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Q19

Analyse the multidimensional challenges posed by external state and non-state actors, to the internal security of India. Also discuss measures required to be taken to combat these threats.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · GS III · 15 marks · External Actors and Internal Security

Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

Core demand of the question

- Analyse the multidimensional challenges posed by external state and non-state actors, to the internal security of India. Also discuss measures required to be taken to combat these threats
- Keep the explanation within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

State actors threaten India through proxy terror, **LAC** and cyber pressure, and neighbourhood influence.

Non-state actors bring transnational terror, narcotics, trafficking, and online radicalisation.

The two often share money, sanctuary, and media.

Measures are border management, **NIA**/fusion grids, **FATF** and diplomacy, cyber defence, coastal security, and political oxygen-denial in conflict districts.

Agency turf wars and weak State police undercut even good Union laws.

Introduction

India's internal security is not only a police subject. External **states** use proxies, fire, cyber, and maps. External **non-state** actors use terror, drugs, fake currency, and ideology. The two often work as a mix: a sanctuary, a wallet, and a narrative that land inside Indian districts.

Body

Challenges from external state actors

- **Cross-border terrorism and proxy war** from Pakistani territory has been the longest kinetic challenge to Jammu and Kashmir and to cities (from the 1990s through 26/11 and later modules).
- **China presents a different mix: LAC coercion that ties down forces, cyber and information** probes, and influence in the neighbourhood that can open secondary borders.
- **Intelligence, weapons, and communication** support to insurgent leftovers in the north-east, and to Khalistani or other diaspora- extremism, when a foreign capital finds it useful.
- **Economic and infrastructure leverage** in neighbouring States can become a security problem if ports and grids sit in a rival's playbook.
- **Fake Indian currency notes** and selected **diplomatic cover** for hostile networks.

Challenges from external non-state actors

- **Transnational terror groups** and franchises that radicalise online without a classic training camp.
- **Drug cartels** on the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle routes; money and addiction both hit Punjab, the north-east, and now Kerala coasts.
- **Arms, wildlife, and human-trafficking** networks that use the same porous stretches as migrants.
- **Communal and separatist online ecosystems** hosted on foreign servers.
- **Pirates and criminal gangs** in the Indian Ocean as a lesser but real maritime-internal link.

The nexus

- State and non-state are not clean boxes. **Safe havens, hawala, and social media** join them.
- A drone dropping rifles, a cyber strike on a power utility, and a riot video can arrive in the same month from different desks.

Measures required

- **Border management:** fencing where it works, floodlights, BOPs, riverine and drone patrols, and **integrated checkpoints**; the India-Myanmar Free Movement reality needs intelligence, not only a slogan.
- **Counter-terror law and investigation:** **NIA**, **UAPA** used with due process, **NATGRID** and MAC-type fusion, and police modernisation so the first responder is not blind.
- **Neighbourhood diplomacy** so Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar deny camps; **FATF** and UN listing to dry money.
- **Cyber and information defence** (CERT-In, NCIIPC) against state-grade tools in internal disruption.
- **De-radicalisation, madrasa and campus engagement, and fast courts** so the narrative war is not left to the terrorist's editor.
- **Coastal security** after 26/11: CISF, marine police, transponders - still uneven, still necessary.
- **Federal coordination:** Union forces assist; **State police** own the street. Rivalry between agencies is itself a vulnerability.
- Address **governance gaps** in Kashmir, the north-east, and Left-Wing districts so the external actor has less local oxygen - without confusing development with naivety about guns.

Flow diagram

External states -> Proxies cyber LAC
 Non-state -> Terror drugs FICN
 Proxies cyber LAC -> Internal security
 Terror drugs FICN -> Internal security
 Borders NIA FATF CERT police -> Denial and disruption

Conclusion

External states bring proxies, cyber, and maps; non-state actors bring terror, drugs, and online hate. India's reply has to be borders, fusion intelligence, law with process, neighbourhood denial of camps, and cyber resilience. A single ministry cannot cover that list.

Facts & figures

26/11 Mumbai

2008 city attack from the sea that reset coastal security and the NIA era.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

National Investigation Agency: Union counter-terror investigation after 2008.

FATF

Used to squeeze terror finance and hawala linked to regional safe havens.

LAC

Line of Actual Control with China: a state-actor pressure that consumes internal military bandwidth.

Golden Crescent / Triangle

Drug routes that feed Indian addiction and organised crime as an internal security tax.

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