceptional rapport with prison staff, thanks to their proactive nature. Her observations partially align with the concept of proactive personality, which suggests that individuals possess the power to shape their surroundings, and that situations are influenced by an individual's behaviour (Bowers, 1973; Bateman and Crant, 1993). People with a prototypical proactive personality are depicted as having a relatively unrestricted response to situational influences. They possess the capacity to recognise opportunities, take initiative, and persist until substantial changes are achieved (Crant, 2000: 439). Jennifer detailed the proactive involvement of these officers in daily prison operations and how this impacts any relationships and the opportunity to gather intelligence on the nexus (Mund et al. 2018). Jennifer also disclosed that, in cases where the officers lack the necessary rapport with prison staff and fail to actively seek out information and engage with the staff, their awareness of any crime-terror nexus might be limited or absent. These findings demonstrate that interpersonal dynamics influence the identification of the PCTN.

#### **8.4.2 Competing priorities**

Managing competing priorities is a common challenge encountered in various industries and sectors (Christensen, 1997; Harford; 2011). Within law enforcement there are conflicting models and strategies that compete with intelligence-led policing for acceptance and adoption (e.g., Neighbourhood Policing; Maguire and John, 2006). Despite the police and HMPPS doing the same job: protecting the public (Podmore, 2012: 144), they have conflicting priorities. HMPPS is *not* a law enforcement agency comparable to the police, so crime prevention is not its primary task (Podmore, 2012: 145). Making prisons safe and decent, maintaining good order and discipline (South, 2023: 162), serving the courts and ensuring people stay in custody are key priorities for HMPPS (Podmore, 2012: 145). The prison service strives to achieve their own objectives and priorities, as a well-ordered prison environment is 'structured, stable, predictable and acceptable' (Liebling, 2004: 291). Whereas within the police service, each force establishes its own priorities, primarily centred on reducing crime and protecting the vulnerable (Farrell, 2022).

Twenty-six interviewees (76%) discussed these competing priorities and how they influence any intelligence gathering to identify the PCTN. For instance, Sean explained that the primary focus of prisons is to ensure 'safety' and efficient 'management of the establishment', a stark contrast to his own priorities as a Police Officer. Additionally, Scott, who serves as a PIO at a Category C establishment, expressed his frustration, stating that the predominant emphasis

within UK prisons revolves around rehabilitation, in contrast to his policing perspective, which centres on fighting crime. Expressing regret, Scott suggested that there is an imbalance between enforcement and rehabilitation efforts, and he regularly struggles to communicate his organisation's priorities to the prison (Treadwell et al. 2019: 47). Similarly, Craig, clearly frustrated, claimed that prisons have 'little appetite to deal with the crime and counterterrorism'. He stated that:

'The prison are interested in, if they count 500 out in the morning and 500 in at the back, and it's all about the doors and discipline, so that is their priority...I can't fault them for that, but----. It always comes secondary to the policing aspect of things.'

Whilst this remark is subjective, it is profound and thought-provoking. It highlights a fundamental combative relationship between the core objectives of HMPPS and law enforcement. Prisons' primary focus is on maintaining order, security, and discipline, with a strong emphasis on ensuring the 'count' of inmates remains consistent. This operational priority is crucial not only for the safe and efficient management of prison establishments (Podmore, 2012: 98) but also for maintaining public and political respect for the prison system. If offenders were to escape or if security breaches occurred, it could lead to a significant public relations disaster, further complicating the already challenging perceptions of prisons in society. Craig's comment also implies that their primary priority does not address broader law enforcement concerns. Craig acknowledges the validity of these priorities but expresses frustration that they often take precedence over policing, potentially hindering efforts to identify and prevent crime within the prison environment.

Equally, many interviewees (n = 12) conveyed frustration at the prison service solely focusing on good order and discipline (GOAD) and being reluctant to do anything that might 'upset the applecart' (Paul, former Police Officer). Paul spoke about the over-riding culture within the prison service. He voiced suspicions that this culture places an emphasis on maintaining GOAD above all else, affecting both thought processes and behaviours within the institution (Crawley and Crawley, 2008: 137). Paul believed that this cultural orientation might hinder the level of intrusive activity necessary for effective intelligence gathering and the identification of any PCTN. Furthermore, when Robert was a Commander at New Scotland Yard, he pushed for better intelligence sharing with the prison service, but this was a mission he noted, wryly, as having largely failed (see Santorso and Rizzuti, 2024). The prison service, he observed, appeared reluctant to engage in such efforts, as it did not align with what they perceived as their core role. Robert expressed his dissatisfaction with the idea that the primary role of prisons is solely focused on maintaining GOAD. He advocated for a broadening of HMPPS objectives to prioritise public safety, by addressing radicalisation within prison walls through

de-radicalisation programmes and robust intelligence gathering. Similarly, Matthew (PIO) explained that the prison service sometimes ‘turn a blind eye’ in order to prioritise stability over addressing potentially disruptive concerns.

Comments of this kind alert to the wider issue discussed above; the prison service is *not* a law enforcement agency. Hence, gathering decent quality intelligence and reporting on any criminality is not their main priority (Podmore, 2012). Hamm (2007: 102) highlighted similar challenges in his research, particularly through the Florida experience, where the head of terrorism intelligence emphasised that effective intelligence work requires a law enforcement mindset, something that prisons often lack. The organisational culture within prisons prioritises maintaining order and security rather than proactive intelligence gathering, which creates significant challenges for identifying and addressing potential risks such as prisoner radicalisation. Kenneth, an Intelligence Officer with over 41 years’ experience in the police and working alongside HMPPS, whilst showing ‘respect’ for the prison service, explained that the staff are there to ‘keep prisoners safe and warm and behind bars... they are not intelligence officers’ (Arnold, 2016: 268). Thus, prison staff are so busy managing the regime and ‘trying to survive’ they have not got time to collect intelligence and submit reports (Anthony, Kimberly and Christopher; South, 2023). Kenneth captured this wider issue succinctly when he said: ‘a prison officer, is a prison officer.’

Within this sub-theme, the analysis indicated an underlying sentiment of combativeness and rivalry between the two organisations. Recognising that positive relationships and cooperation between an organisation and its stakeholders thrive when colleagues align their core values and strategic priorities (Bundy et al. 2018), these two organisations often clash due to divergent priorities and cultures, resulting in combative relationships and conflict (see Mawby and Worrall [2011] for similar issues between probation-police and-prisons). Many interviewees acknowledged the crucial role prisons play in enhancing public safety, which is why some supported Clarke’s (2021) suggestion to transfer HMPPS management from the MoJ to the Home Office to align all aspects of law enforcement and intelligence.<sup>61</sup> Despite both organisations representing different facets of the state, these challenges contribute to animosity, a ‘turbulent field’ (Mawby and Worrall, 2011: 80) and a tendency to assign blame for system weaknesses. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential influence of the sample on this finding (discussed below).

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<sup>61</sup> The recommendation stems from the Fishmongers’ Hall inquest, which identified incompetence, complacency, ignorance, and blame-shifting between organisations, exposing structural and cultural weaknesses (Clarke, 2021).

### 8.4.3 Defensive prisons

The next sub-theme continues to highlight this culture of blame-shifting, as eight interviewees emphasised the prison service's inclination to adopt defensive behaviour regarding politically sensitive events occurring within certain establishments (Ismail, 2020). Originally developed by Freud (1946; 1959; 1962) to explain how individuals avoid acknowledging sexual or aggressive desires, the theory of defence mechanisms has evolved to encompass the protection of self-esteem and avoidance of blame in contemporary research (see Ashforth and Lee, 1990; Baumeister et al. 1998; Cramer, 2000). Whilst defence mechanisms have been researched almost exclusively at the individual level (Norgaard, 2006), this study extends the application to the organisational level (see Brown and Starkey, 2000; Homburg and Fürst, 2007). Analysis indicates that the prison service often exhibits defensive behaviour when confronted with sensitive issues related to security, intelligence sharing, and the identification of problems (Podmore, 2012: 136). This defensive conduct not only obstructs upward communication (Homburg and Fürst, 2007) but also influences intelligence sharing including the identification of the PCTN. Such defensive behaviour can be characterised as anti-learning and overprotective (Argyris, 1985; 1990).

To illustrate this argument, several interviewees (n = 5) pointed out that when confronted with scrutiny, the prison service tends to deflect responsibility or respond defensively, rather than openly addressing and tackling issues. For example, Isaac reflected on the 'closed and secretive environment' within the prison system (Bryans, 2005), and Ivan (Prison Intelligence Manager) and Charles (former Senior Police Officer) emphasised this defensiveness by highlighting the reluctance of the prison service to allow academics access to their world (Sparks et al. 1996; Bryans, 2005). Paul (former Police Officer) extended the discussion by considering the cultural aspects of the prison service, comparing it to the police service he joined in the 1970s. He noted the 'introspective nature' and 'resistance to change' within the prison service, as well as its aversion to 'external scrutiny'. Throughout Paul's 30-year policing career, his extensive involvement with HMPPS allowed him to witness a prevailing 'not invented here' culture and a lack of self-criticism within the prison service. He emphasised the challenge of trying to foster change when the prison culture remains insular and resistant to external perspectives (Ashforth and Lee, 1990: 642).

Additionally, a noteworthy perspective of prison denial emerged from a few interviewees. Denial, a type of defence mechanism, involves refusing to acknowledge environmental factors (Oldham and Kleiner, 1990) or pretending the problem is not there, or that it is the responsibility of someone else (Cohen, 2001; Lertzman, 2008, 16; Adams, 2014). For example, some prisons may minimise intelligence that threatens their establishment. These findings resemble the denial observed in the late 1980s and early 1990s (McDermott, 1990) regarding racism in



prisons and align with Bennett's (2016b) findings where managers exhibited literal denial concerning issues stemming from ethnic differences. To illustrate, Ivan expressed his belief that not only is there an under-reporting of the PCTN, but any reported intelligence is withheld from further disclosure due to its 'highly sensitive nature' (Ismail, 2020: 10). Isaac emphasised the constraints within the information reporting system, suggesting that there is a degree of suppression rooted in 'managerial reluctance' to acknowledge the extent of the problem, particularly concerning Islamist extremism. He noted a pattern of 'downplaying' and 'downgrading' problems within the prison service, attributing the rise of extremism to what he described as 'institutional timidity' in confronting the issue (Braverman, 2023). Similarly, Christopher (PPL) shared that certain prison establishments may be averse to acknowledging an extremist problem. Although Christopher could not provide concrete evidence, he strongly sensed that certain prisons prefer not to acknowledge a terrorism or radicalisation issue, instead labelling it as poor behaviour or racism (this potentially intersects with the observations articulated in Chapter 5 concerning the phenomena of othering, racism, and terrorist undertones). The findings provide evidence that the defensive approach by the prison service is a factor which influences the identification of the PCTN.

However, it is worth considering whether the sample has influenced the findings of this study. The majority of interviewees in this study, work for the police service. The unique culture within the police force can influence how officers perceive and interact with other institutions, such as prisons. There is a rich body of literature that researches the concept of 'cop culture' or 'canteen culture' (see Fielding, 1994; Loftus, 2009; Westmarland, 2012; van Hulst, 2013; Bowling et al. 2019), which explores how collective values among police officers can shape their actions and attitudes towards external organisations (Liebling et al. 2001: 149; Eason, 2023: 98). This 'cop culture' can sometimes manifest as a tendency to blame other agencies for failures or shortcomings, an issue which was exposed during the Fishmongers' Hall Inquest (Clarke, 2021). This discussion extends beyond the police force, as other governmental organisations may also exhibit subcultural characteristics that impede knowledge sharing and collaboration (Eason, 2023: 99). Nevertheless, some of the sample may have assumed a bitterness and dislike for the prison service because of often fraught relationships between the two organisations (Podmore, 2012: 144; Santorso and Rizzuti, 2024: 17). Given this animosity and negativity towards prisons, it could be argued that the sample has the potential to influence the information, the stories communicated and the kinds of difficulties in relationships. Therefore, while HMPPS may bear some responsibility for failures in the intelligence capability and the identification of the PCTN, it is essential to recognise that the police service may also share culpability.

To summarise, this section highlighted the role of complex interpersonal dynamics in shaping intelligence sharing and nexus identification. Additionally, differing institutional priorities influence the identification of the PCTN. Lastly, the prison service's defensive stance on GOAD and intelligence may influence the identification of the nexus, potentially leaving security gaps. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this research primarily involved current and former police service employees, which could influence the findings.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter argues that the main factor influencing the identification of the PCTN is intelligence. Three sub-themes were drawn from the data, each making a distinctive contribution to addressing what factors influence the identification of the PCTN and cause the intelligence capability gap.

The first sub-theme of the intelligence capability gap highlights significant challenges in the identification and understanding of the PCTN. The lack of a clear, universally accepted definition of the PCTN leads to subjective interpretations among prison and law enforcement personnel, which complicates the ability to detect and classify relevant intelligence. This ambiguity is further compounded by structural shortcomings within prison intelligence systems, including insufficient reporting mechanisms, and inconsistencies in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence. These gaps create a scenario where the potential existence of a PCTN may go undetected, contributing to under-reporting and an incomplete understanding of its scope.

Secondly, prison officers play a critical role in the collection of intelligence, given their direct and continuous interaction with inmates. However, the effectiveness of intelligence gathering is significantly undermined by insufficient training, a lack of awareness regarding the importance of intelligence, and unclear guidance on identifying the PCTN. Without proper support and engagement, prison officers are unable to fully contribute to intelligence efforts, leaving authorities with an incomplete understanding of the risks.

The final sub-theme emphasised that the intelligence capability within prisons is profoundly influenced by the specific establishment and the individuals operating within it. The data reveals significant variability in intelligence gathering and reporting practices across different prisons, driven by factors such as the prison priorities, defensiveness and interpersonal dynamics. Personalities, relationships, and the engagement levels of staff, including PIOs and governors, play a pivotal role in the intelligence capability. Strong relationships, particularly between staff, police, and external agencies, are essential for the smooth flow of intelligence and the identification of the PCTN. However, the reliance on personal relationships and the

absence of consistent, standardised policies and protocols, hinder intelligence efforts, leaving gaps in the detection of security threats.

Furthermore, managing competing priorities between HMPPS and law enforcement agencies presents significant challenges to intelligence sharing and the identification of the PCTN. The prison service's primary focus on maintaining GOAD often contrasts with law enforcement's emphasis on crime prevention and public safety, leading to a fundamental misalignment of objectives. This misalignment fosters frustration and conflict, as evidenced by the experiences shared by interviewees. While prisons play a crucial role in ensuring public safety through order and rehabilitation, the reluctance to engage fully in intelligence efforts not only hampers the identification of the PCTN but may also obstruct rehabilitation. If a crime-terror nexus exists and thrives within the prison environment, inmates may be less receptive to changes in attitude and behavior, as their focus shifts toward strengthening their network and furthering extremist ambitions rather than engaging in reformatory efforts. This underlines the broader challenge of balancing institutional priorities while ensuring both security and rehabilitation remain central objectives. Effective collaboration between these organisations requires a recognition of these diverging roles and a concerted effort to bridge the gap between enforcement and rehabilitation to foster a safer environment.

The sub-theme of defensive behaviour exhibited by the prison service significantly hinders the identification and management of the PCTN. This defensive stance not only limits intelligence sharing and transparency but also reflects a broader culture of resistance to external scrutiny and change. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential influence of the sample, particularly the perspectives of police officers, whose own institutional biases may shape their views of the prison system. While the prison service bears responsibility for some of the intelligence capability gaps, the findings suggest that the blame may not lie solely with them.

This intelligence capability gap hampers efforts to detect and respond to potential crime-terror connections. This theme highlights the pressing need for enhanced intelligence capabilities, clear terminologies, and improved operational frameworks to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing the crime-terror nexus within prisons. This chapter stresses the need for resilient operational intelligence frameworks that transcend individual personalities, ensuring that critical intelligence flows are maintained regardless of staffing changes or interpersonal challenges. Acknowledging the insights, a holistic and dynamic approach must be adopted—one that recognises the fluid nature of the nexus within the 'patchwork quilt' (Jeffrey) of the prison estate. The subsequent chapter discusses and reflects on chapters 5 to 8, aiming to highlight the study's theoretical originality and offer recommendations.



## Chapter 9 DISCUSSION, REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Introduction

In an era when a substantial number of resourceful criminals find themselves imprisoned alongside individuals driven by ideological motivations; this thesis enhances the established body of criminological scholarship by presenting a comprehensive qualitative study of the crime-terror nexus within the prison environment. This study's aim was to identify *what factors influence the prison crime-terror nexus*. Through gathering and analysing data from thirty-four semi-structured interviews and prisoner questionnaires and letters, this research study has sought to identify what factors promote, inhibit and influence the identification of the PCTN.

In this chapter, I conceptualise the data chapters by presenting my perspectives and opinions, grounded in a logical and substantiated manner based on the research findings. These interpretations and conclusions are designed to be rational, perceptive, and thorough. The first section **defines the PCTN**, highlighting its dual nature as both individualistic and contextual. This is followed by an introduction to the **Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum**, which outlines the various interactions between criminals and terrorists in prison settings. Next, I explore the factors contributing to the PCTN, presenting the **Modified 'Black Hole' Theory** and examining the intersection between black hole prisons and prison security categorisation to produce a **two-axis matrix**. The last section addresses the **Intelligence Capability Gap** as a key challenge in identifying and addressing the PCTN. I then proceed to reflect on specific limitations inherent in the study, which inevitably influence the scope and applicability of the findings, and future directions. Conclusively, I recap of the primary findings derived from this study and offer practical recommendations for both policymakers and future researchers before concluding.

### 9.2 The Prison Crime-Terror Nexus

Chapter 5 offered a ground-breaking, data-driven definition of the PCTN detailing its individualistic and contextual nature. The findings evidenced that the PCTN is not a monolithic or universal occurrence, but a dynamic phenomenon shaped by a mix of personal traits, motivations, and situational conditions within prison environments. The argument that the PCTN is individualistic and contextual resonates with the person–situation debate and interaction theoretical perspective. The person-situation debate is a longstanding discussion within psychology that concerns the relative importance of a person's inherent traits (personality) versus the influence of situational factors in determining human behaviour (Fleeson, 2004). The debate has evolved to recognise various forms of compromise (Mischel

and Shoda, 1995; Fleeson and Nettle, 2008; Aunger, 2020: 274). One of the proposed resolutions is known as interactionism (Magnusson and Endler, 1977; Mischel and Peake, 1983; Hyland, 1984), which emphasises the continuous interaction of the individual and the situation in behaviour (Endler and Magnusson, 1976: 957; Fleeson, 2004). In the context of the PCTN, both personality traits (individualistic) and situational factors (contextual) influence inmates' behaviour.

### **9.2.1 Individualistic Nature**

Prisoners are not homogenous entities; any nexus between them is influenced by a variety of individual factors. Firstly, differences in ideology, background, and individual circumstances determine the formation or avoidance of crime-terror interactions. Highlighting the role of ideological differences and the presence of extremist criminals (not formally convicted terrorists), this first sub-theme demonstrates that the nexus is neither universal nor rooted in group affiliations but shaped by individual traits and contexts (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2004; Gallagher, 2018; 2024). Moreover, aligning with the similarity-attraction hypothesis (SAH), shared traits, such as nationality, religion, or criminal background, often underpin the formation of relationships, drawing attention to commonality as a driver of the nexus. This perspective suggests that individuals are drawn to those who share similar traits (Berscheid and Walster, 1969; Byrne, 1971). Such similarities create a fertile ground for connections that may facilitate the emergence of a nexus.

Furthermore, many prisoners resist associating with terrorist offenders due to stigma, moral objections, or fear of social and institutional repercussions (Jones, 2014). Within the prison environment, there exists an unwritten 'inmate code', which encompasses a set of expectations dictating how imprisoned individuals should conduct themselves during their confinement (Young et al. 2023). This code of conduct reflects the cultural and social values from the outside world, defining certain actions as immoral or unacceptable (Emery, 1970). Inmates typically uphold their own moral standards, leading to resentment and anger directed at specific crimes, with terrorists potentially facing stigmatisation from some inmates (Jones, 2014: 94). This reluctance to engage with TACT offenders, manifests in various ways, making it difficult for these individuals to establish friendships, networks, or engage in activities, such as radicalisation and recruitment, within the prison environment. Moreover, this reluctance to associate with terrorists is closely intertwined with the broader dynamics of 'othering' and racism within the prison environment (Liebling et al. 2011; Wintle, 2016; Silva, 2017). It is not merely a standalone phenomenon but rather a manifestation of deeper social processes in which certain groups, particularly those perceived as 'others', are systematically marginalised and stigmatised (Thomas-Olalade and Velho, 2011). These social dynamics further emphasise the individualistic nature of the PCTN, highlighting that not all prisoners willingly participate in

these interactions, and that reluctance is a significant factor in shaping the nature of these relationships.

Finally, the individualistic nature of the PCTN is further highlighted by the profit vs. ideology dichotomy, which serves as a significant inhibiting factor. This dichotomy arises from the fundamental differences in motivation and *raison d'être* between the two groups. Criminals are primarily motivated by financial gain, driven by the pursuit of monetary rewards and economic interests. In contrast, terrorists are typically motivated by an entrenched ideological commitment to a political cause, making their beliefs and convictions core to their identity and purpose. Terrorists are not merely criminals in the traditional sense; their ideological commitment fundamentally distinguishes them. These divergent motivations serve as a barrier to the nexus but can be overridden by opportunistic reasoning, illustrating the fluid nature of these interactions.

### **9.2.2 Contextual Nature**

Chapter 5 also revealed that the PCTN is highly dependent on situational dynamics. Firstly, building upon Basra et al. (2016) and Felson (2006), this study has highlighted the significance of co-location in fostering crime-terror interactions. Prisons serve as convergence settings where the proximity of criminals and terrorists, combined with shared grievances toward the prison authorities, creates opportunities for cooperation (Felson, 2006; Shelley, 2014; Asal et al. 2016; Patel, 2023; O'Donnell, 2023). Unlike the outside world, where diverse social connections limit such interactions, the confined and controlled nature of prisons facilitates unintentional associations and networks (Waldram, 2012).

Furthermore, the security categorisation of prisons significantly influences the likelihood and nature of the PCTN. High-security prisons, such as Category A, with their higher density of long-term TACT offenders and SOC prisoners, create a concentrated environment for potential interaction between terrorists and criminals, amplifying the risk of radicalisation (Thomas and Zaitzow, 2004; Hamm, 2007) and nexus formation. Conversely, lower-security prisons (Categories C and D) typically house fewer TACT offenders, reducing but not eliminating these risks, as demonstrated by cases of radicalisation in such settings (Cuthbertson, 2004). These distinctions highlight how the unique operational and inmate dynamics of each security category shape the emergence and characteristics of the PCTN. Further exploration will contextualise these dynamics within a two-axis framework below (Section 9.5).

Finally, mutual gains and incentives shape the dynamics of the PCTN (Makarenko, 2004; Dishman, 2005; Horgan, 2005). Relationships between criminal and terrorist prisoners often develop when both parties perceive tangible benefits or resources to advance their interests.

Interviewees described this collaboration as a form of 'synergy', where mutual advantages drive interactions, often overriding ideological divides. These findings align with rational choice perspectives, which emphasise that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their actions to make decisions that maximise their personal gains (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Within the prison setting, such incentives often manifest through social, material, or protective resources that inmates perceive as valuable. Liebling and Maruna (2005) explain how these dynamics are embedded in the power structures and social relationships of prison life, where prisoners negotiate and navigate opportunities to secure advantages. This contextual specificity reinforces the idea that the PCTN is driven by mutual gains and shaped by the incentives within a highly structured environment.

### **9.2.3 Definition of the PCTN**

**The Prison Crime-Terror nexus is a context-dependent phenomenon within prison environments, characterised by six distinct types of interaction between criminals (SOC and non-SOC) and terrorist prisoners (any ideology). The PCTN is shaped by individual traits, mutual incentives, and the specific situational factors of each prison establishment.**

The decision to exclude extremist inmates convicted of non-terrorism-related crimes from the PCTN definition preserves conceptual clarity and focuses on individuals with direct terrorism-related links. This approach avoids diluting the concept and ensures precision in addressing crime-terror interactions.<sup>62</sup> This definition marks a critical step in advancing theoretical and

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<sup>62</sup> The decision to exclude extremist inmates who have not been convicted of terrorism-related crimes from this definition is based on several key reasons. First, including such individuals could create ambiguity by blurring the line between ideological extremism and actual terrorist involvement (see Hamm, 2013), which is crucial for maintaining clarity. Expanding the definition risks overgeneralising the nexus, making it too broad and less focused on identifiable, terrorism-related threats. Practical challenges also arise in categorising extremist inmates who may not meet legal or operational terrorism criteria, complicating risk assessment and management. A narrower definition helps focus on those directly linked to terrorism-related offences, ensuring that resources are directed towards individuals with clear security implications. Furthermore, including non-terrorism-linked extremists could inflate the perceived threat, diverting attention and resources away from more immediate risks. The aim of the definition is to keep the nexus narrowly defined to better capture actual crime-terror links and ensure a more effective response to security threats.

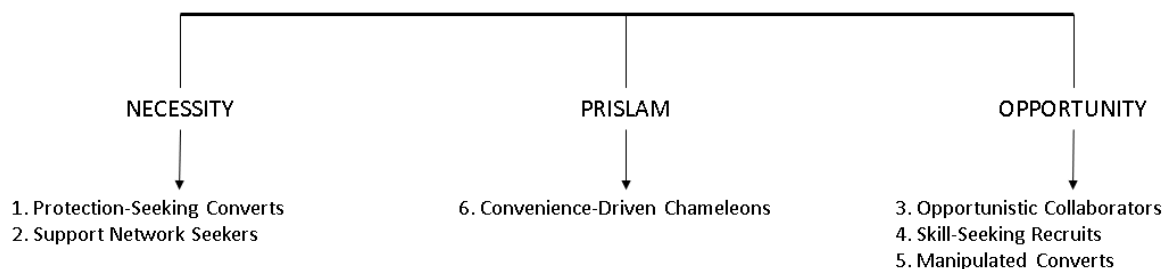


practical understanding of the PCTN. By identifying its individualistic and contextual nature, the thesis offers a focused framework for future research and intervention strategies.

### 9.3 The Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum

Since the 1990s, several researchers have proposed taxonomies to clarify, the often ambiguous, interactions between OC and terrorism. For instance, Makarenko (2012) offers a framework focusing on three planes—operational, organisational, and evolutionary—and identifies five types of interactions: alliance, appropriation of tactics, integration, hybrid, and transformation. Rollins and Wyler (2013) characterise three primary patterns of interaction between terrorist and criminal groups: collaboration as a force multiplier, tactical appropriation, and organisational transformation. Similarly, Mullins and Wither (2016) describe four types of relationships: interaction, appropriation, assimilation, and transformation. Schmid (2018) distinguishes between ‘weak nexus’, ‘regular association’, ‘alliance formation’ and ‘convergence’, with the latter two categories referring to hybrid organisations that adopt the tactics of the other group without formally linking. Kupatadze and Argomaniz (2019) take a dimensional approach, breaking the nexus down into functional, financial, and ideological confluence. More recently, Paoli et al. (2022) suggest a tripartite model of interaction, transformation/imitation, and similarities. Despite this growing body of literature on crime-terror interactions, its manifestations within prisons remain underexplored, lacking a nuanced and prison-specific conceptual framework. Thus, I address this gap by offering a new taxonomy to conceptualise the types of interactions between criminals and terrorists in the prison estate.

I propose a **Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum** (Figure 22) that categorises inmates’ motivations for engaging in the PCTN, distinguishing it from existing models. This spectrum encompasses varied motivators and offers six distinct types of interaction, providing a more granular understanding of inmate interactions while emphasising the fluidity and context-specific nature of these relationships.



*Figure 22: The Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum (Author's Own)*

### 9.3.1 Necessity-Based Interactions

The necessity side of the spectrum captures interactions driven by survival and psychological needs in unstable, violent prison environments. Prisoners engage in the PCTN primarily to seek protection and social connections essential for survival. This engagement often shifts focus from the crime-terror nexus itself to the formation of support networks and solidarity among prisoners, shaped by the challenging conditions within prisons.

#### 9.3.1.1 Protection-Seeking Converts

Inmates affiliate with extremist or religious groups primarily to gain protection within the violent and unstable prison environment (Shrivastava, 1973; Hamm, 2007). This strategy, aimed at concealing fears, projecting strength, and avoiding victimisation (Sabo et al. 2001), involves presenting a tough façade and exhibiting hyper-masculinity by joining a religious group that functions as protection (Sykes, 1958). Hamm (2007) highlights that such conversions are often pragmatic rather than ideological, driven by a survival instinct in the face of pervasive threats such as gang violence, extortion, or victimisation by other inmates (Powis et al. 2019: 13; Ruschenko, 2019). These individuals seek the security offered by powerful groups, which can act as a shield against the dangers of prison life (Irwin, 1980). In support of Hamm's (2007) findings, this thesis argues that these conversions are particularly common among vulnerable inmates who face heightened risks due to their perceived weakness, isolation, or the nature of their offences. By affiliating with a dominant group these inmates gain access to protection and a support system that can significantly improve their chances of survival.

As discussed in this thesis, Levi Bellfield, a high-profile child sex offender, exemplifies a protection-seeking convert, a type of PCTN interaction. Struggling to achieve prison masculinities and facing rejection due to the inmate code's disdain for child sexual offenders, Bellfield converted to Islam in 2016, reportedly to gain protection from prisoners after concerns for his safety (Marranci, 2009; Maguire, 2021; South, 2023). Another example is Michael Coe (also known as Mikaeel Ibrahim). Coe, who converted to Islam while serving a prison sentence, reportedly sought the safety and solidarity offered by a group of Muslim inmates (Dalrymple, 2016; Basra and Neumann, 2017; Yaacoub, 2018: 82). His case highlights the potential for conversions in prison to serve practical, rather than solely spiritual, purposes, especially for individuals who feel vulnerable or isolated within the prison hierarchy.

#### 9.3.1.2 Support Network Seekers

Inmates who seek emotional support and a sense of belonging often form or join religious or extremist groups, not for ideological reasons, but for camaraderie and solidarity (Sykes, 1958; Hamm, 2007; Roberts, 2016; Maitra, 2023). These prisoners are drawn to the strong social bonds and reduced isolation these groups provide during imprisonment (Corley, 2001). In

particular, those who previously found belonging in street gangs may gravitate toward religious or extremist groups, seeking to recreate the sense of community they once had (Liebling et al. 2011; Roberts, 2016: 12). This conversion helps restore social bonds and belonging, as religious practices inherently foster strong group dynamics.

Two notable examples of inmates seeking support and belonging through religious or extremist groups include Michael Coe and Khairi Saadallah. Coe, who converted to Islam while in prison, reportedly did so not for ideological reasons but to find solidarity and protection within the Muslim inmate community (Corley, 2001; Ehsan, 2021). Similarly, Khairi Saadallah, the 2020 Reading terrorist attacker, was imprisoned for violent offences and spent a significant amount of time with Abu Izzadeen, a long-time member of ALM, suggesting that his conversion and later actions were influenced by the sense of belonging and camaraderie offered by the group (Roberts, 2016; Ehsan, 2021). These cases highlight how prisoners can embrace religious or extremist affiliations as a means to forge emotional connections and escape isolation, rather than for purely ideological motivations.

### **9.3.2 Opportunity-Based Interactions**

Some studies characterise the connections between crime and terrorism as rooted in opportunism. By expanding on this approach, terrorists and criminals may associate for opportunistic reasons inside prison. These interactions can potentially offer more opportunities than either group or individual would have when acting independently (Corley, 2001; Mincheva and Gurr, 2013: 4).

#### **9.3.2.1 Opportunistic Collaborators**

Criminals and terrorists who engage in interactions with the strategic aim of securing economic gain, accessing goods and services, or leveraging their criminal expertise. These individuals seek to strengthen their criminal ties and establish cross-network collaborations, both during imprisonment and post-release, in order to further their illicit activities. Their goal is to enhance their status within criminal or terrorist circles and position themselves for future opportunities, expanding their networks and operations. This is consistent with literature that highlights collaboration as a key interaction within the crime-terror nexus, where criminal and terrorist organisations form alliances to achieve mutual benefits such as financial gain, operational support, or strategic advantages. For example, Rollins and Wyler (2013) identify collaboration as a key interaction, highlighting how individuals and groups with divergent goals can work together to achieve common objectives, often facilitated by shared resources and networks. Similarly, Makarenko (2004) discusses the concept of 'alliances,' emphasising that these partnerships often emerge between criminals and terrorists, where both parties leverage their respective strengths—criminals providing funding or logistical support, and terrorists offering

ideological or operational advantages (Kupatadze and Argomaniz; 2019). Schmid (2018) further explores alliance formation, noting that such collaborations enable both groups to extend their reach and enhance their capabilities, often leading to long-term strategic partnerships. An example of opportunistic collaborators might be the IRA members in the 1990s who built associations with criminal associates in prison, enabling robberies that funded terrorism (Ruane and Todd, 1996).

#### 9.3.2.2 Skill-Seeking Recruits

Terrorists or criminals who specifically target prisoners with valuable criminal skills (e.g., fraud, smuggling) to enhance their operational capabilities. These inmates are often seen as valuable assets who can offer skills necessary for the continuation of criminal and terrorist activities. The exchange is mutually beneficial as both parties learn from each other's expertise. Basra and Neumann (2016) identified skill-transfer as a defining feature of the *new* crime-terror nexus, noting that criminals often bring key competencies, including access to weapons, evasion techniques, petty crime financing, and a desensitisation to violence. Similarly, Kupatadze and Argomaniz (2019) emphasise the concepts of functional confluence (skills exchange and social learning) and financial confluence (criminal funding of terrorism) within prison environments, which act as convergence spaces for offenders (Felson, 2006). They argue that terrorists either purchase these skills or recruit experienced criminals, optimising operations through collaborative efficiency, as rational choice criminology suggests (Walsh, 1986; McCarthy et al. 1998). This interaction within the PCTN is challenging to identify, as the clandestine nature of skill transfers often goes unnoticed unless the skills are later used in criminal or terrorist acts. The issue of 'unknown unknowns' brings to light the difficulty in understanding the true extent of such exchanges without concrete evidence or incidents (Neumann and De Frias, 2017).

#### 9.3.2.3 Manipulated Converts

Vulnerable inmates targeted by extremist recruiters can be manipulated into adopting radical ideologies, not often out of genuine belief, but as a result of exploitation by charismatic or influential radicalisers. It is important to note that radicalisation and religious conversion in prison are not inherently problematic—and can even be constructive in providing inmates with structure and purpose (a positive crime-terror nexus). The critical concern arises in cases where this process leads to actionable outcomes (Hamm, 2013). Specifically, it becomes dangerous when radicalised individuals progress from ideological alignment to planning or engaging in terrorist activities. A pertinent example is the terrorist attack on Prison Officer Neil Trundle at HMP Whitemoor on 9th January 2020. Brusthom Ziamani, a convicted terrorist, befriended and radicalised fellow inmate Baz Hockton while imprisoned in the high-security prison. This manipulation culminated in a coordinated knife attack on Officer Trundle, during

which the pair reportedly wore fake suicide vests and shouted Islamist slogans, mimicking tactics used in other terrorist incidents. This incident demonstrates the influence of a manipulative radicaliser on a vulnerable inmate and the tangible dangers of such dynamics within prison environments (Acheson, 2024). This PCTN echoes historical concerns during the NI Troubles, where the prison service created terrorist-only prisons to prevent the type of crime-terror interaction now associated with the PCTN. The separation of politically motivated prisoners from the general population sought to disrupt the influence of terrorist offenders on organised criminals, demonstrating an early awareness of the nexus's risks. However, such measures were not without challenges, as evidenced by high-profile escapes and reports of staff conditioning.

### **9.3.3 Venn Diagram Overlap: Prislam as a Convenience-Driven Phenomenon**

#### **9.3.3.1 Convenience-Driven Chameleons**

At the intersection of necessity and opportunity sits Prislam (Figure 13), where inmates superficially adopt Islam to gain social and physical benefits, blending the need for safety with opportunities for enhanced status and access to resources. In these conversions, religious intentions or a belief in the radical ideology appear to be notably absent (Jones, 2014; Yaacoub, 2018). Hence, Prislam is convenient in specific prisons, and many criminals who adopt it may revert when released or transferred to a different establishment (Brandon, 2009a: 4). These individuals are chameleonic in nature, adapting their beliefs and affiliations as needed to navigate their environment and maximise personal gain. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of 'flexians' (Wedel, 2009), who are individuals who fluidly adopt different identities as circumstances demand. In the context of the illegitimate world mirroring the licit, the findings reveal that prisoners often embody the ultimate flexians.

This research provides a significant original contribution to knowledge by proposing the Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum as a conceptual model tailored to the prison environment. Unlike existing taxonomies that often present static or linear categories, this model emphasises the dynamic and context-dependent nature of the PCTN. It highlights the capacity of prisoners to oscillate between criminal and terrorist roles, exploiting the prison environment's unique opportunities while maintaining the ability to revert to previous activities (i.e. chameleons). Moreover, the research delineates nuanced motivations behind these interactions, informed by empirical data and insider perspectives, offering practical insights into how these relationships evolve. This approach addresses gaps in prior frameworks and builds on taxonomies, such as Kupatadze and Argomaniz (2019) three-dimensional approach, by integrating environmental and individual factors unique to the prison context.

By categorising interactions along a Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum and incorporating the hybrid roles exemplified by Prislam adherents, this framework provides policymakers, prison authorities, and researchers with a robust model to understand, analyse, and disrupt the PCTN. Policymakers should engage with researchers and experts in the field to ensure that policies and interventions are evidence-based. Regular evaluation and adaptation of policies are essential to effectively counter the PCTN. However, it is important to note that this research has solely focused on male prisons. The applicability of this spectrum and these interactions may differ in female prisons, where dynamics and relationships often operate differently. Future research should investigate how the framework and drivers manifest in female prison establishments to ensure its broader applicability. Comparative studies across countries and prison systems can reveal variations in the manifestation of the nexus, offering insights into how cultural, legal, and institutional factors influence this phenomenon. By addressing these considerations for policy impact and future research, stakeholders can work towards a more comprehensive understanding of the PCTN and develop strategies to mitigate its risks and consequences effectively.

#### **9.4 Modified Black Hole Theory**

In the context of this thesis, it was relevant to examine Makarenko's black hole theory within the Crime-Terror Continuum (2004). She suggests that a black hole represents a scenario in which some states foster the merging of OC and terrorism, thereby establishing a secure environment for the sustained operations of these groups. Although Makarenko's (2004) Crime-Terror Continuum's visual and conceptual representation has evolved since its introduction in the early 2000s, the notion of the black hole has concerned law enforcement and presents a significant threat to international security globally (Makarenko, 2004; Menkhaus, 2007; Piazza, 2008; Phillips and Kamen, 2014). In nearly every conceptualisation of a black hole, the state is described as weak, fragile, or failed, creating a permissive environment where the crime-terror nexus can thrive, particularly in regions characterised as 'ungoverned' or 'poorly governed' (Menkhaus, 2006; Piazza, 2008; Viano, 2020; Omelicheva and Markowitz, 2021a; Petrich, 2022). This conceptualisation of the crime-terror nexus occurring within black hole states has thus far, not yet been applied to the prison environment.

This study proposes the Modified 'Black Hole' Theory to examine the intersection between OC and terrorism within prison environments. This thesis extends Makarenko's black hole theory (2004) by examining structural factors that promote the PCTN, representing an original contribution to knowledge. Some prisons, often referred to as 'failing prisons' or 'dangerous spaces', can resemble 'failed states' (Williams, 2010; Liebling, 2015; Williams and Liebling, 2022). These prisons demonstrate the contributory causes of corruption, vulnerable prisoners, weak governance and weak security and the indicators of violence and the drugs economy.

Therefore, considering previous literature and the data collected and analysed, I have generated six characteristics of a black hole prison (Figure 23).

Characteristics of a 'Black Hole' Prison
1) Corruption
2) Vulnerable Prisoners
3) Weak Governance
4) Weak Security
5) Violence
6) Entrenched Drugs Economy

Figure 23: Characteristics of a 'Black Hole' Prison (Author's Own)

### 9.4.1 Corruption

The first contributory cause is central to any crime-terror nexus (Rotberg, 2003; Shelley et al. 2005; Shelley, 2014). Scholars have long highlighted the corrosive effects of corruption, which not only compromises institutional authority but also facilitates networks that connect criminal and terrorist actors (Goldsmith et al. 2016; Barrington et al. 2021). Prisons are ideal environments for corruption to thrive, but these practices are destructive and dangerous and severely impact and undermine the criminal justice system. Corruption within the prison context can be characterised as:

- i. *Conditioning* refers to the process by which inmates attempt to influence prison staff through various means, including persuasion or the offering of incentives. Inmates engaging in conditioning, may use tactics to gain favourable treatment, privileges, or leniency from prison staff. For example, an inmate may attempt to condition a prison officer by pretending to be compliant or cooperative, while secretly engaging in criminal or extremist activities.
- ii. *Manipulation* involves inmates employing cunning or deceitful strategies to achieve their objectives. This can include efforts to deceive prison staff, other inmates, or external individuals to further their criminal or extremist agendas.
- iii. *Non-feasance* refers to the failure or neglect of prison staff to fulfil their duties and responsibilities effectively. It encompasses situations where staff members intentionally or unintentionally neglect their duty to maintain security, enforce regulations, or prevent criminal activities within the prison. This may include situations in which the workload of staff hinders their ability to stay abreast of all tasks. When prison staff engage in non-feasance, they may turn a blind eye to illicit activities and fail to report security breaches or to implement necessary measures to combat crime.

Corruption within the prison context involves a range of behaviours. These behaviours can undermine the effectiveness of prison staff, compromise security, and create an environment conducive to the PCTN.

#### **9.4.2 Vulnerable prisoners**

The second contributory cause of the PCTN is the high number of vulnerable prisoners, who are often physically weak, under-educated, psychologically distressed, and socioeconomically disadvantaged. These individuals are particularly susceptible to exploitation and recruitment by both criminal and terrorist actors, who may offer them protection, status, or resources in exchange for their complicity (Neumann, 2010; Gooch, 2022). The data revealed that such prisoners often form a 'captive audience' (Sykes, 1958) for recruitment, with their vulnerabilities amplified by unstable and violent prison environments (Finkelhor and Asdigian, 1996; Liebling et al. 2011; Crewe et al. 2014; Basra and Neumann, 2016: 30). As a result, vulnerable prisoners unwittingly reinforce the dynamics of the crime-terror nexus, contributing to its persistence and proliferation. This finding resonates strongly with Basra, Neumann and Brunner's (2016) analysis of European prisons as breeding grounds for extremism and criminal collaboration. Their work highlights prisons as sites of vulnerability, where inmates experience profound psychological and social disconnection, making them particularly receptive to extremist ideologies.

The vulnerability of certain prisoners is also linked to weak governance and security, where a laissez-faire approach to managing the wings—characteristic of 'light-absent' prisons (Crewe et al. 2014)—creates increased opportunities for violence and exploitation. Crewe et al. (2014) found that rather than empowering prisoners to thrive, the relative autonomy granted in such environments often fosters insecurity. Prisoners are often left to resolve disputes and navigate relationships in an environment where staff authority is under-asserted, and problems arise not from excessive control but from the absence of control (Crewe et al. 2014: 400). At its most extreme, this can lead to an atmosphere of chronic instability, where prisoners exist in a state of heightened anxiety and vulnerability (Basra and Neumann, 2016; Acheson, 2024)

#### **9.4.3 Weak governance**

Weak governance in prisons, often likened to the characteristics of failed states, is marked by systemic institutional deficiencies, such as insufficient staffing, inadequate training, and ineffective oversight. These structural failings undermine authority and create environments where informal power structures can thrive. Scholars such as Liebling (2015) and Hamm (2009; 2013) have drawn parallels between failing prisons and failed states, identifying common traits such as ineffective management. Liebling (2015) describes failed-state prisons as being paralysed by distrust, which erodes dynamic security and fosters anger, alienation,



and heightened political charge. Similarly, Hamm (2009) contends that disordered and overcrowded prisons provide fertile ground for radicalisation and the emergence of underground networks. This study builds on these insights, arguing that weak governance fosters environments where inmates can engage in the PCTN. Thus, the parallels with fragile states, where governance imbalances breed instability and exploitation, are evident in the way weak governance in prisons enables the PCTN and undermines the prison's ability to enforce rules, maintain control, and uphold legitimacy (Crewe et al. 2014).

This weak governance often leads to what Skarbek (2014; 2016; 2020) terms 'extra-legal governance', where inmate groups, such as gangs or religious factions, fill the void left by institutional failures. These groups offer protection and order within an otherwise chaotic environment (Williams, 2016). Such informal systems can undermine the legitimacy of prison governance, fostering conditions where both criminal and terrorist networks can thrive. For example, in the study by Liebling et al. (2011) staff had yielded too much power to prisoners in HMP Long Lartin, under-enforcing legitimate rules, and allowing the development of 'no-go areas' on the prison landings (McDermott and King, 1988). However, O'Donnell (2023) highlights a contrasting dynamic, demonstrating that even in prisons with stronger institutional governance, highly integrated environments (e.g. H Block) can still foster centralised extra-legal arrangements among prisoners. This suggests that informal governance structures are not solely the result of institutional weakness but may also arise in contexts of strong prisoner cohesion. Nevertheless, the erosion of institutional authority and the rise of informal governance structures demonstrates how prisons can become sites of 'extra-legal governance', where power dynamics shift away from the official structure, enabling criminal networks to flourish. This aligns with broader studies showing that weak or failed governance facilitates the convergence of OC and terrorism by creating permissive environments for these actors to operate (Makarenko, 2004; Shelley, 2005; Viano, 2020).

#### **9.4.4 Weak security**

Weak security is distinct from governance failures and corruption, as it pertains specifically to the absence of proactive measures to monitor, prevent, and disrupt criminal or terrorist activities. This thesis claims that some prison security operates reactively rather than preventatively, addressing issues only after they escalate (Podmore, 2012; Treadwell et al. 2019). Weak security measures allow inmates to engage in criminal enterprises with minimal fear of detection or repercussions, creating an operational safe haven for crime-terror interactions (Shelley, 2014).

The contextual nature of the PCTN becomes evident when considering the significance of security and law and order within a particular prison environment. Strong security measures,

as highlighted by the leading status of CONTEST, combined with recent investments in HMPPS, have contributed to bolstering security and maintaining law and order within the prison estate. These measures enable relevant agencies to employ the PREVENT strand as a government intervention for inmates who have not yet formed a PCTN (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2022). Thus, this study argues that not all prisons fall into the black hole category, as security and governance can differ so drastically across the prison estate. For example, using Crewe et al.'s (2014) four quadrants model, prisons can range from heavy-present, where there is a strong security presence alongside engaged staff, to light-absence, where staff retreat, and governance is weak. In rare cases, prisons may fall into the heavy-absent quadrant, marked by restrictive security measures combined with a lack of active staff presence, or the light-present quadrant, where staff focus on maintaining a managed peace without overbearing control.

Furthermore, the identification and mitigation of risk are essential within this weak security characteristic. While the nexus may exist, relevant agencies have adopted a 4P approach, following the guidelines of CONTEST to identify and respond to potential threats. To mitigate these risks effectively, various strategies and tactics are employed, including the transfer of pertinent inmates to alternative establishments. Separation centres have also proved to be effective means of inhibiting any potential nexus. These facilities disconnect inmates posing a terrorist risk from the general prison population, preventing them from exerting a malign influence on other prisoners (Hall, 2022). Hence, if law and order is weak or non-existent within a prison establishment, the PCTN can thrive. Similarly, strong security measures and effective risk mitigation strategies can significantly inhibit the crime-terror nexus. This variation demonstrates that proactive and well-coordinated efforts between prison authorities and external agencies are crucial to inhibiting the PCTN.

#### **9.4.5 Violence**

The fifth factor of a black hole prison is violence. Prisons that are characterised as violent environments indicate the existence of the PCTN. Violence within the prison context can include extortion and bullying, and a fear of verbal, physical and sexual assault. Sykes (1958) argued that violence and the ever-present threat of physical harm are central to the inmate experience. Sykes contended that this environment creates a 'prison community' where survival often requires aligning with dominant groups or gangs, perpetuating cycles of exploitation and aggression (Bondeson, 2011). When violence becomes commonplace within a prison, it diminishes staffs' capacity to effectively manage and control the use of force within its establishment. This lack of control erodes the legitimacy of prison authorities and undermines the trust of both inmates and staff in the institution's ability to maintain security and ensure safety (Liebling, 2004). Violence within prisons serves as a key indicator of the

PCTN, as the need for protection in an unstable environment can drive prisoners to form alliances with criminal or terrorist groups/individuals, gradually fostering shared beliefs and reinforcing the nexus.

#### **9.4.6 Prisons drugs economy**

The sixth characteristic drawn from the data and previous prison-focused research, centres on the thriving illicit drugs economy, which is a key indicator of the PCTN. In addition to it relieving the experiences of material deprivation (Sykes, 1958; Swann and James, 1998; Crewe, 2005b), the prison illicit drugs economy can be an opportunity for entrepreneurial minded individuals to make money within prison and the community, as well as occupy positions of authority and leadership (O'Donnell: 2001). As Gooch and Treadwell (2020: 2) argue, prison was once a place for a 'lie down' but is now an environment to 'graft' and 'do big business'. Likewise, Crewe (2005b) highlights that prisoners have increasingly shifted toward self-serving, individualistic behaviours, eroding inmate solidarity as they become absorbed in the lucrative trade of illicit substances. Prisons can be a lucrative marketplace for 'grafters,' as drugs in prison are worth three to four times their street value and the demand and supply has long been a central feature of prison life (Crewe 2005b; Penfold et al. 2005; Gooch and Treadwell, 2015; 2020; Gooch, 2022). This is particularly prevalent with the increased availability of mobile telephones and online financial transactions within prison (Gooch and Treadwell, 2019: 56). This thriving economy amplifies instability, creates power hierarchies, and undermines institutional control, signalling the broader dysfunction within the prison system.

Despite drugs often only featuring 'parenthetically' in literature on violence and order (Crewe, 2005b: 459), it became very apparent during data analysis that the flourishing prison drugs economy contributes to the elevated levels of violence, intimidation and vulnerable inmates inside prison (Munson et al. 1973). Drugs have transformed prisons into one of exploitation, manipulation and self-interest (Crewe, 2005b: 459), as the men controlling the illicit economy gain power, status and reputation and display their masculinity whilst the vulnerable quickly accrue copious amounts of debt (Gooch and Treadwell, 2019). Thus, this research contends that the illicit drugs economy undermines prison security and exacerbates violence and instability (Connor and Tewksbury, 2016; O'Hagan and Hardwick, 2017; The Centre for Social Justice, 2019: 38). Many prisons have a sophisticated high gain, low risk drugs economy due to a captive audience and market which escalates violence and magnifies the instability of the environment.

By identifying and analysing the structural contributory causes and indicators of black hole prisons, this thesis extends Makarenko's theory into a novel domain, providing a new

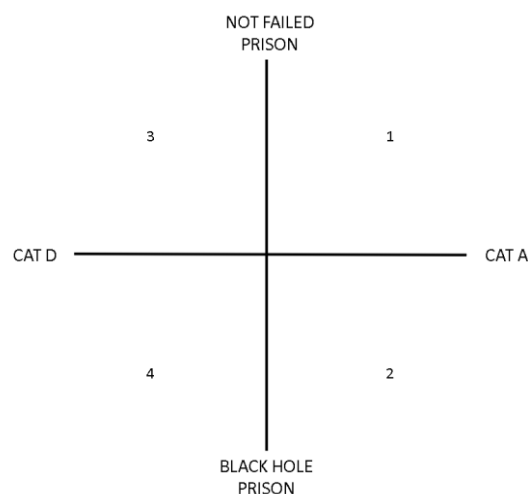
theoretical framework for understanding the convergence of crime and terrorism in institutional settings. Researchers and policymakers can use these factors to evaluate and compare prison establishments, identify areas in need of improvement, and develop targeted interventions to enhance prison security and discourage the PCTN. Moreover, these factors offer valuable tools for future studies, as one could hypothesise that these characteristics may occur in any prison setting, opening numerous avenues for research and application.

## 9.5 The Intersection of Security Categorisation and Black Hole Prisons

This section synthesises two pivotal concepts from this thesis: the prison security categorisation (discussed in Chapter 5) and the characteristics of black hole prisons (examined in Chapter 7 and Section 9.4). The integration of these areas introduces a novel two-axis matrix (see Figure 24), which offers a visual framework to identify environments most conducive to fostering the PCTN.

The matrix uses two axes:

- i. **Y-Axis: Level of 'Black Hole' Prison Characteristics**  
This axis measures the extent to which a prison exhibits features of a black hole prison, such as weak governance, high levels of corruption, violence, weak security, and the prevalence of the drugs economy.
- ii. **X-Axis: Security Categorisation of Prison**  
This axis reflects the prison's formal security level, ranging from high-security Category A to low-security Category D prisons.



*Figure 24: The Intersection of Security Categorisation and Black Hole Prisons Matrix (Author's Own)*

### 9.5.1 Quadrants and Their Implications for the PCTN

The interaction of black hole prison characteristics and prison security categorisation creates four distinct quadrants, each representing a unique environment with varying implications for the emergence of the PCTN (see Table 6).

#### Quadrant 1: Category A, Not Failed

This quadrant represents high-security prisons with robust governance, stringent security, and minimal evidence of black hole characteristics. These institutions are characterised by strong mechanisms that prevent the formation of any PCTN. Although Category A prisons house a high amount of TACT offenders—many serving long sentences—they can effectively mitigate opportunities for significant interaction between criminals and terrorists. As a result, the likelihood of a PCTN emerging in these prisons is limited.

QUADRANT	PRISON CATEGORISATION	LEVEL OF 'BLACK HOLE' PRISON CHARACTERISTICS	PCTN LIKELIHOOD	KEY CHARACTERISTICS
Quadrant 1	Category A	Not Failed	Limited	High-security prisons with strong governance, stringent controls, and minimal 'black hole' characteristics. Robust oversight disrupts inmate-led networks.
Quadrant 2	Category A	Failed ('Black Hole')	High	High-security prisons with weak governance, staff corruption, violence, and drugs. The high concentration of TACT offenders enables collaboration and networks.
Quadrant 3	Lower Category (C/D)	Not Failed	Very Limited	Low-security prisons with effective governance, low violence, and limited failed-state traits. Few TACT offenders reduce opportunities for PCTN emergence.
Quadrant 4	Lower Category (C/D)	Failed ('Black Hole')	Moderate (Context Dependent)	Low-security prisons with weak governance, high drugs economy, and informal networks. Fewer TACT offenders reduce the likelihood but still allow informal nexus.

*Table 6: Four Quadrants (Author's Own)*

#### Quadrant 2: Category A, Black Hole Prison

In contrast, this quadrant includes high-security prisons that exhibit black hole characteristics. These prisons create fertile ground for the PCTN. The combination of a high concentration of TACT offenders and serious criminals with black hole characteristics, fosters interactions that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources, and influence among inmates. This environment allows prisoner networks to flourish, significantly increasing the likelihood of a PCTN taking root.

#### Quadrant 3: Lower Category (C/D), Not Failed

Low-security prisons with effective governance, low levels of violence, and minimal black hole characteristics fall within this quadrant. These institutions typically house inmates serving

shorter sentences for less severe offences, with few TACT offenders present. The combination of effective governance and strong security significantly reduces the conditions necessary for the PCTN to develop. Opportunities for crime-terror interactions between criminals and terrorists are minimal, making the likelihood of a PCTN emerging in these prisons very limited.

#### **Quadrant 4: Lower Category (C/D), Black Hole Prison**

This quadrant encompasses low-security prisons that exhibit black hole characteristics. While these prisons house fewer TACT offenders compared to their high-security counterparts, the presence of black hole traits creates opportunities for criminals and terrorists to associate. The emergence of the PCTN in these environments is context-dependent but less likely than in high-security black hole prisons due to the lower concentration of terrorism-related offenders.

#### **Category B and C Prisons: The Middle Ground**

Category B and C prisons occupy a position between high- and low-security environments. Their governance and characteristics can vary significantly, making them adaptable to different contexts. Depending on how many black hole characteristics they present, and the inmate population, Category B and C prisons can exhibit traits that align with either high-security or low-security institutions, shifting their position closer to Quadrant 1 or Quadrant 3, or in more extreme cases, towards Quadrant 2 or Quadrant 4.

Conclusively, prisons that lack black hole characteristics, even when housing higher category offenders, are better equipped to prevent the emergence of networks that facilitate collaboration between criminals and terrorists. Effective governance, robust security, low violence, and minimal corruption, mitigates the environmental factors that enable the PCTN, irrespective of the prison's security categorisation. This thesis identifies Category A prisons with black hole characteristics as the highest-risk environments for the PCTN. These institutions combine a high density of TACT offenders with systemic governance breakdowns, fostering conditions for the emergence of collaborative networks. In contrast, low-category prisons with effective governance provide the least conducive environment for the PCTN, as their inmate populations and structural conditions do not support the necessary interactions for such a nexus to form.

Finally, prisons in the lower categories that exhibit black hole characteristics represent a more complex and context-dependent risk. While the concentration of high-risk offenders is lower, the systemic failures within these prisons create opportunities for the PCTN. The PCTN in these environments is less pronounced but remains a possibility, particularly if certain conditions align. By integrating these axes, the matrix offers a comprehensive framework for

identifying and mitigating environments that are most conducive to the PCTN. This original contribution highlights the intersection between black hole prisons and security categorisation, providing valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners working in the field of CT and prison security.

## **9.6 The Intelligence Capability Gap**

One of the central challenges highlighted in this research is the *intelligence capability gap*, a concept developed through the findings in Chapter 8. This framework encapsulates the systemic, operational, and conceptual shortcomings that hinder the effective detection and understanding of the PCTN. As discussed in Chapter 5, the lack of a clear, universally accepted definition of the crime-terror nexus leads to subjective interpretations among prison and law enforcement personnel, complicating the classification of intelligence. For example, interviewees varied in their perceptions of the nexus, with some viewing it as requiring overt collaborations, while others emphasised subtler connections (Schmid, 2018). This definitional uncertainty results in inconsistent intelligence practices and significant blind spots. The importance of definitional clarity has been similarly emphasised in the U.S. context, particularly through Hamm's (2013) research on radicalisation in federal prisons. Hamm's findings highlight the dangers of definitional ambiguities, which often result in missed opportunities to identify and address radicalisation and criminal-terrorist collaborations within prisons. This parallel reinforces the need for the clear and consistent definition of the PCTN proposed in this research.

Several systemic barriers contribute to the intelligence capability gap. Disparities in intelligence reporting across the prison estate hinder the ability to construct a comprehensive understanding of the PCTN. Intelligence gathering is often dependent on officers who may lack the training or institutional support to fulfil this critical role effectively (UNODC, 2015). Furthermore, a misalignment of objectives between HMPPS and law enforcement complicates these challenges. While HMPPS focuses on safety, order, and rehabilitation, law enforcement prioritises crime prevention and public safety. These competing priorities create friction, limiting collaboration and the integration of intelligence efforts (Podmore, 2012; Clarke, 2021). Similar challenges have been observed across Europe, where diverse prison systems and priorities complicate intelligence-sharing efforts. For instance, while Scandinavian countries emphasise rehabilitation (Smith, 2012; Denny, 2016), high-security prisons in countries like France prioritise CT measures (Hamilton, 2019; Chirani, 2024). These contrasting approaches demonstrate the potential value of adopting standardised frameworks, such as the definition of the PCTN proposed in this study, to foster collaboration and consistency.

Moreover, interpersonal dynamics were identified as pivotal to intelligence-sharing efforts. Strong relationships and proactive individuals facilitate effective intelligence flows, while disengaged or overwhelmed staff hinder the process. This reliance on personal relationships gives emphasis to the unevenness of intelligence capabilities across the prison estate and exposes vulnerabilities to staff turnover or strained interactions (Reiss and Kirtchuk, 2009). Additionally, a defensive, insular culture which prioritises GOAD over intelligence-led initiatives, limits the ability to address systemic weaknesses (Podmore, 2012). Argyris' theories on organisational learning provide valuable insights into addressing these cultural and operational divides. His emphasis on double-loop learning—which encourages institutions to challenge entrenched assumptions and address underlying issues rather than merely surface-level deficiencies—is particularly relevant here (Argyris, 1977; Argyris and Schön, 1978).

The concept of the 'intelligence capability gap' represents an original contribution to criminological scholarship by synthesising these challenges into a cohesive framework. By providing a definition of the PCTN (see Section 9.2.3), this research seeks to address one of the foundational barriers contributing to the intelligence capability gap. A clear and consistent definition offers a basis for aligning terminology, guiding intelligence practices, and fostering a shared understanding across agencies. This definitional clarity is a crucial step toward mitigating the subjective interpretations and fragmented approaches that currently impede efforts to identify and mitigate the PCTN.

By situating the intelligence capability gap within the broader context of the PCTN, this research provides a novel perspective on the nexus of crime and terrorism in prison settings. Addressing this gap requires a dynamic approach that integrates robust definitions, targeted training, and strengthened institutional collaboration. These efforts will not only bridge theoretical gaps but also offer practical insights for enhancing the security and functionality of the prison estate. It is my hope that the definition of the PCTN proposed in this research serves as a foundational tool to support more effective intelligence practices and reduce the intelligence capability gap.

## **9.7 Reflections on Limitations and Future Directions**

I now critically highlight the limitations and shortcomings of this study while also providing recommendations for subsequent research endeavours. Firstly, any research related to terrorism and OC encounters a significant challenge from the absence of universally agreed definitions in this field. The lack of consensus on critical terms like terrorism, OC and the crime-terror nexus necessitates this study to identify and analyse conceptual gaps in these phenomena without the benefit of a shared understanding. Consequently, there is a need for



future research to develop and present specific definitions for these pivotal terms. Secondly, any research into this field is limited by the nature of the subject matter. Gathering relevant and reliable data on this area is extremely difficult. A lot of evidence is anecdotal (Williams, 2002: 68). This is due to limited access to the kind of individuals (e.g., clandestine/prisoners) directly involved as they operate in secrecy. Hence, much of the previous literature analyses case studies and publicly available information.

I initially decided to interview prisoners and prison staff regarding the crime-terror nexus. This plan had to be abandoned as the NRC refused my application for research access. Therefore, I took the pragmatic approach to focus on professionals and front-line practitioners within the police and their partner agencies because I had access to these groups. Through my colleagues, I have access to individuals working inside prisons who helped me, to some degree, mitigate the NRC decision. These professional colleagues work in the prison environment and participate in overt and covert operations. They observe substantial levels of prison activity and were able to provide reliable and crucial information. Their contribution to this study cannot be underestimated. However, it did raise the issue of being dependent on snowballing and convenience sampling and an imbalanced representation of gender (predominately male professionals) amongst my interviewees. To address this, future research should make deliberate efforts to recruit participants from underrepresented gender groups, aiming to enhance the diversity of perspectives in the study. Given the male-dominated workforce, achieving gender balance may be challenging, but it remains essential to strive toward this goal.

Furthermore, I was able to use a gatekeeper to successfully collect prisoners' perspectives, even after receiving a set-back. Using gatekeepers, can be an effective strategy to access sensitive or restricted research environments. Establishing strong relationships with gatekeepers who have influence and connections within the target population can facilitate data collection. Likewise, researchers should be prepared to adapt their research plans based on feedback and constraints imposed by institutional review committees or relevant authorities. A pragmatic approach may involve shifting the focus of the study or exploring alternative data sources.

Another limitation stems from the use of non-probability sampling for the interview participants, a practical choice necessitated by time and funding constraints. This approach can be subject to criticism for not providing a representative cross-section of the population (Kemper et al. 2003; Palinkas et al. 2015). All participants in this study are affiliated to the same professional sphere, having connections to the government, law enforcement agencies, or the prison service. They collectively collaborate in the implementation of government policies and the

CONTEST strategy aimed at effectively countering SOC and terrorism. Given their shared knowledge base, similar cultural backgrounds, and commitment to upholding the rule of law and sovereignty, it is acknowledged that the sample may not offer a comprehensive representation of the broader population. This presents a potential issue as participants, being uniformly in favour of current arrangements, may not offer diverse viewpoints. The inclusion of individuals from various professional backgrounds could have introduced dissent, nuanced perspectives, and critical insights that might have been absent in the data. To address the limitation of non-probability sampling, future studies should aim for a more diverse participant pool. This could involve individuals from various professional backgrounds beyond law enforcement and HMPPS, such as academics, psychologists, or probation workers.

However, these interviewees offered valuable insights and first-hand experiences relevant to the research aim. While some data were of an anecdotal nature, numerous participants have direct experience in observing prisoners and managing intelligence related to any crime-terror interactions. Furthermore, by incorporating data from prisoner questionnaires, a form of triangulation was introduced to complement the interview data (Noble and Heale, 2019). Consequently, through these approaches, this research is distinct from prior studies in this field, offering fresh and unique perspectives and knowledge on the PCTN.

It is also acknowledged that there may be methodological weaknesses relating to the use of opportunity sampling as a data collection technique. On certain occasions, I enlisted suitable individuals when the opportunity presented itself. These interviewees were accessible to me due to my role within law enforcement. However, Silke (2001) emphasises that 97% of terrorism researchers commonly use opportunity sampling, choosing participants based on accessibility rather than systematically selecting potential participants, recognising the practicality and expected approach due to the contentious and perilous nature of terrorism research. Thus, I succeeded in accessing individuals possessing first-hand experience related to the subject matter. Acknowledging their potential biases, which may arise from their involvement in law enforcement, the thesis attempted to triangulate their viewpoints with academic and open-source material whenever feasible. This access, coupled with my conscientious efforts to mitigate bias, offers a reasonable level of assurance that this research is both novel and innovative, grounded in a credible evidence base to support its conclusions.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge a potential bias stemming from my professional background in law enforcement. Throughout the study, I have remained cognisant of this bias, taking steps to minimise the impact. I consistently aimed to approach this subject matter with the impartial and detached scrutiny demanded by academic inquiry. Notwithstanding these limitations, it is argued that being cognisant of these constraints and the measures

implemented to mitigate them, especially the engagement of informed research participants, upholds the substantial value of the discussion, and these limitations are insufficient to undermine the validity of the conclusions drawn. Additionally, my position as an insider gave me access to high-profile individuals as well as data that would not have been revealed to an outsider. The benefits of being an insider certainly outweighed any potential drawbacks. Importantly, future researchers with insider perspectives can contribute valuable insights to the academic community while addressing potential biases and limitations. It is important to maintain transparency and take active steps to mitigate potential biases throughout the research process.

## 9.8 Key Contributions and Recommendations

From my comprehensive analysis of the literature and data, several key findings and arguments have emerged, shaping the possibilities of understanding the PCTN and its complexities. First, this thesis makes a ground-breaking contribution to the literature by offering the first data-driven definition of the PCTN. It establishes the PCTN as a dynamic, context-dependent phenomenon shaped by individual traits, mutual incentives, and situational factors within prisons. By providing a focused and precise framework, this definition advances theoretical understanding and forms the foundation for future research and interventions.

The second contribution is the conceptualisation of the PCTN through the Necessity-Opportunity Spectrum. This framework categorises six distinct types of interactions within prisons, ranging from **necessity-driven** survival strategies, such as protection-seeking and support network formation, to **opportunity-based** collaborations, including skill acquisition. By highlighting the fluid and context-specific nature of these dynamics, this model provides a more nuanced understanding of how prisoners navigate the spectrum, bridging gaps in existing taxonomies and offering actionable insights for policymakers and prison authorities. Thirdly, some prisons can be viewed as a 'black hole' (Makarenko, 2004). This research has yielded six specific characteristics that clarify the concept of a black hole prison, acting as a fertile ground for the incubation of the PCTN. These indicators offer a valuable framework for assessing and addressing vulnerabilities within prison establishments, enhancing the authorities ability to identify any prison enabling the crime-terror nexus.

The fourth original contribution introduces an innovative two-axis matrix that synthesises the concepts of prison security categorisation and black hole characteristics, providing a comprehensive framework for identifying and mitigating environments conducive to the PCTN. By examining the intersection of these axes, the matrix offers a nuanced classification of prison environments into four quadrants. Each quadrant delineates varying risks associated with fostering the PCTN. This framework equips policymakers and practitioners with

information to strategically manage and mitigate risks associated with the PCTN, emphasising the critical role of robust governance and security in all prison establishments.

Finally, it became evident during this research that the identification of the PCTN is a complex challenge that confronts policymakers and practitioners alike. The final contribution introduces the ‘intelligence capability gap’, a novel concept to explain the systemic and operational shortcomings that hinder the detection of the PCTN. The intelligence capability gap highlights critical barriers, such as disparities in intelligence reporting, misaligned objectives between agencies, and reliance on interpersonal dynamics. It emphasises the need for cultural reform, targeted training, and strengthened collaboration across institutions. This contribution transcends theoretical insights, providing actionable strategies to enhance intelligence capabilities and bridge critical gaps, offering policymakers and practitioners realistic solutions to improve the security and functionality of the prison estate. The following series of recommendations are proposed, providing guidance for future strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating the risks associated with the PCTN.

### **9.8.1 Recommendations**

1. Definition: Further research is needed to refine and provide more precise definitions for the term, ‘crime-terror nexus’, which is currently broad and ambiguous.
2. Security measures: The findings of this research highlight the importance of developing prison security strategies that target the promoters of the PCTN. This could include greater use of separation centres and legal frameworks for prosecuting individuals involved in such activities within the prison estate.
3. Research-informed policy: Policymakers should engage with researchers and experts in this field to ensure that policies and interventions are evidence-based. Regular evaluation and adaptation of policies are essential to effectively counter the PCTN.
4. Staffing: An adequate and well-trained staff presence within prison establishments, as they serve as the primary observers of the PCTN is vital. This includes having a suitable (capability) and sufficient (capacity) number of staff who are confidentially in control and have the ability to report intelligence.
5. Training on the PCTN: Training programmes and educational material should be developed for relevant staff to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the PCTN. Any initiative should emphasise the varying characteristics of different types of nexuses (i.e. Convenience-Driven Chameleons, Protection-Seeking Converts), enabling better identification. This should empower staff to identify and respond to the different types of crime-terror nexuses effectively.
6. Training on recognising and responding to signs: Prison staff should receive initial and regular training on recognising and responding to signs of the PCTN.

7. De-radicalisation programmes: The research highlights the need for effective individualised de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes within prisons. Such programmes should not only focus on religious de-radicalisation but also address the underlying drivers, such as the need for protection and social networks.
8. Consistent intelligence capabilities: Efforts should be made to enhance consistent intelligence capabilities across all prisons, addressing the issue of the failure of coverage. This includes improving information collection, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and developing centralised structures for intelligence gathering among and between relevant agencies.
9. Institutional priorities: Policymakers should acknowledge the divergence in institutional priorities between prisons and law enforcement agencies. There should be a concerted effort to align these priorities, particularly in areas where they intersect, such as CT and crime prevention within the prison estate.
10. Collaboration and communication: Policymakers should promote closer collaboration and improved intelligence-sharing between the police and HMPPS. The definitions and frameworks developed in this study provide a structured approach to identifying and assessing the PCTN, helping to enhance clarity of terminology and communication between these agencies.
11. Cohesive structures: Addressing the lack of structures within and across the prison estate is crucial. Dependence on individual prisons, governors and personalities and relationships for addressing the PCTN leads to inconsistency. Developing cohesive structures would promote consistency and facilitate the sharing of intelligence and effective practices throughout the whole prison estate.
12. Comprehensive and adaptive approach: Policymakers and practitioners should adopt a comprehensive and adaptive approach to understanding and addressing the PCTN. Recognising the dynamic individualistic nature of this issue within the diverse prison landscape is crucial for effective prevention and intervention strategies.

## **9.9 Conclusion**

In the current era, Britain's struggling prison system (Podmore, 2012; Pryce, 2013) faces a diverse and oppositional inmate population with varying motivations, affiliations, and ideologies. Amidst challenges such as rising suicide rates and understaffing, incidents, exemplified by Daniel Kahlife's escape from HMP Wandsworth, expose the system's vulnerabilities. Additionally, in August 2023, an inmate at HMP Lindholme became the seventeenth individual to be convicted in the UK's largest prison drugs conspiracy case. This investigation began in 2019 after the discovery of multiple contraband items in the possession of a mental health prison nursing assistant (South Yorkshire Police, 2023). Furthermore, the

government has acknowledged the pressing concern of prison overcrowding. They have begun to consider transferring British national prisoners to facilities in Europe, and the early release for imprisoned foreign nationals in order to deport them to their home countries (Parker, 2023). Despite discussions on rehabilitation, incapacitation, and deterrence, prisons remain predominantly perceived as a flawed yet necessary tool for retribution in the eyes of the majority of the public (Sykes, 2003). Against this backdrop, this research represents a significant contribution to the field of criminology by highlighting the complex individualistic dynamics of the nexus between crime and terrorism within the prison environment.

Despite the evolution of prisons into corporate hubs for criminals and terrorists, they remain key institutions. Therefore, the primary aim of this research was to identify *what factors influence the prison crime-terror nexus*. Through an extensive and meticulous process involving interviews, prisoner questionnaires, and letters, this study has addressed the research aim and provided a comprehensive perspective that informs future policies, interventions, and research endeavours.

By analysing the data and drawing connections between various aspects of the PCTN, five key findings have emerged from this study. Each finding not only contributes to the current body of knowledge but also holds the potential to guide practical efforts aimed at addressing this complex issue. This research has defined the PCTN and developed a new model which identifies the different interactions between criminal and terrorist prisoners. These findings highlight the importance of addressing individualistic and contextual factors within prisons, empowering policymakers to formulate strategies that effectively mitigate risks associated with the PCTN. The recent case of Axel Rudakubana<sup>63</sup> exemplifies the shift from group-based to individualism in terrorism and OC. Rudakubana's long-standing obsession with violence, devoid of any specific political or religious ideology, demonstrates how acts of extreme violence are increasingly carried out by individuals rather than OCGs (Gallagher, 2024). Prime Minister Keir Starmer recently remarked on this trend, noting that terrorism has changed, with 'loners, misfits, [and] young men in their bedrooms' (Starmer, 2025) now posing significant threats, often driven by a fixation on violence for its own sake. The research's recognition of the nuanced and multifaceted nature of the PCTN further emphasises the importance of tailored interventions, fostering more effective and targeted approaches.

Finally, to enhance the practical impact of this research, I have developed recommendations covering areas such as definitions, security, staff training, intelligence, and institutional priorities. These recommendations provide a roadmap for policymakers and practitioners to navigate this complex landscape while fostering safer and more secure prison environments.

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<sup>63</sup> Axel Rudakubana is the Southport attacker who killed three children in 2024.

The findings from this research will be a valuable resource for those addressing the newly defined PCTN and its implications for the criminal justice system.

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## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT MATERIAL

### Policing the Crime-Terror Partnership Inside Prison: Strategies, Perceptions and Recommendations

Hannah Bennett, School of Law, Policing and Forensics, Staffordshire University

Can YOU help?



Do YOU want to be part of helping to develop a better understanding of how to tackle criminals and terrorists from working in partnership?

If so, I am seeking participants to share their experiences, knowledge and insights through an online interview.

I need you to be part of my PhD study!

Please get in touch.



Scan QR code for more information.



If you would like to take part in the study or have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[hannah.bennett@research.staffs.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.bennett@research.staffs.ac.uk)

Scan the QR code to email me.



# APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

## Participant Information Sheet



### Title of Project:

Policing the Crime-Terror Threat Inside Prison

### Name of Researcher and School/Faculty:

Hannah Bennett. School of Law, Policing and Forensics.

I am currently studying for a PhD in Criminology focusing on policing the crime-terror nexus inside prisons in England and Wales. You are invited to participate in the study and this information sheet explains what the research is about and how I would like you to take part.

The study is funded by Staffordshire University. It is independent and impartial and is not conducted on behalf of the Prison Service or any other government agency.

### What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to:

- i. Understand what the crime-terror nexus looks like inside prison in England and Wales.
- ii. Explore the police and their partner agencies' perceptions of strategies in place to tackle the crime-terror nexus inside prison.
- iii. Offer recommendations on how to better tackle terrorists and criminals forming partnerships inside prison.

It is evident from previous research (Basra and Neumann, 2016), that prisons offer an environment for networking amongst criminals and terrorists. It is argued that some prisoners are forming alliances, learning new tactics, and gaining associations that can provide expertise in illegal goods and services. However, what does the crime-terror nexus look like inside prison?

Additionally, less is known about how we can minimise this networking. Hence, this study will propose recommendations on how the police can tackle unhealthy prisoner relationships, whilst critically engaging the CONTEST strategy 4 'P' work strands: Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue.

- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists, supporting terrorism or engaging in serious and organised crime.
- Prepare: to reduce the impact of a terrorist attack or serious and organised crime.
- Protect: to increase the protection against a terrorist attack or serious and organised crime.
- Pursue: prosecuting and disrupting terrorist attacks or serious and organised crime.

### Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw up until December 2021. If you do take part in the interview, you can decline to answer any questions.

You will not be offered any incentive to participate nor incur negative repercussions if you decide not to participate, stop the interview, or withdraw your data from the research. You will not be asked any questions about why you no longer want to take part. If you wish to withdraw your data



after the study, you should email the researcher requesting withdrawal of your data, providing your participant number which can be found on the top of your consent form.

**What will happen if I take part?**

In order to hear about your experiences, insights and views, I would like to interview you virtually at a convenient time. Given the current climate in the UK and Staffordshire University's guidance on research during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview will be conducted via telephone, Skype or video conferencing, whichever is most convenient for you. It is the preference of the researcher to undertake the interviews virtually; however, if you would like to participate but have limited time available, an email interview can be arranged.

If you agree to take part in a virtual interview, it will be audio recorded if you approve and could possibly last up to an hour. The information you provide in the interview will be used for research purposes only. Portions of your transcript may be quoted in publications; reports webpages and other research outputs and a false name will be used to preserve your anonymity.

**Are there any risks involved?**

The study has been considered and approved by an Institutional Ethics Committee at Staffordshire University. During the interview you can decline to answer any interview questions. I do not anticipate you experiencing discomfort or inconvenience or there being any risks to you participating in the study. Nonetheless, due to discussing a somewhat sensitive topic from a professional perspective, if you feel uncomfortable and wish to terminate the interview, please inform the researcher. If this happens, then I would like to direct you to contact a support helpline.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

You will not be identified from any publication or dissemination and the researcher will ensure that none of your personal details will be shared outside of the research. All prisons used in the research will be generalised and a false name will be given to all participants. It is preferable to the researcher that some participants are given a generic job title (e.g. Police Officer) in the final report, due to their expertise and profession. This will be discussed with you before the interview takes place and you can decide whether to include a generic job title or not.

Furthermore, you will be provided with the transcript from your interview and have 14 days from the date of postmark/email to review it. You can delete any sections you feel relevant or anonymise certain portions of your interview.

**Data Storage**

Data will be kept securely, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. The audio recording of the interview will be transcribed verbatim and notes, recordings and transcripts will be electronically stored on the University OneDrive. All notes will be electronically scanned and kept within the University OneDrive and then shredded immediately. No other person has access to the researcher's laptop.

The audio recording will be deleted once it has been transcribed. The transcripts will be kept throughout the research process, then destroyed when the PhD has been awarded. The researcher will make the relevant data and research evidence accessible to others for reuse where appropriate

and safely store the data for a maximum of 10 years after the completion of the research. All data, including consent forms, will be preserved for 10 years. The researcher is responsible for data storage and handling, as well as for its appropriate disposal, which must be in accordance with University data policy.

#### GDPR Statement

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

#### Contact Details of Researcher

Thank you for agreeing to consider taking part in the study. If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[hannah.bennett@research.staffs.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.bennett@research.staffs.ac.uk)

Alternatively, you can speak to my supervisors, Em Temple-Malt [emma.temple-malt@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:emma.temple-malt@staffs.ac.uk) and James Treadwell [james.treadwell@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:james.treadwell@staffs.ac.uk).

Note: A copy of the participant information sheet will be available for the participant alongside a copy of the signed consent form.



# APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM AND PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PRISONERS



## Consent form

Participant number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Title of the research: The Crime-Terror Partnership Inside Prison

(Please tick the boxes to indicate consent has been given)

I agree to take part in the above study via a questionnaire.

☐

I agree to further written communication with the researcher if I choose to correspond via letter.

☐

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

☐

I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study using my participant number up until December 2021 and will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.

☐

I understand that selections of my responses may feature in publications, reports webpages and other research outputs.

☐

I understand that my participation will be anonymous, and I will be given a false name in the final report.

☐

I understand that I cannot be identified from any publication of the results of the study.

☐

### GDPR Statement

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please write to the ICO's Wilmslow Office.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

.....

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

.....

## Participant Information Sheet



### **Title of Project:**

**The Crime-Terror Partnership Inside Prison**

### **Name of Researcher and School/Faculty:**

I am currently studying for a PhD in Criminology focusing on policing the crime-terror partnership inside prisons in England and Wales. You are invited to participate in the study and this information sheet explains what the research is about and how I would like you to take part.

The study is funded by Staffordshire University. It is independent and impartial and is not conducted on behalf of the Prison Service or any other government agency.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to understand whether the crime-terror partnership is happening inside prison. In other words, are prisons offering an environment for networking amongst individuals convicted of non-terrorist and terrorist related crimes inside prison.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw up until December 2021. You will not be offered any incentive to participate. If you decide not to participate or withdraw your data from the research, there will not be any consequences.

If you decide not to participate or to withdraw your data, you will not be asked any questions about why you no longer want to take part. If you wish to withdraw your data after the study, you should contact the Intervene Project requesting withdrawal of your data, providing your participant number which can be found on the top of your consent form.

### **What will happen if I take part?**

In order to hear about your experiences, insights and views, I would like you to complete a questionnaire. If you wish to communicate further after returning the questionnaire, I would like to communicate with you via letters. The information you provide in the questionnaire and letters will be used for research purposes only. Portions of your responses may be quoted in publications; reports webpages and other research outputs, but a false name will be used to ensure you remain fully anonymous.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

The study has been considered and approved by an Institutional Ethics Committee at Staffordshire University. You can decline to answer any questions on the questionnaire.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

You will not be identified from any publication and the researcher will not be given any of your personal details. You will only be identified by a number.

### **Data Storage**

Data will be kept securely, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. All questionnaires will be electronically scanned and kept within the University OneDrive and then shredded immediately. No other person has access to the researcher's laptop.

The questionnaires will be kept throughout the research process, then destroyed when the PhD has been awarded. The researcher will make the relevant anonymous data and research evidence accessible to the Intervene Project and others for reuse where appropriate and safely store the data for a maximum of 10 years after the completion of the research. All data, including consent forms, will be preserved for 10 years. The researcher is responsible for data storage and handling, as well as for its appropriate disposal, which must be in accordance with university data policy.

#### **GDPR Statement**

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please write to the ICO's Wilmslow Office.

#### **Contact Details**

Thank you for agreeing to consider taking part in the study. If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me via the Intervene Project.

Note: A copy of the participant information sheet will be available for the participant alongside a copy of the signed consent form.

## APPENDIX D: COVERING LETTER FOR PRISONERS



### Rule 39 Solicitors Correspondence

M

Date: 04/11/2023

Our Ref: INTERVENE

Dear M,

### Re: Research into the Crime-Terror Partnership

The *Intervene Project* provides legal advice and support to you and our other clients. We are now hoping to expand the charity's focus. *Intervene* will be initiating and supporting research into issues related to our advocacy work. We hope that some of this research will build a greater understanding of prisoners' experience and help ensure that prisoners' rights are fully observed.

As a part of this research, we are working with a researcher at Staffordshire University. The title of their research is: The Crime-Terror Partnership Inside Prison. We believe that this work is important. Further information about the study is listed on the Participant Information Sheet enclosed.

This project involves a questionnaire, as is also enclosed here. We ask that you complete the questionnaire and return it to *Intervene* using the pre-paid envelope provided. You do not have to complete the questionnaire and if you do choose to participate, you do not have to answer every question.

Whether you choose to complete the questionnaire or not, and whatever answers you provide, **your legal relationship with *Intervene* will not be impacted**. We will continue to represent you to the best of our ability. The answers will be anonymously passed to the researcher: they will not know your name or details.

We are grateful if you do choose to respond to the questionnaire and look forward to receiving the responses.

Yours Sincerely

**Intervene Project**

Seeking redress for injustice  
Intervene Project is a registered charity, registration number: 1153228  
Registered address: 27 London Road, Bromley, BR1 1DG  
Tel: 020 8181 3100 Fax: 020 8181 3101  
Website: [www.interveneproject.org](http://www.interveneproject.org)

## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEWEES

30 men and 4 women were interviewed for this study. Below, I provide a pseudonym, generic job title and demographics of the 34 interviewees.

NAME	JOB TITLE	SECTOR	EXPERIENCE	GENDER
Craig	Counter Terrorism Intelligence Officer	Police	22 years	Male
Isaac	Senior Advisor and Counter Terrorism Expert	Prisons	10 years	Male
Melissa	Police Officer	Police	25 years	Female
Terry	Senior Counterterrorism Intelligence Manager	Police	26 years	Male
Robert	Former Commander at New Scotland Yard	Police	30 years	Male
Alex	Police Officer	Police	25 years	Male
Ivan	Prison Intelligence Manager	Police	32 years	Male
Joseph	Intelligence Officer	Police	19.5 years	Male
Tony	Senior Counter Terrorism Officer	Police	35 years	Male
Jerry	Former Prison Governor	Prisons	25 years	Male
Christian	Police Officer - Prevent Supervisor	Police	6 years	Male
Gregory	Debriefing (expert in Salafi jihadism)	Police	33 years	Male
Daniel	Prison Intelligence Officer (Organised Crime)	Police	18 years	Male
Jim	Prison Intelligence Officer (Counterterrorism)	Police	42 years	Male
Charles	Former Senior Police Officer (expertise in Counterterrorism)	Police		Male
Marcus	Senior Police Officer	Police	26 years	Male
Scott	Prison Intelligence Officer (Organised Crime)	Police	18 years	Male
Matthew	Prison Intelligence Officer (Counterterrorism)	Police	21 years	Male

Patrick	Prison Intelligence Officer (Counterterrorism)	Police	23 years	Male
Dennis	Prison Intelligence Officer (Organised Crime)	Police	28 years	Male
Sean	Police Officer	Police	13 years	Male
Larry	Police Intelligence Officer	Police	29 years	Male
David	Ports Officer	Police	18 years	Male
James	Senior Government Advisor	Prisons	2 years	Male
Adam	Regional Prisons Coordinator (DSU)	Police	19 years	Male
Jeffrey	Senior Police Officer	Police	25 years	Male
Kenneth	Intelligence Officer	Police	41 years	Male
Jennifer	Intelligence Officer	Police	29 years	Male
Mark	Senior Police Officer	Police	18 years	Male
Paul	Former Police Officer (expertise in Counterterrorism and prisons)	Police and Prisons	30+ years	Male
Natasha	Prison Intelligence Officer	Police	13 years	Female
Kimberly	Prison Intelligence Officer	Police	13 years	Female
Anthony	Prison Intelligence Manager	Police		Male
Christopher	Prison Prevent Lead	Prisons	23 years	Male

## APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Interview Schedule



#### Initial greeting

Reiterate the purpose of the research to the participant, their involvement and how their data will be handled and stored. Ensure they have read the participant information sheet and signed the consent form.

e.g., Prevent Officer

Experience:

1. Can you each tell me a bit about your background and experience/knowledge working in prison?
2. What is your understanding of the crime-terror nexus? Have you heard of it before? Is it about crime or SOC?
3. I am trying to understand the extent of the CT nexus inside prison. Have you witnessed the networking of criminals and terrorists in prison? i.e., networking, new associations, radicalising of criminals etc.
4. If not, why not?
  - Is it not happening or unreported?
  - Is the radicalisation of criminals by terrorist prisoners not the crime-terror nexus?
  - Is identifying the CT nexus in prison hindered by the current capabilities to collect intelligence to identify what is going on there? If you have no CHIS in a prison wing and no intrusive or directed capability, you have no idea what one OC villain is saying to the terrorists.
5. If so, what are the implications?
6. What factors promote any nexus inside prison?
7. What factors inhibit any nexus?
8. In your opinion, are the prisons tackling any nexus?
9. What are your views? Do you have confidence in the current strategies aimed at tackling the networking of criminals and terrorists in prisons? Does prevent work?
10. What is your view on the joint working and intelligence sharing between the police and prison?
11. I know that the prisons have recently had a big investment boast to implement new departments which are similar to the police. How is this going? Jupiter and financial crime for example.

**Recommendations**

12. In your opinion, what should be done to tackle the crime-terror nexus inside prison?
13. Is the CONTEST strategy working within prison? i.e., prevent.

**Future considerations**

1. Clarification of any previous points
2. A more future-looking question. Are there any other issues or ideologies out there which you see as brewing terrorist threats?
3. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the networking in prison? i.e. Are prisoners able to communicate as easily or have new measures curbed their opportunities for networking? (e.g., prisoners being locked-up for longer periods of time due to COVID-19)
4. What do the authorities need to be thinking about in the future?

Ensure all topics have been covered in the interview. Ask the participant if there is anything they want to add.

[End of interview]

Debrief the participant, allow them to ask questions, maybe explain potential outcomes and how their contribution will help.

Thank them for their participation.



# APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW BRIEF



## Interview Schedule

### Initial greeting

Consent form / PIS

1. Background and experience
2. Crime-terror nexus happening in prison – networking, radicalisation, etc.
3. If not, why not / unreported / current capabilities to collect intelligence
4. Implications
5. Factors promoting and inhibiting
6. Tackling the crime-terror nexus
7. Confidence in the current prison approach. What is working? What is not? Prevent.
8. Intelligence sharing and joint working
9. New departments and teams within prison

### Recommendations

10. What should be done to tackle crime-terror nexus?
11. CONTEST Strategy (prevent)

### Future considerations

12. Clarification of any previous points
13. Brewing terrorist threats
14. Effects of COVID-19 pandemic
15. Thoughts for the future

[End of interview]

## APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM



### Consent form

**Participant number:**

**Title of the research: Policing the Crime-Terror Partnership Inside Prison: Strategies, Perceptions and Recommendations**

(Please tick the boxes to indicate consent has been given)

I agree to take part in the above study via a semi-structured interview.

☐

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

☐

I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study using my participant number up until December 2021 and will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.

☐

I understand that I can decline to answer any questions during the interview.

☐

I understand that taking part in this study will include being interviewed and audio recorded, and I am happy to proceed.

☐

I understand that excerpts of my interview may feature in publications, reports webpages and other research outputs.

☐

I understand that my participation will be anonymous, and I will be given a false name in the final report.

☐

I understand that I cannot be identified from any publication or dissemination of the results of the study.

☐

I understand that I will be provided with the transcript from my interview. I will then have 14 days from the date of postmark/email to review it and omit any sections.

☐

Do you wish to be debriefed after the study?

YES

NO

Do you wish to receive an electronic copy of the final research report?

YES

NO

### GDPR Statement

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability.

Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

### Contact Details of Supervisors

Em Temple-Malt [emma.temple-malt@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:emma.temple-malt@staffs.ac.uk)

James Treadwell [james.treadwell@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:james.treadwell@staffs.ac.uk)

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

.....

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

.....

## APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

This is the questionnaire for non-TACT prisoners. I slightly edited it for TACT prisoners.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### *Participant Number:*

The purpose of this study is to understand whether terrorist and non-terrorist individuals' network and socialise whilst they are in prison. The information you provide in the questionnaire will be used for research purposes only. The questionnaire is anonymous. Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary.

Thank you.

#### 1. Are you male or female?

☐ MALE

☐ FEMALE

#### 2. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, how much has your ability to socialise with other individuals inside prison reduced?

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

None

A Little

Somewhat

A Lot

Significantly

#### 3. Do you socialise/affiliate with individuals inside prison convicted of terrorist related offences?

☐ YES

☐ NO

##### 3.1. Why?

YES		NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	To learn new things	<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't want to socialise with them
<input type="checkbox"/>	To transfer skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	No reason
<input type="checkbox"/>	To teach them something	<input type="checkbox"/>	No similar interests
<input type="checkbox"/>	To benefit from a new relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Because of similar interests		
<input type="checkbox"/>	To obtain something		
<input type="checkbox"/>	To gain something else		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: (please specify)		

The researcher is interested in hearing from prisoners about their experience of socialising inside prison. Particularly, how individuals imprisoned for terrorist and non-terrorist-related offences network and form associations (friendships/affiliations). Please use the space below to express any views and experiences on socialising and forming associations whilst in prison (write, draw, poem, doodle, etc.)

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Please return it to the Intervene Project along with your Consent Form.

## **APPENDIX J: EXAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO A PRISONER**

Hi Participant, 25

Thank you for completing the questionnaire and returning it to the Intervene Project. The information you have provided is really interesting. I enjoyed reading about your shop and experiences in the three prisons.

I also appreciate you offering to communicate further by letter. I would like to ask you a few questions from your responses.

If terrorists were put on the same wing, would you socialise with them?

Can you tell me a bit about the new skills and tactics have you learnt from other inmates?

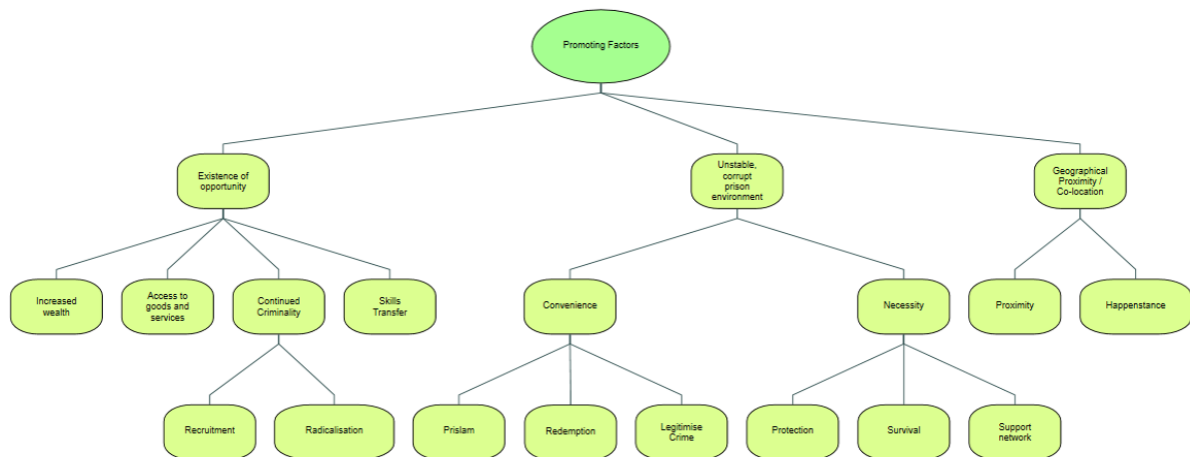
During your time in all three prisons, have you seen terrorist prisoners attempting to radicalise/convert other prisoners?

This is voluntary and please feel free to not answer any of my questions. Your participation is confidential, and you will remain anonymous.

Thank you again for taking part in my study. The information you provide is invaluable and I really appreciate your time.

Hannah

## APPENDIX K: EXAMPLE BUZAN DIAGRAM



## **APPENDIX L: INTERVIEWEES UNDERSTANDING OF THE CRIME- TERROR NEXUS**

“I have only a limited understanding of the crime-terror nexus. When I think about it, it is clear that there are links and crossovers between the two and between nominals who may exist in both spaces, terrorist and criminal. In many ways the idea of terrorists being some kind of noble warriors or freedom fighters seems old fashioned, but no doubt depends on which lens we’re looking through, and who is in control of the focus.”

Christian, Prevent Supervisor

“Clearly, there will be incidents where a criminal’s expertise in a particular paradigm, say where a firearm reactivator is persuaded by TACT offenders to facilitate procurement of weapons, or if a drug dealer indoctrinates someone with a Salafist Jihadist mind set into how to manufacture crack or procure fentanyl (which they later use in order to raise funds for jihad).

For me, the nexus is more about those who have extensive antecedents becoming terrorists and using pre-existing skills to facilitate their ideals. This would also encompass those who are radicalised in prison (like the offender who assisted Brusthom Ziamani at Whitemoor).”

Gregory, Debriefers

“The 2 groups do co-exist in order to pursue a common purpose. This is usually based around profiting from their respective times in custody.”

Daniel, Prison Intelligence Officer

“My understanding is that it is various links from social deprivation which can signpost to involvement in crime and or groups involved in terrorist activity. It can involve a sense of belonging by being involved with a group crime or terror related.”

Jim, Prison Intelligence Officer

“In my opinion the crime-terror nexus is the merging of criminals (often in gangs) and those who are politically or ideologically driven to commit terrorist attacks. This has been



exacerbated by the mixing in prisons. Specifically, those Islamic prisoners who have effectively created their own gangs within the prison system. The dangers are extreme as gangs have access to all the weapons that terrorists would be prepared to use on the public.”

Charles, Former Senior Police Officer

The crime-terror nexus refers to engagement between those involved with criminality and those involved in terrorism. It can take the form of joint activity to mutual benefit, transformation from carrying out action in support of one phenomena to the other (to varying degrees) or indeed conflict between actors involved in either pursuit.

Marcus, Senior Police Officer

“It’s the connection between Organised Crime and Terrorism, do terrorists need Organised crime groups and vice versa can they support each other in achieving their goals, the skills and network that an OCG has can be useful to a terrorist.”

Scott, Prison Intelligence Officer

My understanding of the crime-terror nexus is the cooperation of criminals, be that OCG or lower-level criminals and extremists.

Matthew, Prison Intelligence Officer

“I think it’s the connection between crime and CT, i.e., are they supporting each other through finances or equipment etc. To me it is a readymade network and knowledge of criminals to tap into.”

Patrick, Prison Intelligence Officer

“For me the Crime -Terror Nexus is where an OCG and a known terror group would have set up a joint venture/working group to achieve an aim i.e. on a large scale, smuggling guns/weapons into or out of a country. But for me the more realistic scenario would be, where the two groups work together in order to traffic drugs and phone into a prison establishment for joint power and reward.”

Dennis, Prison Intelligence Officer

“My understanding of the crime-terror nexus is simply the crossover between criminality and terrorism... Unstructured networks of contacts from criminality and terrorist groups, introducing one another, may be considered a crime-terror nexus... organised, or low-level informal and random, as long as one of the parties makes contact, or crosses from one element to the other to pursue an outcome to further criminality or terrorism-related activity, that is a crime-terror nexus.”

David, Ports Officer

“To me, in the prison context, the crime-terror nexus is both (a) the fact, or fear, of assets (such as firearms) being transferred from organised criminals to terrorists as a result of prison contact or (b) the fact, or fear, of organised criminals becoming affected by terrorist ideologies.”

James, Senior Government Advisor

“I don’t really understand the crime terror nexus, I guess it would mean how the TACT offenders have organised themselves in prison, in order to identify vulnerable people, how they set about radicalising and how they gain financial support outside of prison and how they influence activity on the wings.”

Adam, Regional Prisons Coordinator

“My understanding is that this [crime-terror nexus] refers to the points and opportunities within the criminal justice system when CT and Crime risks come into contact.”

Melissa, Police Officer

“Crime prisoners or OCG nominal socialising and networking with TACT prisoners. TACT prisoners maintaining friendships with prisoners who have been convicted of drug dealing, Fraud, Murder, Possession of firearms, Robbery/Burglary in possession of blades / offensive weapons. Crime prisoners converting to Islam whilst in prison.”

Jennifer, Intelligence Officer

“The networking of criminals and terrorists”

Kimberly, Prison Intelligence Officer

“Nexus between serious OC and terrorism... When everyone says around CT SOC crossover, you are thinking ALM terrorists trying to get firearms.”

Anthony, Prison Intelligence Manager

“My understanding of the crime terror nexus is those individuals engaged in crime who also engage in extremism / terrorism. There is a distinction to be made here between those engaged with extremist / terrorist activity who are also involved in low level criminality (cannabis possession, driving offences, etc.) and those who engage in serious and organised criminality (e.g. drug or human trafficking, arms sales etc.).”

Robert, Former Commander at New Scotland Yard

“The Crime Terror Nexus is the principle that terrorism and OC are intrinsically linked.”

Alex, Police Officer

“The crime nexus to me is simply the nature of the interrelationships between crime and terrorism. Specifically, it is about how criminals and terrorists support mutually support each in order to deliver on their own individual / organisational objectives i.e., criminals making money and terrorists progressing their ideology. Both can act as enablers to the commissioners of acts by the sharing of knowledge, resources, methodologies and networks.”

Ivan, Prison Intelligence Manager

“It means Terrorists gaining criminal skills and obtaining commodities such as firearms and explosives to conduct attacks, as well as committing mass fraud and money laundering for terrorist finance.”

Joseph, Intelligence Officer

“It’s about understanding (and thwarting) people of CT interest developing their own capability to cause harm via connections with the criminal fraternity. The most obvious and worrying example is gaining access to a firearm.”

Tony, Senior Counter Terrorism Officer