



Cross-Border Terrorism

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For Prelims: Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, Indian Border, National Investigation Agency (NIA), Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT), LoC (Line of Control) and LAC (Line of Actual Control).

For mains: Cross-Border Terrorism, Factors Facilitating Cross-Border Incursion, Cross-Border Terrorism in India, Related Initiatives and more steps that can be taken.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Defence Minister of India urged the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#) member states to jointly **fight and eliminate terrorism, including the cross-border variety**, calling the menace one of the most serious challenges to global peace and security.

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.

What are the Factors Facilitating Cross-Border Incursion?

- **Porous Border:**
 - India's borders with most neighbours are porous (not protected) and 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 for a 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.

What do we Know About the 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 28 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: What's the Scenario?

- During the last several 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 been exacerbated due to the 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. The Supply of arms helps 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 [United Liberation Front of Asom \(ULFA\)](#) 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.**
 - The 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.

What are the 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 the 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.
 - The FATF has removed **Pakistan on its 'greylist' or 'increased monitoring list'**. The FATF **included the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, with which [India signed a free trade agreement](#) in February 2021.
 - There are 23 countries on the grey list of FATF.
 - Zimbabwe has been excluded from the list after a review found it compliant on all parameters.
- 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 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 prioritise 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 the 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.

What can be the 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.**
- The military should also look at alternative means to strike at the terror camps across the **LoC (Line of Control) and LAC (Line of Actual Control)** 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 localised 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.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Mains

Q. 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. **(2021)**

Q. Analyze internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including the Line of Control (LoC). Also discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard. **(2020)**