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Q20

Analyse the complexity and intensity of terrorism, its causes, linkages and obnoxious nexus. Also suggest measures required to be taken to eradicate the menace of terrorism.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · GS III · 15 marks · Border Security and Organised Crime

Security challenges and their management in border areas - linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

Core demand of the question

- Analyse the complexity and intensity of terrorism, its causes, linkages and obnoxious nexus. Also suggest measures required to be taken to eradicate the menace of terrorism
- Keep the explanation within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Terrorism in India's experience is networked, asymmetric, and often sanctuary-backed.

Causes include ideology, alienation, and state sponsorship; poverty is soil, not destiny.

The obnoxious nexus is narco, hawala, fake currency, arms, and sometimes political protection.

Measures are intelligence, NIA/PMLA/FATF, border and cyber control, counter-radicalisation, and diplomacy against safe havens.

Jobs and rights reduce recruits; they do not replace the need to stop the active cell.

Introduction

Terrorism is the organised use of fear against civilians for a political, religious, or criminal aim. Its intensity in India's neighbourhood has been high because ideology, territory, and crime share the same wallet. Eradication is a strong word. Reduction to a residual police problem is the practical goal, through law, money, and politics that do not feed the next recruiter.

Body**Complexity and intensity**

- **Terrorism is asymmetric:** a small cell can shock a large democracy (Parliament 2001, 26/11, Pulwama).
- **It is networked:** local modules, diaspora money, online instruction, and sometimes a state sanctuary.
- Intensity in South Asia has included **fidayeen**, VBIEDs, and now **drones and encrypted command**, which raise the cost of policing.
- **Multiple theatres overlap: J&K, Left-Wing Extremism** (a different ideology, similar terror against civilians and the State), **north-east remnants**, and **urban modules**.

- The target set includes **soft civilians**, **security forces**, and **symbols** (temples, trains, hotels) to maximise publicity.

Causes

- **Political:** unresolved self-determination narratives, alienation, and governance failure that a handler can script.
- **Ideological and religious** extremist teaching, including imported takfiri streams and, in other cases, ethno-national militancy.
- **Youth unemployment and humiliation** as recruitment soil, not as a full cause - most poor people never bomb a market.
- **State sponsorship** and safe havens that turn a local grievance into a trained unit.
- **Copy-cat media reward:** the more the blast leads the news, the more the method spreads.

Linkages and obnoxious nexus

- **Terror-crime:** kidnapping, extortion, and bank robbery (classic LWE and insurgent finance).
- **Terror-narco:** Golden Crescent heroin and Afghan-era routes funding modules; drugs also hollow the society that must resist.
- **Terror-hawala and fake currency:** moving value without a clean bank trail.
- **Terror-arms bazaars** and leftover small arms after regional wars.
- **Terror-cyber:** recruitment, recon, and sometimes disruption.
- **Obnoxious nexus with politics:** when a party, a police unit, or a foreign desk uses a militant as an asset, the State fights itself.

Measures to reduce and, as far as possible, eradicate

- **Intelligence-led policing**, not only post-blast special laws: human sources, financial intelligence, and tech intercept with oversight.
- **NIA, UAPA, PMLA**, and **UN 1267 listing** to freeze people and money; courts that conclude trials so law is not only detention.
- **Dry the nexus:** FATF-standard KYC, narcotics control (NCB), and coastal/border interdiction.
- **Counter-radicalisation** in prisons, campuses, and online, with credible community voices - not only takedowns.
- **Protect soft targets** without turning cities into permanent fortresses: hotels, rail, and religious sites after 26/11 lessons.
- **Diplomacy and, where needed, calibrated force** against sanctuaries; no impunity for state sponsors.
- **Address genuine grievances** (jobs, rights, local government) so the political file is not empty. This is not a substitute for disrupting the bomb-maker.
- **International:** UN conventions, Interpol, and data-sharing; a common definition is still contested, but extradition of named accused is concrete.
- Strategic communication that **denies theatre** without hiding facts.

Flow diagram

Grievance ideology sanctuary -> Terror modules
Narco hawala arms cyber -> Terror modules
Terror modules -> Civilian fear
Intel NIA PMLA FATF -> Disrupt money and cells
Governance without impunity -> Disrupt money and cells

Conclusion

Terrorism is intense because it mixes ideology, sanctuary, and a crime economy. India's tools are intelligence, NIA and financial law, border and cyber work, and a politics that neither bargains with the gun nor ignores the grievance. Eradication is the aim; relentless reduction is the method.

Facts & figures

26/11 and Parliament attack

High-intensity urban and symbolic attacks that defined India's modern counter-terror law and coastal reforms.

UAPA / NIA

Principal Union legal and investigative tools against terrorist organisations and modules.

PMLA and hawala

Financial laws used to attack the terror-crime money trail.

UN 1267

Sanctions listing of designated terrorists and entities, a diplomatic freeze tool.

NCB / Golden Crescent

Narcotics enforcement against a documented finance and social-damage route into India.

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