



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK:
CHALLENGES AND THE ROAD
AHEAD**

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PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK: CHALLENGES AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Context

- The recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam poses challenges to India on multiple fronts by threatening the economic revival and normalisation efforts, and underscores long-standing lapses in intelligence and security measures.

About Terrorism

- It is broadly defined as the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives.
 - ♦ It is a global challenge that undermines peace, security, and human rights.
- According to the **United Nations**, there is **no universally agreed definition** of terrorism, but it is generally understood as acts intended to cause death or serious harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or international organization to act or refrain from acting.
- In the **context of India**, terrorism often includes cross-border activities, insurgencies, and radicalized attacks.
 - ♦ The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967**, defines a terrorist act as one that threatens the **unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of India** or causes terror among people by using violence or disrupting essential services.

Types of Terrorism in India

- **Cross-Border Terrorism:** Groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) continue to operate from Pakistan, targeting civilians and security forces in J&K.
 - ♦ It includes Mumbai Attacks (2008), Pathankot Airbase attack (2016), and Pulwama bombing (2019).
- **Insurgency in the Northeast and Left-Wing Extremism:** States like Manipur, Assam, and Nagaland face insurgency due to ethnic grievances and separatist demands.
 - ♦ The Maoist (Naxalite) threat in the **'Red Corridor'** across Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha remains a long-standing internal security issue.
- **Cyber Terrorism and Financing:** Terrorists increasingly exploit digital platforms for propaganda, recruitment, and fundraising using cryptocurrency and the darknet.
- **Urban Radicalization & Lone-Wolf Attacks :** The rise of lone-wolf attacks and online radicalization has added new dimensions to India's security challenges.
 - ♦ Groups like **The Resistance Front (TRF)** use hybrid terrorism tactics, employing radicalized locals for targeted attacks.

Challenges in Counterterrorism Efforts

- **Intelligence & Security Gaps:** Despite advancements in surveillance, lapses in intelligence-sharing have led to major attacks, including the Pahalgam incident.
 - ♦ Strengthening human intelligence networks and cyber surveillance is crucial.
- **Security and Intelligence Challenge:** The attack also highlights long-standing inadequacies in intelligence and security mechanisms in J&K, despite recurring militant strikes in the past year.
- **Geographical Expansion:** Militant activities, once confined to the Kashmir Valley, have expanded to Jammu, with over 30 attacks between 2021 and 2024, many of which caused civilian casualties.
- **Homegrown Extremism:** Radicalization through social media and religious propaganda continues to fuel domestic terrorism.

- ♦ Groups like the Indian Mujahideen (IM) and certain ISIS-inspired modules have emerged in recent years.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** India's strategic proximity to the United States has led to increased hostility from adversaries.
 - ♦ The extradition of Tahawwur Rana, accused in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, has further strained relations with Pakistan.
- **Public Sentiment & Communal Harmony:** Terrorist attacks often fuel communal tensions, making it imperative for the government to prevent misinformation and social unrest.

Counter-Terrorism Efforts

- **Legal Framework:**
 - ♦ **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)** empowers agencies to label individuals as terrorists.
 - ♦ **National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act** created a central counter-terror agency with pan-India jurisdiction.
- **Institutional Mechanisms:**
 - ♦ NIA, Intelligence Bureau (IB), and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) are pivotal in intelligence collection and enforcement.
 - ♦ Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) ensures inter-agency coordination.
- **Technological Integration:**
 - ♦ Deployment of facial recognition, drone surveillance, and AI-enabled threat analytics enhances border and urban surveillance.
- **International Cooperation:**
 - ♦ India collaborates with the U.S., Israel, and other nations on intelligence sharing and counter-radicalization efforts. It is also part of global anti-terror frameworks such as:
 - Financial Action Task Force (FATF)
 - United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee
- **De-Radicalization Initiatives:** State police and intelligence wings, particularly in Kerala and Maharashtra, run community outreach and deradicalization programs targeting vulnerable youth.

Recent Government Initiatives

- **NATGRID:** A centralized database for real-time intelligence sharing.
- **Safe City Projects:** Urban surveillance under Smart Cities Mission.
- **Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)**

Way Forward: Strengthening India's Counterterrorism Strategy

- **Enhanced Security Infrastructure:** Deploying advanced surveillance technologies, including AI-driven threat detection.
 - ♦ Expanding special forces operations in high-risk areas.
- **International Cooperation:** Strengthening counterterrorism partnerships with Saudi Arabia, the US, and European nations.
 - ♦ Joint intelligence-sharing initiatives to track global terror networks.
- **Restoring Normalcy:** Immediate steps should focus on boosting security, encouraging tourism, and addressing public concerns.
 - ♦ Confidence-building measures can help counter the fear instilled by the attack.
- **Community Engagement & De-Radicalization:** Implementing rehabilitation programs for radicalized individuals.
 - ♦ Encouraging interfaith dialogues to counter extremist narratives.

Conclusion

- The Pahalgam attack represents not just an assault on innocent lives but on the very fabric of J&K's resurgence.
- While the government must address the immediate security lapse, it must also take long-term measures to strengthen peace, stability, and economic growth in the region.
- A calculated and decisive response is essential to restore confidence and ensure that terrorism does not derail the progress made in J&K.

Source: BS

Mains Practice Question

[Q] What measures should India adopt to address the evolving nature of terrorism, while balancing national security, geopolitical pressures, and communal harmony?

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