



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the efficacy of population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) approach in dealing with insurgency in Kashmir. (250 words)

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Approach

- Mention about the situation in Kashmir and the need for counter-insurgency operations in the introduction.
- Mention the approaches of counter-insurgency operations with their merits and demerits.
- Conclude by giving a way forward to deal with the situation.

Introduction

- The political instability in Kashmir started right from the partition of the subcontinent. The root cause of insurgency lies in the alienation of the people of Kashmir from the Indian state. It may be due to deterioration of regional autonomy and not addressing the aspirations of the local people.

Body

There are two broad approaches to dealing with an insurgency:

- **Conventional military approach** also called anti-insurgency or enemy-centric approach, which focuses on targeting the insurgents.
 - These strategies have sometimes been labeled as counterterrorism. Pakistan's handling of the situation in Balochistan can be an example.
- **Population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) approach:**
 - It is aimed at cutting off the insurgents' supply lines by either providing incentives to the population for supporting the counterinsurgent forces, or by imposing costs on the population for supporting the insurgents.

Indian security forces have primarily relied upon the population-centric (COIN) approach in Kashmir.

Main **advantages** of such an approach are:

- Prominence to winning the hearts and minds of the population. Any counter-insurgency approach cannot be successful without the support of the local people and addressing the alienation among them.
- It gives opportunity to convince people that the advantages of supporting the government against the insurgents outweigh the advantages of supporting the insurgents.
- It reduces the chances of local people to join the insurgent groups.

However, there are **risks associated with a population-centric approach:**

- It causes the soft target population to suffer retribution when insurgents begin to view the people to be conspiring with the counterinsurgency forces.
- It is difficult to handle situations when the local population forms the insurgent groups while

counterinsurgency forces are predominantly from outside the conflict zone.

- In such cases, the government forces are seen as occupiers and are rarely able to gain the trust of the civilian population.

Even though difficult to pursue, the people-centric approach seems to be well suited for the Kashmir crisis.

Conclusion

- After the withdrawal of certain provisions of Article 370, and reducing Jammu and Kashmir to a Union Territory status, it is a perfect opportunity for Central government to address people's aspirations and development deficit of the region. The momentary unrest should lead to peace and stability if the concerns of the local people are addressed in a phased manner.

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