

# Terrorism in India: Impact on National Security

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## Abstract

Terrorism remains one of the most significant challenges to India's national security, with implications that extend beyond immediate loss of life and property. Rooted in diverse socio-political, religious, and cross-border dynamics, terrorism in India undermines public safety, destabilizes democratic institutions, and hinders economic development. The persistence of insurgencies in regions such as Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East, and areas affected by left-wing extremism highlights the complexity of the issue. Moreover, cross-border terrorism, facilitated by state and non-state actors, has added a strategic dimension to the threat. This study seeks to examine the multifaceted impact of terrorism on India's national security by analysing its effects on political stability, economic resilience, military preparedness, and social cohesion. By drawing from case studies, security reports, and policy analyses, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges terrorism poses and explore the effectiveness of India's counter-terrorism strategies within the broader framework of internal and external security policies.

## Introduction

The November 2008 deadly terrorist assault (ABC News) on district and a spate of bomb attacks (BBC) across India's cities the same year have claimed hundreds of lives and once again raised questions about India's vulnerability to terrorism. According to the latest report on global terrorism by the U.S. government's National Counter-Terrorism Centre, more than one thousand people died in India because of terrorist attacks in 2007, ranking India fourth behind only Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. India, a nation of a billion people, has been confronted with terrorism since its birth, and currently contends with a variety of regional groups mainly intent on separatism.

## Background of Terrorism

The word 'terrorism' comes from the French 'terrorism,' which is derived from the Latin word 'torero,' which means 'I terrify.' The term was initially coined during the French Revolution, specifically in relation to the 'Reign of Terror.' The Irish Republican Brotherhood (1858–1924) is often regarded as the first organisation to employ contemporary terrorist tactics. Indeed, virtually any particularly heinous act of violence perceived as directed against society is frequently labelled 'terrorism' whether it involves anti-government dissidents or governments themselves, organized crime groups or common criminals, rioting mobs of militant protesters, individual psychopaths or lone fraudsters. There is still **no universally accepted definition of terrorism**, as debates at the UN in the 1970s–80s faltered due to disagreements over state versus non-state use of violence in liberation struggles.

## Causes of Terrorism

There are so many causes of terrorism, some of which are mentioned below-

### **Political Causes**

Insurgency and guerrilla warfare, a form of organised political violence perpetrated by a non-state army or group, were the origins of terrorism theory. They pick terrorism because they dislike society's current structure and wish to change it. It is, in general, the polar opposite of independence, growth, and human rights.

Terrorism has had the greatest impact on India's frontier regions, particularly those bordering Pakistan.

### **Strategic Causes**

Emphasizing that an organisation has a strategic reason for using terrorism is another way of saying that it isn't a haphazard or irrational choice, but rather a tool used to achieve a bigger goal.

Hamas, for example, employs terrorist techniques, but not because it has an irrational urge to launch rockets at Israeli Jews. Instead, they want to use violence (and cease-fires) to get specific concessions from Israel and Fatah in order to achieve their goals. It is often regarded as a weak person's method for gaining an edge over bigger militaries or political powers.

### **Socio Economic Causes**

Socio-economic theories of terrorism imply that certain forms of deprivation motivate people to commit acts of terror, or that they are more open to recruitment by terrorist organisations.

Poverty, illiteracy, and lack of political freedom are only a few examples. On both sides of the debate, there is evidence to support their claims.

Comparisons of different conclusions can be perplexing because they don't distinguish between individuals and societies, and they ignore the complexities of how people feel injustice or deprivation, independent of their economic situation.

### **Religious Terrorism**

Terrorist acts today are mostly driven by religious imperatives all around the world. Terrorists who are motivated in part or entirely by a religious imperative, according to Hoffman, regard violence as a divine obligation or a sacramental act. In comparison to other terrorist groups, it embraces distinct forms of legitimization and justification, and these distinguishing elements make religious terrorism more damaging in nature.

### **Cross-border Terrorism**

When the soil of one country is used to spread fear or engage in terror against its bordering countries, this is known as cross-border terrorism. India is a victim of cross-border terrorism, which has Pakistan as its source.

***Factors contributing to cross-border terrorism are as follows:***

- Internal support: Terrorists frequently receive support from the local people for a variety of reasons, including ideological or ethnic affinity, fear, monetary enticement, and so on.
- Corrupt officials: Unfortunately, many officials in a country's institution can aid terrorists and allow them to enter the country illegally for terrorist actions just for financial gain.
- Porous borders: These show that the border is not well-protected. Due to tough terrain and other circumstances, India's borders with most of her neighbours cannot be physically sealed or wired. Terrorist organisations take advantage of permeable borders to penetrate another country.

- Backing from non-state actors: India's tense relationship with Pakistan supports the latter's support for separatist groups, which the Pakistani leadership provides with money, weapons, and training.

## Literature review

### Terrorism in India

In Kashmir, the northeast, and to a lesser extent Punjab, India faces terrorism from secessionists, as well as left-wing extremist groups in central, east-central, and south-central India. The 2008 Mumbai terror attacks were a series of terrorist assaults in November 2008 in which ten members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani Islamist terrorist organisation, carried out 12 coordinated shooting and bombing operations across Mumbai over the course of four days.

India is one of the most afflicted countries in the world by terror. India was the seventh-most affected country in 2018, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace. It was stated that around 8000 people were killed in terror strikes in India between 2001 and 2018. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been hit the hardest by terrorist attacks in the country. India is also ranked 12th in the Global Terrorism Index 2022 with a score of 7.432.

The **2025 Pahalgam terror attack**, where five militants killed 26 tourists, marked India's deadliest civilian massacre since 2008. The perpetrators were linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba and TRF, prompting **Operation Mahadev**, a security operation that eliminated the mastermind, reinforcing India's proactive counter-terror posture.

### Impacts of Terrorism

It is a huge challenge to international peace and security, as well as a threat to humanity's essential principles of peace and growth.

- Terrorist activities destabilize governments and impede economic and social progress, in addition to the catastrophic human cost of terrorism in terms of lives lost or permanently altered.
- Terrorist attacks frequently transcend national boundaries.
- Terrorist attacks with CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives) materials have devastating implications for people and infrastructure.

### Research Objectives:

- To examine the historical evolution and current patterns of terrorism in India.
- To assess the impact of terrorism on India national security.
- To analyse socio economics consequences of terrorism
- To evaluate the effectiveness of India's counter terrorism strategies

### Steps Taken by India to Combat Terrorism

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act 1967 is the current law in India meant to combat all forms of terrorism.

- Following the Mumbai terror attacks on November 26, 2001, the government established the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#).
- Since the late 1990s, India has been pushing for a global intergovernmental convention called the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) to combat terrorism.

- India is also a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global organisation dedicated to preventing money laundering and terrorism financing.
- India maintains a network of intelligence agencies, including the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Intelligence Bureau (IB), and others, that are tasked with combating terrorism both inside and outside the country.
- There is also a National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID), which is an integrated intelligence framework that connects the databases of Indian security agencies to acquire comprehensive intelligence patterns that can be accessed by Indian intelligence agencies
- The National Security Guard (NSG) is a paramilitary group charged with counter-terrorism and anti-hijacking activities.

### Conclusion

Terrorism in India is a **complex, multifaceted, and enduring national security challenge** rooted in diverse socio-political, religious, cross-border, and ideological dynamics. From cross-border terrorism, primarily affecting regions like Jammu & Kashmir, to Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in central/east-central states, and insurgencies in the North-East, the threat landscape remains highly variegated. The primary conclusion is that while India has shown significant **resilience** and has developed a more robust counter-terrorism framework, the persistence and evolution of terror threats necessitate a continuous, adaptive, and holistic approach.

### Recommendations

To further fortify India's national security against terrorism, the following recommendations are proposed:

#### 1. Strengthen Border Management and Technology:

- Recommendation: Invest heavily in smart border fencing and surveillance technology (e.g., radar, thermal imaging, drones) to mitigate the threat posed by porous borders and cross-border infiltration, especially along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sensitive frontiers.

#### 2. Enhance Counter-Radicalization and Social Outreach:

- Recommendation: Develop and implement targeted Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs at the local level, focusing on youth unemployment, education, and community-police engagement. This should include strong strategic communication to counter extremist narratives online, moving beyond solely a law-and-order response.

#### 3. Reform and Resource Security Agencies:

- Recommendation: Provide consistent budgetary support, modern equipment, and specialized training to state police forces and central agencies like the NIA. Focus on building technical expertise in cyber forensics, cryptanalysis, and financial tracking to effectively combat terror financing and digital radicalization.

#### 4. Expedite the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT):

- Recommendation: Continue to push for the conclusion of the CCIT at the UN to establish a universal, legally binding definition of terrorism and a unified global framework for prosecution, which would help isolate states that sponsor terrorism.

#### 5. Address Socio-Economic Drivers:

- Recommendation: Focus on rapid and inclusive economic development in terror-affected and vulnerable regions to address the underlying socio-economic grievances (poverty, unemployment, illiteracy) that terrorist and extremist groups often exploit for recruitment.

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