



Cross-Border Terrorism

Why in News?

- On 14 February 2019, suicide bombing attack on a CRPF convoy in the Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir has killed 40 security personnel.
- Pakistan based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad has claimed the responsibility for the attack.
- Cross-border terrorism remains a core concern for India. According to parliamentary report 323 infiltration bids have been made by terrorists from across the border in 2018.

What is Cross-Border Terrorism?

- The term 'cross-border' implies a movement or an activity across a border between the two countries.
- Cross-Border Terrorism is a form in which soil of one country is used to create terror in bordering countries.
- As a grey zone conflict, it is an undeclared war and considered to be highest form of strategy to bleed a nation for prolonged period by small efforts.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002

- It defines terrorist activity as one which intends to threaten the unity, integrity, security or sovereignty of India or strike terror in the minds of people.
- It can either be created through explosive or lethal weapons or any other substance of hazardous nature to cause death of or injuries to any person and destruction of any property.
- It is a systematic use of violence against civilians for intimidating a population or government for political, religious, or ideological goals.
- Cross Border Terrorism includes unconventional tactics like cyber attacks, political warfare, perception war, sponsorship of armed proxy fighters etc.

Factors Facilitating Cross-Border Incursion

- **Porous Border**
 - India's borders with most neighbours are porous (not protected) which are extremely easy to cross.
 - These borders cannot be physically wired due to complex geographical features such as mountains, deserts and other landforms.
 - This complexity makes these borders difficult to protect by security forces.
 - Moreover Border management in India has been characterised by security ambivalence and lack of strategic thinking.
- **Support from Non-State Actors**
 - India has a discordant political relationship with Pakistan which provide material support for secessionist militants in the border states of North-East and Jammu and Kashmir.
 - Pakistan facilitates movement of its proxies across the border with the only motive of creating terror in the minds of people of neighbouring states.

▪ **Internal Support**

- Sometimes the local population support and facilitate cross border movement of terrorists by providing them conveyance and safe places to hide.
- This could happen due to multitude of reasons such as identical ethnic affiliation, monetary requirements, fear of life, lack of education, dissatisfaction from present governance system etc.

▪ **Corrupt officials**

- Sometimes officials in exchange of few thousand rupees allow unabated entry of illegal migrants whose identities and backgrounds are little known, these channels provide scope to criminal elements to cross over to mainland India.

Indian Border

- India has 15,106.7 kms of land border and a coastline of 7,516.6 kms including island territories.
- Out of the total 29 states of India except for six states (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Delhi and Haryana), rest all states have either maritime boundary or land border with other nations.
- India has land borders with countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan (PoK), China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- India has maritime borders with seven countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Cross-Border Terrorism in India

- During last 15 years thousands of civilians have lost their lives in acts of terrorism, apart from thousands of defence, paramilitary and police personnel who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.
- Infiltration and smuggling of narcotics, arms and weapons across the borders have been matters of constant and unmitigated anxiety to all concerned agencies manning the borders.

Indo-Pakistan Border

- Indo-Pakistan Border (3,323 Km) runs along the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and J&K. Direct accessibility of the borders and some technological developments enabling quick passage of information and transfer of funds has changed the focus and tenor of border security.
- Cross-Border Terrorism from Pakistan has exacerbated due to non-recognition of boundaries by its terrorist groups and their success in acquiring legitimacy due to religious or ethnic identity.
- Inadequate Cooperation from Pakistan has made the management of border further difficult for India.

Indo-Bangladesh Border

- The Indo-Bangladesh Border (4,096 Km) passes through West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- The entire stretch consists of plains, riverine belts, hills & jungles which make illegal migration very easy.
- Illegal Migration across this border poses serious security threats and acts as a fertile ground for organisations like the Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan to penetrate and expand their activities.
- Also, poor law and order situation at the border, has led to smuggling of arms and drugs. Supply of arms help in sustaining any conflict.

Indo-China Border

- India shares a long land border with China (3,488 Km) in the Indian states of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

- Although this border remains relatively aloof from illegal migrations, this border remains a cause of constant vigil for Indian forces.
- India has a longstanding border dispute with China running back to British era in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.

Indo-Nepal Border

- India-Nepal Border (1,751 Km) is an open border in the sense that people of both the countries can cross it from any point, despite the existence of border check posts at several locations.
- Anti-India organizations use this border to plant their people in the territory of India.
- Also, smuggling of gold, small arms, drugs and fake currency helps terrorists in executing an attack.

Indo-Bhutan Border

- This border (699 km) passes through states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Sikkim.
- Illicit establishment of camps by militant outfits in the dense jungles of south-east Bhutan helps insurgents from India in executing anti-India activities.

Indo-Myanmar Border

- The northeast states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share the border with Myanmar (1,643).
- Some of the insurgents groups like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and ULFA operate from Myanmar, which threatens the security of India as well as Myanmar.

Cross-Border Terrorism through Maritime Borders

- Not only contiguous Border States with land borders are vulnerable to the cross border terrorism but **coastal areas are equally vulnerable**.
- Long coastline of the country remains comparatively unguarded. The presence of the Coast Guard is minimal.
- In 26/11 attack in terrorists came from the western coast through boats.

Steps Taken by India

- Government of India has created National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2008 after Mumbai attacks which acts as a federal agency to combat terror.
- Multi Agency Centre (MAC) revamped after 26/11 attacks, acts as a multi-agency intelligence coordination mechanism for counter terrorism.
- Combating Financing of Terrorism Cell (CFT- Cell) is also created to deal with the policy matters on combating terrorist financing and Fake Indian Currency.
- India is also a member of FATF (Financial Action Task Force) whose aim is to establish international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- Recently FATF puts Pakistan on 'grey-list' over global terror finance.
- The government has created observation posts, Border fencing, flood lighting, deployment of modern and hi-tech surveillance equipment to prevent increased immigration.
- Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) has replaced manual surveillance/patrolling of the international borders by electronic surveillance to enhance detection and interception capabilities.
- India has been supportive of all efforts, particularly in the UN to combat terrorism and has played a leading role in shaping international opinion and urging the international community to prioritize the fight against terror.
- India since 1996 is trying to push a global intergovernmental convention i.e. Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) to tackle terrorism. It can provide a legal framework to enhance prosecution and extradition of terrorists.
- Continuous dialogues with neighbouring countries have been initiated from time to time for motivating them for a strict action against terrorists breeding in their respective territories.

Way Forward

- There is a need to reassess our policies on number of issues pertaining to the management of India's international borders such as intelligence apparatus, internal security and border management.
- Technical solutions are necessary to augment and complement the traditional methods of border guarding.
- They not only enhance the surveillance and detection capabilities of the border guarding forces but also improve the impact of the border guarding personnel against infiltration and trans-border crimes.
- India should move in the direction of specialisation of military to fight cross-border terrorism.
- Military should also look at alternative means to strike at the terror camps across the LoC and LAC through mechanisms like Precision Engagement Capability.
- A judicious mix of properly trained manpower and affordable and tested technology is likely to yield better results.
- War against terrorism is a low intensity conflict or localized war and cannot be waged without the full and unstinted support of the society and can be lost easily if the morale and resolve of the society to fight against terrorism falters.