

# THE IMPORTANCE OF DYNAMIC SECURITY FOR MAINTAINING ORDER, LEGITIMACY AND THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN PRISON

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**Abstract:** The paper examines the importance of dynamic security for maintaining order, legitimacy and the prevention of violence in the prison environment. It is based on the contemporary understanding that prison security cannot be founded exclusively on static measures, such as walls, locks, cameras, physical separation and formal supervision, but depends to a considerable extent on the quality of everyday relationships between prison officers and convicted persons. Dynamic security involves the constant professional presence of officers in prison life, communication with prisoners, observation of the prison atmosphere, knowledge of individual behaviour and the ability to identify risks at an early stage. The main aim of the paper is to show that dynamic security has an important preventive function. Violence in prison does not arise solely as a consequence of the individual characteristics of convicted persons, but also as a result of the prison regime, institutional culture, the quality of management, living conditions and relationships between staff and prisoners. For this reason, the role of prison officers is particularly significant, as through everyday contact they are able to recognise changes in behaviour, tensions among prisoners and situations that may develop into conflict. Timely intervention, conflict de-escalation and the adjustment of responses to the specific situation represent key elements of dynamic security. The paper also considers the relationship between dynamic security and the legitimacy of prison authority. When convicted persons perceive prison officers as professional, consistent, fair and capable of maintaining order without unnecessary repression, the likelihood of voluntary compliance with rules increases. In this way, dynamic security contributes to a more stable prison climate, the reduction of tensions and the strengthening of trust in the institution. The paper concludes that dynamic security is not a replacement for static security, but its necessary complement. Its value lies in the fact that it connects control, communication and prevention, thereby contributing to the maintenance of order, the reduction of violence and the creation of a more humane and safer prison environment.

**Keywords:** *dynamic security, prison, maintaining order, prison officers, prevention of violence.*

**Field:** Social Sciences, and Humanities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Security in the prison system represents one of the fundamental prerequisites for achieving the purpose of the enforcement of criminal sanctions. The traditional understanding of prison security is most often associated with static measures, such as walls, locks, bars, cameras, the physical separation of convicted persons and formal supervision. Although these measures are necessary for the functioning of every prison institution, contemporary penological research shows that they are not sufficient on their own to maintain a stable and secure prison environment. Order in prison does not depend exclusively on physical control, but also on the quality of everyday relationships between prison officers and convicted persons, as well as on the broader prison culture and the way in which the institution is managed (Wooldredge, 2020).

In this context, the concept of dynamic security occupies a particularly important place. Dynamic security involves the continuous professional presence of officers in prison life, communication with convicted persons, knowledge of their behaviour, monitoring of the atmosphere within the institution and the ability to recognise risks at an early stage. Its essence does not lie in abandoning control, but in connecting control, communication and prevention. Sørensen, Midtlyng and Boe (2024) emphasise that dynamic security cannot be reduced merely to maintaining good relationships with prisoners, but also involves officers' ability to 'read' situations, assess risks and adapt their responses to specific circumstances.

The importance of dynamic security is particularly evident in the prevention of violence and the maintenance of order. Violence in prison does not arise solely as a consequence of the individual characteristics of convicted persons, but is also influenced by the prison regime, institutional culture, living conditions, management style and staff attitudes towards prisoners (Wooldredge, 2020). When convicted persons perceive officers as professional, consistent, fair and capable of maintaining order without unnecessary repression, the likelihood of voluntary compliance with rules and the strengthening of the legitimacy of prison authority increases (Ryan & Bergin, 2022).

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The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of dynamic security as an important element of the contemporary prison system, particularly in terms of maintaining order, strengthening the legitimacy of prison authority and preventing violence.

The paper consists of five chapters. Following the introductory considerations, which point to the importance of dynamic security for the contemporary prison system, the second chapter examines its concept and basic elements, such as the professional presence of officers, communication, observation of the prison atmosphere and risk assessment. The third chapter is devoted to the relationship between prison officers and convicted persons as the basis of security, with an emphasis on the importance of fair, consistent and professional conduct. The fourth chapter analyses the role of dynamic security in the prevention of violence and the maintenance of order, with particular reference to the early identification of risks and the prevention of conflict escalation. The conclusion summarises the main findings of the paper and emphasises that dynamic security does not replace static security, but complements it by linking control, communication, prevention and legitimacy.

## 2. THE CONCEPT AND BASIC ELEMENTS OF DYNAMIC SECURITY

Dynamic security represents a contemporary approach to maintaining order and safety in prison institutions, which is not based exclusively on physical, technical and formal control measures, but on the daily professional work of prison officers with convicted persons. Unlike static security, which includes walls, locks, cameras, bars, physical separation and formal supervision, dynamic security involves the active presence of officers in prison life, their communication with convicted persons, the monitoring of behaviour, an understanding of the atmosphere within the institution and the ability to identify potential risks before they develop into a serious security problem. In this sense, it is primarily preventive in character, as it is based on the early recognition and resolution of possible threats to security (Sørensen et al., 2024).

The literature emphasises that the concept of dynamic security is often used in prison practice and policy, but that it is not always clearly defined. Sørensen et al. (2024) point out that dynamic security is often associated with officers being present among prisoners, talking to them, listening to them and being attentive to the prison atmosphere and the possibility of incidents occurring. However, Sørensen et al. (2024) emphasise that such an understanding is not sufficiently precise, particularly when working with highly violent prisoners. For this reason, dynamic security cannot be reduced merely to a “good relationship” between an officer and a convicted person, but must be understood as a complex professional ability to observe, assess and adapt one’s response to a specific situation (Sørensen et al., 2024).

One of the basic elements of dynamic security is knowledge of convicted persons. A prison officer who is present in the daily lives of convicted persons can notice changes in their behaviour, mood, communication and relationships with other prisoners. Such changes may be early indicators of conflict, pressure, fear, planning of violence or disruption of order. Dynamic security is therefore based on the idea that an officer does not react only when an incident has already occurred, but acts preventively on the basis of information obtained through everyday contact. This understanding is close to definitions according to which dynamic security exists when officers are attentive, know the prisoners, move among them, talk to them and are able to “sense” a problem before it develops (Sørensen et al., 2024).

Another important element is communication. Professional communication with convicted persons enables officers to better understand their needs, frustrations and mutual relationships. It does not imply leniency or a loss of authority, but represents a means of maintaining control in a less repressive and more effective way. Through conversation, an officer can reduce tension, clarify a misunderstanding, prevent the escalation of conflict and demonstrate that rules are applied consistently and fairly. This approach is important because authority in prison is not based solely on the officer’s formal position, but also on the way in which officers use their power in everyday relationships with convicted persons (Ryan & Bergin, 2022).

The third element is the continuous observation of the prison atmosphere. Dynamic security requires officers to observe not only individual convicted persons, but also group dynamics, informal hierarchies, changes in relationships among prisoners and the general climate within the institution. Wooldredge (2020) emphasises that prison violence cannot be understood solely through the individual characteristics of prisoners, but also through prison culture, management style and the role of prison officers in the everyday maintenance of order. This means that officers must understand the broader context in which the behaviour of convicted persons takes place, because prison culture and the way in which the institution is managed can influence the emergence of conflict, violence and the sense of safety within the institution (Wooldredge, 2020).

A particularly significant element of dynamic security is the ability to assess risk and adapt one's response. Sørensen et al. (2024) emphasise that working with violent prisoners requires officers to be able to "read" prisoners, situations and changes in the environment, as well as to align their responses with the specific threat. This means that an officer must know when it is necessary to talk, when to issue a warning, when to involve other officers and when to apply formal security measures. Such conduct requires experience, training, teamwork and trust among staff (Sørensen et al., 2024). Sørensen et al. (2024) particularly emphasise the importance of teamwork and a shared understanding of situations among officers. In their research, officers describe a successful team as a group with a common goal, divided roles, mutual trust and the ability to adapt to changes in prisoners' behaviour. Such team coordination enables a rapid, discreet and harmonised response in risky situations. For this reason, dynamic security is not only the individual ability of a single officer, but also the collective ability of the service to identify risk and respond in a coordinated manner (Sørensen et al., 2024).

Dynamic security involves linking control and legitimacy. The authority of prison officers is not based solely on their formal power, but also on whether convicted persons perceive them as fair, consistent, professional and capable of maintaining order. Ryan and Bergin (2022) indicate that fair and respectful treatment by prison officers can contribute to the perceived legitimacy of authority, which may then encourage normative, that is, voluntary, compliance with rules. For this reason, dynamic security is important not only as a security mechanism, but also as a means of strengthening trust, stability and order within a prison institution (Ryan & Bergin, 2022). In this sense, dynamic security can be understood as a combination of professional presence, communication, observation, knowledge of convicted persons, risk assessment, teamwork and timely response. It does not replace static security, but complements it and makes it more effective, as it enables risks to be identified and controlled before they develop into violence or a serious disruption of order. This understanding is particularly important for the contemporary prison system, as it links control, prevention and the legitimacy of prison authority.

Table 1 presents the basic elements of dynamic security and their practical implications for the work of prison officers. The findings presented show that dynamic security cannot be reduced merely to communication with convicted persons, but includes a broader set of professional skills: observation, risk assessment, understanding of the prison atmosphere, adaptation of response and the building of legitimate authority.

Table 1. Basic elements of dynamic security and their importance

Element of dynamic security	Important finding / significance	Source
Clearer understanding of the concept	Dynamic security is often used in practice, but is not always precisely defined; it is therefore important to distinguish it from physical control alone.	Sørensen et al., 2024
Professional presence and communication	The presence of officers among convicted persons and everyday communication enable a better understanding of behaviour, needs and possible tensions.	Sørensen et al., 2024
Observation of the prison atmosphere	Security risks do not arise only from individuals, but also from prison culture, regime, relationships and management style.	Wooldredge, 2020
Risk assessment and response adaptation	Officers need to "read" situations and convicted persons, and adapt their response to the specific level of risk.	Sørensen et al., 2024
Legitimacy of authority	Fair, consistent and professional conduct by officers increases the likelihood of rule compliance and the stability of the prison environment.	Ryan & Bergin, 2022
Complement to static security	Dynamic security does not replace walls, locks, cameras and formal supervision, but complements them through communication, prevention and early risk identification.	Sørensen et al., 2024

Source: Author' research

### 3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRISON OFFICERS AND CONVICTED PERSONS AS THE BASIS OF SECURITY

The relationship between prison officers and convicted persons represents one of the key foundations of security within a prison institution. Although prison security is often associated with formal rules, physical control and technical surveillance measures, everyday practice shows that the stability of the prison environment largely depends on the quality of direct relationships between staff and prisoners.

Prison officers are the most visible representatives of prison authority, and it is through their everyday actions that convicted persons assess whether prison authority is professional, fair and legitimate (Wooldredge, 2020). Within the framework of dynamic security, the relationship between officers and convicted persons is not a secondary element, but a basic instrument for maintaining order. Officers who are present among convicted persons, who talk to them, listen to them and know their habits, can identify changes in behaviour and in the prison atmosphere at an earlier stage. Sørensen et al. (2024) state that dynamic security is based on the presence of officers, interaction with prisoners and the ability to recognise potential problems before they develop into incidents. Such a relationship does not imply leniency, but rather professional closeness that enables better risk assessment and a timely response (Sørensen et al., 2024).

The quality of this relationship is particularly important because prison is a closed and tense social environment in which conflicts can escalate quickly. If convicted persons perceive officers as unfair, harsh or inconsistent, distrust towards the institution increases, as does the possibility of resistance to rules. Conversely, when officers act consistently, respect the dignity of convicted persons and clearly explain the rules, prisoners are more likely to accept their authority. Ryan and Bergin (2022) emphasise that procedurally fair treatment contributes to the perceived legitimacy of the prison regime, and legitimacy is an important basis for voluntary compliance with rules.

The relationship between officers and convicted persons therefore also has a preventive function. It enables the officer to recognise tensions, fear, changes in group relations, pressure among prisoners or situations that may lead to violence. Wooldredge (2020) emphasises that the actions and attitudes of officers influence the way prisoners perceive prison authority, as well as prison culture and the adjustment patterns of convicted persons. In other words, if prisoners see officers as capable of solving problems and maintaining order, there is less need for them to seek protection or conflict resolution through informal prison groups or violence (Wooldredge, 2020).

It is important to emphasise that a professional relationship does not mean eliminating the distance between officers and convicted persons. On the contrary, dynamic security requires a balance between communication and control. An officer must be approachable, but not unprofessionally close; must show respect, but also clearly maintain boundaries; must understand the needs of convicted persons, while at the same time protecting order and security within the institution. Miranda (2024) points out that prison staff have a complex dual role: on the one hand, they develop a supportive relationship with prisoners, while on the other hand, they retain a control function. For this reason, the relationship between prison officers and convicted persons can be viewed as the central space in which prison security is produced or undermined on a daily basis. A professional, consistent and fair relationship contributes to trust, the legitimacy of authority and the reduction of tensions.

In this sense, security is not only the result of physical barriers and formal rules, but also the result of everyday communication, observation, assessment and the officer's ability to identify and prevent risks in a timely manner. The most important elements of the relationship between prison officers and convicted persons, as well as their significance for maintaining security, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The relationship between prison officers and convicted persons as the basis of security

Key aspect of the relationship	Significance for security	Source
Professional presence of officers	The everyday presence of officers among convicted persons enables a better understanding of the prison atmosphere and earlier identification of risks.	Sørensen et al., 2024
Communication with convicted persons	Communication with convicted persons helps officers understand needs, tensions and possible conflicts before they escalate.	Sørensen et al., 2024
Fair and consistent treatment	When officers act fairly and consistently, convicted persons are more likely to perceive them as a legitimate authority.	Ryan & Bergin, 2022
Legitimacy of authority	The perception of legitimacy increases the likelihood of voluntary compliance with rules and reduces the need for coercion.	Ryan & Bergin, 2022
Influence of officers on prison culture	Officers' attitudes and actions influence the prison climate, the adjustment of convicted persons and the possibility of violence occurring.	Wooldredge, 2020
Balance between control and support	A professional relationship requires communication and respect, but also the clear maintenance of boundaries and authority.	Miranda, 2024

Source: Author' research

#### 4. DYNAMIC SECURITY IN THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND THE MAINTENANCE OF ORDER

Dynamic security plays a particularly important role in the prevention of violence and the maintenance of order within a prison institution. Unlike approaches that rely exclusively on repressive and static measures, dynamic security is based on the view that many risks can be identified before they develop into open conflict. Violence in prison does not arise solely as a consequence of the individual characteristics of convicted persons, but also as a result of prison culture, management style, the quality of relationships between officers and prisoners, everyday routines and the general climate within the institution (Wooldredge, 2020). For this reason, the prevention of violence requires continuous monitoring of prison life, not merely a response after an incident has occurred. The basic value of dynamic security is reflected in the early recognition of changes in the behaviour of convicted persons and relationships within the prison community. Officers who are present among convicted persons and who know their habits, mutual relationships and everyday behaviour can notice changes that indicate increasing tension, fear, pressure, conflict or preparation for violent behaviour. Sørensen et al. (2024) particularly emphasise officers' ability to "read" prisoners and situations, as well as to align their responses with the specific risk. This means that an officer does not act according to a fixed pattern, but assesses when conversation is sufficient, when a warning is necessary, and when other officers should be involved or formal security measures applied.

Dynamic security also contributes to the maintenance of order because it strengthens the legitimacy of prison authority. When convicted persons perceive officers as professional, consistent and fair, they are more likely to comply with rules voluntarily, rather than merely out of fear of punishment. Ryan and Bergin (2022) point out that procedural justice and legitimacy play an important role in the acceptance of authority and compliance with rules in the prison environment. This reduces the need for the frequent use of coercion, while prison order is maintained in a more stable and long-term manner.

The prevention of violence also depends on the organisation of everyday routines and the conditions in which convicted persons are accommodated. Howard et al. (2020) show that the prison environment, activities, accommodation conditions and level of supervision influence the risk of physical assaults among prisoners. This means that dynamic security is not only an individual skill of officers, but also part of the broader system of institutional management. It links the presence of officers, communication, risk assessment, timely intervention and fair treatment. In this way, dynamic security contributes to reducing tensions, preventing the escalation of conflicts and creating a more stable, humane and secure prison environment.

In addition to the direct relationship between officers and convicted persons, security is also influenced by the broader conditions of prison life. Research shows that the quality of the prison climate, the physical environment, the availability of activities, prisoners' mental health and the way technology is used can contribute to either reducing or increasing tensions within the institution. In this regard, the study by Mjåland et al. (2023) is also significant, as it shows that convicted persons evaluate the experience of being held in open-type prisons more positively than in closed-type prisons, with the "pains of imprisonment" being experienced as less intense and more bearable. This finding indicates that the degree of restrictiveness of the regime, the level of autonomy and the general prison climate can have an important impact on prisoners' everyday experience and, indirectly, on the maintenance of order and the reduction of tensions. Auty and Liebling (2024) indicate that harmony, professionalism and a sense of safety are associated with lower levels of serious forms of violence in prison. Engstrom and van Ginneken (2022) emphasise that architecture and physical space influence the well-being of those who use the prison space, while Testoni et al. (2021) show that work with prisoners with mental health difficulties requires cooperation between different professionals and additional support for staff.

Contemporary technologies can contribute to better institutional management and communication, but Hofinger and Pfliegerl (2024) and Miranda (2024) warn that, if not applied thoughtfully, technology may lead to expanded surveillance and the displacement of the direct professional relationship between officers and convicted persons.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Dynamic security represents an important element of the contemporary prison system, as it shows that the maintenance of order and safety cannot be based solely on static control measures. Walls, locks, cameras, physical separation and formal supervision remain necessary, but they are not sufficient unless accompanied by the everyday professional work of prison officers with convicted persons. The fundamental value of dynamic security lies in its ability to enable the early identification of risks, timely response and prevention of conflict escalation. The paper has shown that dynamic security rests on several interconnected elements: the professional presence of officers, communication with convicted persons, knowledge of their behaviour, observation of the prison atmosphere, risk assessment, teamwork and the adaptation of responses to specific situations. It is particularly significant that the relationship between officers and convicted persons is not merely a matter of everyday communication, but also a basis for building legitimate authority. When convicted persons perceive officers as fair, consistent, professional and capable of maintaining order without unnecessary repression, the likelihood of voluntary compliance with rules increases.

The prevention of violence in prison requires a broader understanding of security. Violence does not arise solely as a consequence of the individual characteristics of convicted persons, but also as a result of prison culture, regime, living conditions, the organisation of everyday activities, prisoners' mental health, the architecture of the space and the way in which contemporary technologies are used. For this reason, dynamic security must be part of the overall system of institutional management, and not merely an individual skill of a single officer. It can be concluded that dynamic security does not represent a replacement for static security, but its necessary complement. Its particular value lies in the fact that it connects control, communication, prevention and legitimacy, thereby contributing to a more stable prison climate, the reduction of violence and the creation of a more humane and secure prison environment.

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