The spread of crime is a complex, dynamic process that calls for a systems level approach. We build and analyze a series of dynamical systems models of the spread of crime, imprisonment and recidivism, using only abstract transition parameters. To find the general patterns among these parameters --- patterns that are independent of the underlying particulars, we compute analytic expressions for the equilibria and for the tipping points between high-crime and low-crime equilibria in these models. We examine, in particular, the effects of longer prison terms and of increased arrest rates on the prevalence of crime, with a follow-up analysis of the effects on a Three-Strike Policy.