Dismantling the Roots of Terrorism

This editorial is based on "[Terror attack in Reasi underscores fragility of a hard-won peace in J&K](#)" which was published in The Indian Express on 12/06/2024. The article brings into picture the fragile peace in Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting a recent terrorist attack in Reasi that underscores ongoing security challenges

For Prelims: [Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967](#), [National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008](#), National Security Council, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Offences against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents (1973), International Convention against the Taking of Hostages (1979), **[International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)](#), [Left-Wing Extremism](#), [Financial Action Task Force](#).**

For Mains: Various Emerging Forms of Terrorism, Major Terrorism Related Challenges that India Faces.

The specter of **[terrorism](#)** continues to cast a long shadow across the globe. From coordinated attacks targeting civilians to targeted assassinations, terrorist groups employ violence and fear to achieve their political goals. While the international community has made strides in countering terrorism, its **reach and tactics remain fluid**, demanding **constant vigilance and adaptation.**

India, a nation with a long history of grappling with terrorism, faces a unique set of challenges. This is particularly evident in the restive region of Jammu and Kashmir, where incidents like a **recent attack on pilgrims in Reasi,** a district with minimal prior militancy, exposes the fragility of peace.

[India's fight against terrorism](#) necessitates a **multi-pronged approach.** Stringent security measures are crucial to deter infiltration attempts and disrupt terror networks. Only through a comprehensive strategy that combines robust security measures with efforts to address underlying grievances can India hope to achieve lasting peace and security for its citizens.

What is the Framework Related To Terrorism in India?

- **About: Terrorism is the deliberate and unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, to instill fear and achieve political, religious, or ideological goals.**
  - It seeks to influence governments or societies by creating a **climate of fear, disruption, and uncertainty**.
  - India maintains a strong stance against terrorism with a **"zero tolerance" policy.**
  - However, there are **no universally accepted definitions of terrorism,** making it difficult to classify specific activities as terrorist acts.
    - This ambiguity gives terrorists an advantage and enables some countries to remain silent and veto actions in global institutions.
- **Domestic Laws:**

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967**: Designates terrorist organizations or individuals, criminalizes terrorist activities, and empowers authorities for investigation and prosecution.
- **National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008:** Establishes a central agency for investigating and prosecuting **terror-related offenses.**
  - **Institutional Framework:**
    - **National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS):** Oversees and coordinates national security strategy, including counter-terrorism efforts.
    - **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA):** Leads domestic counter-terrorism operations and intelligence gathering.
    - **National Investigation Agency (NIA)**: Investigates and prosecutes major terror-related cases.
  - **International Agreements:** India is a signatory to various UN conventions against terrorism, including:
    - **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Offences against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents (1973)**

    - International Convention against the Taking of Hostages (1979)

    - International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)

What are the Various Emerging Forms of Terrorism?

- **Lone Wolf Attacks:** The rise of **self-radicalized individuals** carrying out attacks without being part of a larger group poses a significant challenge for intelligence agencies.
  - These "lone wolf" terrorists are harder to detect and can strike with little to no warning.
- **Bioterrorism Risks:** The **Covid-19 pandemic** has sparked the potential consequences of a bioterror attack involving the **weaponization of viruses, bacteria or other biological toxins** as an instrument of mass disruption.
  - The illicit procurement and deployment of such agents by non-state actors with **catastrophic intentions** remains a looming danger that requires constant vigilance.
- **Unmanned/Drone Threats:** The rapid proliferation of advanced yet inexpensive **commercial drone technologies** has opened a new threat vector that terrorists could exploit for purposes like **intelligence gathering, targeted strikes, or as delivery platforms for explosives/chemical dispersion** devices, presenting a formidable new security challenge.
  - For example, India witnessed a significant drone attack at the **Air Force Station** in Jammu in June, 2021.
    - The airbase, which is **14 km away from the India-Pakistan border**, was attacked by low–flying drones that dropped two **improvised explosive devices (IEDs).**
- **Terrorist Safe Havens:** Prolonged conflicts and fragile regions with limited governance in parts of **Africa and the Middle East** provide fertile territories for terrorist groups to establish **safe havens, training infrastructures, and a foothold** to export violence across borders, making these unstable zones an enabler for transnational terror.
- **Terror-Crime Nexus:** The deepening convergence between terrorist entities and transnational organized criminal syndicates, combining their **illicit financial resources (through cryptocurrency), distribution networks** (like case of Drug supplies in Punjab)a**nd expertise** in areas like weapons procurement and human trafficking, has emerged as a potent threat multiplier that demands sustained counterterror operations.
- **Terrorism Driven by Emerging Technologies**: Terrorist entities are actively seeking to exploit cutting-edge technologies like **encrypted communications and dark web** to amplify their capabilities across all phases - recruitment, radicalization, operational planning, and attack execution.
  - Staying ahead of this technological curve remains an **ongoing cat-and-mouse battle** for counterterrorism forces.

What are the Major Terrorism Related Challenges that India Faces?

- **Cross-border terrorism: India has been grappling with cross-border terrorism emanating from neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan.**

    - Recent examples include the 2019 Pulwama attack, where a suicide bomber from the Pakistan-based terrorist group targeted a convoy of Indian security personnel.

    - Also, recent attacks like the **one in Reasi** (June 2024) suggest that increased security pressure in traditionally **militant-affected districts like Rajouri and Poonch** might be pushing them towards more peripheral areas.
- Left-Wing Extremism **(LWE): The LWE movement, also known as the Naxalite insurgency, has been a persistent challenge for India.**

    - Maoist rebel groups have been active in several states like **Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand,** engaging in violence, extortion, and disrupting development projects.

    - The number of LWE related violent incidents have come down by 76% in 2022 in comparison to 2010.

    - However, the issue is still persistent, highlighted by a recent incident in **Narayanpur District of Chhattisgarh.**

- **Separatist Movements and Militancy:** India has faced separatist movements and militancy in various regions, including the **Northeast, and Punjab.**

    - The issue of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has been particularly complex, with Pakistan-based terrorist groups like **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)** fueling the insurgency.

- **Radicalization and Online Propaganda:** The rise of radicalization, particularly among the youth, and the spread of extremist ideologies through **online platforms and social media,** pose a significant challenge.

    - India has witnessed instances of youth being radicalized through methods like Honey trapping (like the **recent instance of trapping Former BrahMos engineer)** and recruited by terrorist organizations, both domestically and internationally.

        - In **February 2024**, 4 were arrested by the **National Investigation Agency** in connection with radicalisation of youths to carry out terror attacks.
- **Cyber Terrorism: The increasing reliance on digital infrastructure and the potential for cyber attacks by terrorist groups or state-sponsored actors is an emerging concern for India.**

    - Cyber terrorism could target **critical infrastructure, financial systems, and sensitive data,** causing significant disruption and economic damage.

    - A recent report has stated that a Chinese firm breached nearly **100 gigabytes of Indian immigration data.**
- **Pakistan Exiting FATF Grey List: With Pakistan out of the grey list, India's claims about Pakistan's lack of action against terror groups might hold less weight internationally.**

    - The **Financial Action Task Force(FATF)** listing served as a form of validation of India's concerns.

    - Also, in this case China Factor comes into picture that is highlighted by China blocking India's demand to declare **Hafiz Saeed a terrorist**

What Measures can India Adopt to Curb the Menace of Terrorism?

- **Focus on Rehabilitation, Not Just Punishment:** Developing **deradicalization programs** for individuals caught in the early stages of radicalization.
  - These programs should address the root causes of radicalization and provide participants with opportunities for **rehabilitation and reintegration into society.**
- **Establishing a National Counter-Terrorism Database:** Developing a centralized and secure database tha**t integrates intelligence from various agencies**, including law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and financial institutions.
  - Leveraging **advanced data analytics and machine learning techniques** to identify patterns, connections, and potential threats, enabling proactive action.
- **Enhancing Physical Security Measures: Improving physical security measures at critical infrastructure, public spaces, and potential high-risk targets, including surveillance systems, access control, and perimeter security.**
  - Conducting regular **security audits and vulnerability assessments** to identify and address potential weaknesses.
  - Implementing **robust crisis management protocols** and evacuation plans in case of terrorist attacks.
- **Open-Source Intelligence Training for Police: Training police forces in open-source intelligence (OSINT) techniques to analyze publicly available data on social media and online forums to identify potential threats and track terrorist activities.**
- **Strengthening Cybersecurity and Online Counterterrorism Capabilities:** Investing in developing advanced cybersecurity measures to protect critical infrastructure and online systems from cyber attacks and **digital espionage** by terrorist organizations.
- **Empowering Communities, Not Just Security Forces: There is a need to educate communities, particularly in vulnerable regions, about early signs of radicalization and how to report suspicious activity.**

  - Address socio-economic grievances in areas susceptible to extremist influence. Improve education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities to create a sense of hope and discourage radicalization.

    - The **Himayat and UMEED Scheme** in Jammu and Kashmir is a significant step in this direction.
    - **Khelo India Centres** could be established in areas prone to radicalization as a means of redirecting the youth.
    - **Mainstreaming terrorism** prone areas as highlighted by India during its G20 Presidency meetings in Jammu and Kashmir and thereby **Winning their Hearts and Minds.**
  - It's the high time for promoting **national security as a shared responsibility.**
- **Weakening the Financial Lifeline of Terror: Exploring the use of blockchain technology to track financial transactions and identify suspicious patterns associated with terror funding.**

  - The transparency and immutability of blockchain can make it harder for terrorists to move funds.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss various emerging terrorist threats that India faces. Suggest measures that India can adopt to mitigate the impact of these challenges on its national security.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Hand-in-Hand 2007' a joint anti-terrorism military training was held by the officers of the Indian Army and officers of Army of which one of the following countries? (2008)

(a) China

(b) Japan

(c) Russia

(d) USA

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. The scourge of terrorism is a grave challenge to national security. What solutions do you suggest to curb this growing menace? What are the major sources of terrorist funding? **(2017)**