



NATIONAL COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY & STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

India has been at the forefront of the ongoing fight against terrorism for several decades now. While the nature of threats continues to change and present new challenges, India has remained consistently opposed to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

There has been a history of sporadic instability in the immediate neighborhood of India, which has often given rise to ungoverned spaces. Besides, few countries in the region have sometimes used terrorism as an instrument of State Policy. Notwithstanding this, India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilization. India has always denounced terrorism and its use by any actor for achieving any stated or unstated ends, unambiguously and unequivocally.

India has always stood by the victims of terrorism and has been steadfast in its belief that there can be no justification whatsoever, for violence in the world. **It is this principled approach which informs the Indian policy of 'zero tolerance' against terrorism.**

The counter-terrorism strategy of India, '**PRAHAAR**', flows from these ideals and is predicated on the following:

- P**revention of terror attacks to protect Indian citizens and interests;
- R**esponses, which are swift and proportionate to the threat posed;
- A**ggregating internal capacities for achieving synergy in a whole-of-government approach;
- H**uman rights and 'Rule of Law' based processes for mitigation of threats;
- A**ttenuating the conditions enabling terrorism, including radicalization;
- A**ligning and shaping the international efforts to counter terrorism;
- R**ecovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

THREAT PROFILE

India has since long been affected by sponsored terrorism from across the border, with Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organizations, continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks in India. India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells.

Violent Extremists operating from the soils of foreign countries have hatched conspiracies to promote terrorism. Their handlers from across the border frequently use latest technologies, including use of Drones, for facilitating terror-related activities and attacks in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Increasingly, terrorist groups are engaging organized criminal networks for logistics and recruitment to execute and facilitate terror strikes in India.

For propaganda, communication, funding and guiding terror attacks, these terror groups use social media platforms as well as 'instant messaging applications'. Technological advancements like encryption, dark web, crypto wallets etc. have allowed these groups to operate anonymously.

Disrupting/Intercepting terrorist efforts to access and use CBRNED (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, Digital) material remains a challenge for Counter Terrorism (CT) agencies. The threat of state and non-state actors misusing drones and robotics for lethal purposes remains another area of concern, even as criminal hackers and nation states continue to target India through cyber-attacks.

COUNTER TERRORISM STRATEGY

1. Prevention of Terror Attacks

India follows a pro-active approach to prevent and counter terrorist threats. This approach is primarily 'Intelligence-Guided', in which primacy is accorded to intelligence gathering and its dissemination to executive agencies for neutralization of threat. Operationalization of Multi Agency Centre (MAC) along with the Joint Task Force on Intelligence (JTFI) in the Intelligence Bureau (IB) remain the nodal platform for efficient and real time sharing of CT related inputs across the country and subsequent prevention against disruptions. Close partnerships for CT operations have been created with Central Agencies and State Police Forces under the mechanism of MAC/JTFI in IB.

Terrorists and violent extremists misuse internet for communication, recruitment, glorification of jihad and other terror related activities. Indian Law Enforcement Agencies make sustained efforts to counter misuse of internet through pro-active disruption of such cyber activities, online networks of terrorist groups and their propaganda/recruitment. Law enforcement agencies also regularly disrupt the over ground workers (OGW) modules, through which terrorists are extended logistic, material and financial support.

In recent times, nexus between illegal arms syndicates and terrorist groups has emerged, and for combating it, coordinated interventions are being made by the intelligence agencies along with the respective Law Enforcement Agencies, in various Indian States. Special emphasis is given for disrupting terror funding networks through legal framework under Indian laws.

India faces terrorist threats on all three fronts viz. water, land and air. Indian border guarding forces (Defence, Central Armed Police Forces) as well as immigration authorities are equipped with state-of-the-art tools and technologies to secure Indian borders. Capacities have been developed to protect the critical sectors of Indian economy including power, railways, aviation, ports, defence, space and atomic energy from state/non-state actors.

2. Response

The local Police is the first responder to any attack, assisted by specialized State and Central anti-terror Forces. The States vulnerable from the terror threat point of view, have created special CT Forces to respond to attacks. The National Security Guard (NSG) is the nodal national Counter-Terror Force under MHA, for assistance to State Forces in responding to major terror attacks, besides capacity building of such State Forces.

Responding to a terror attack is a multi-stakeholder exercise involving various Agencies at Central, State and District levels. There exists a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), for coordination at the apex level that includes intelligence dissemination, analysis and follow up action, through the platform of MAC. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), are regularly deployed in States and these Forces perform a wide range of duties, including maintenance of law and order and counter-terrorism operations.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and State Police Agencies conduct CT investigations in India and high prosecution rates of these investigations ensure a deterrent to future terror incidents.

3. Aggregating Capacities

Modernization of Security and Law Enforcement Agencies plays an important role in CT responses. There is regular acquisition of latest tools, technology and weaponry, besides training for new skills and tactics for CT Agencies. Efforts have been made to further modernize the training modules and infrastructure of the training institutes, besides upgrading the training faculties, to provide training on best practices for responding to terrorist situations.

The Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), in association with training institutions of States and CAPFs, regularly conducts training courses for the personnel of State Police and CAPFs. NSG's training in urban combat caters to the need of specialized CT Forces in different States.

In a multi-agency environment, standardization of processes and procedures ensure similar and synergistic responses and *inter-alia* there is a move for having uniform anti-terrorism structure in the States. The overall capacities of various Law Enforcement and CT Agencies have been enhanced by identifying the resource gaps and suggesting necessary countermeasures.

4. Human Rights and Rule of Law Based Processes

Indian laws, including anti-terrorism laws, give due importance to human rights. India adheres to the 'Rule of Law', where laws are just, applied evenly and protect fundamental rights. Besides, The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 specifically deals with cases of violation of human rights in India. India is also a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, besides ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Special laws are in place to tackle terrorism related crimes. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 is the principal legal regime to deal with terrorism in India, supplemented by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 and various other Acts like the Explosives Substance Act, 1908, Arms Act 1959 and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

Multiple levels of legal redressal is available to any accused through an elaborate infrastructure of justice system from the Districts, through States, right up to the higher judiciary at the Central level. The due process of law gives wide scope to the Supreme Court of India for protection of the rights of citizens. Robust and independent criminal justice system ensures that all are properly represented and get affordable legal services. Besides, there are ample opportunities available to the aggrieved person to contest and file appeal before courts.

5. Attenuating the conditions conducive to Terrorism

Terrorist groups are continuously making efforts to recruit Indian youth and to thwart these efforts, Indian intelligence and law enforcement agencies have been continuously disrupting the designs of terrorist groups. Once identified, these youths undergo a graded police response, aimed at comprehensively addressing the problem of radicalization and violent extremism in a multi-stakeholder setting. Legal action is initiated against the individual based on their level of radicalization.

Community and religious leaders, moderate preachers and NGOs are engaged to spread awareness about the adverse consequences impacts of radicalization and extremist violence. Besides, youth are constructively engaged for ensuring that issues that may threaten peace and communal harmony are checked. In order to prevent radicalization in prisons, prison staff are cautioned from time to time to prevent acts of radicalization of vulnerable inmates by hard core inmates. De-radicalization programs are also undertaken.

Issues of poverty and unemployment among vulnerable communities are addressed through various government schemes and initiatives to prevent inimical elements from misusing these conditions to their advantage. Access to quality education, affordable

housing and stable jobs is promoted among such communities. Various scholarships and loan schemes especially cater to the needs of the youth and women to empower them educationally and financially.

6. Aligning and Shaping the International Efforts

International partners are very important to Indian counter terrorism efforts, given the trans-national character of terrorism. Besides Agency-to-Agency engagements for intelligence sharing, India has entered into various agreements/arrangements like Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), Extradition Treaty/Extradition Arrangement (ET/EA), Joint Working Group (JWG) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with foreign partners for information/evidence sharing and other legal cooperation. This cooperation has resulted in disruption/ indictment of many terrorist/radical entities in India and abroad. Law Enforcement Agencies have also succeeded in extraditing/deporting wanted fugitives. International partners further support India in its pursuit to designate wanted terrorists at the UN.

India engages with the international community in various counter terrorism forums. Bilateral and multi-lateral exchange of global best practices in counter terrorism field are immensely helpful in creating a holistic national response against terrorist threats.

7. Recovery and Resilience through a whole-of-society approach

India follows a whole-of-society approach in countering terrorism. Public-private partnership has been a key component in our fight against terrorism. This partnership helps in faster recovery and resilience in case of a terror attack. The government engages a team of doctors, psychologists, lawyers and other members of civil society, including NGOs, religious and community leaders, to sensitize and reintegrate the affected community. The civil administration takes lead in reconstruction and restoration efforts. The police administration strengthens preventive security measures in and around their area, that reassures the community and promotes their resilience.

THE WAY FORWARD

The coordinated multi-agency actions have greatly contributed towards success in Indian counter terrorism efforts. However, there remains a scope for further cooperation and collaboration among various agencies for intelligence collection and investigation. Further, the domestic counter terrorism legal regime needs to be amended from time to time to respond to the emerging challenges. In addition, there is a continual need for capacity building of the Counter Terrorism units/ATs of States/UTs to respond to, neutralize and investigate terror-related incidents. To this end, uniformity in their structure, resources, training, and methodologies of investigation becomes important.

To make appropriate cases against the perpetrators of acts of terrorism, there is a need to associate legal experts at every stage of investigation, right from registration of FIR to its culmination in prosecution.

Terrorist groups based outside, nowadays use the infrastructure, logistics and terrain knowledge of local outfits for launching attacks. National actions, coupled with international and regional cooperation, are key elements in addressing trans-national terrorism challenge.

India remains committed to international cooperation and collaboration. To build consensus on the understanding of terrorism and the rights of victims of terrorism, India will continue to work for a comprehensive framework on international terrorism while pursuing its counter-terrorism policy and strategy 'Prahaar', which aims to criminalize all terrorist acts and deny access to funds, weapons and safe havens to the terrorists, their financiers and supporters.

India would continue its efforts together with the international community, to counter the global challenge of misuse of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for terrorist purposes. Besides, investment in technology and partnerships with private enterprise have been included to mitigate futuristic terror threats.