



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** Critically examine the role of Indian intelligence agencies in countering terrorism. In light of existing challenges, do you think structural reforms are needed to enhance coordination?(250 words)

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### Approach

- Briefly introduce the role of intelligence agencies in countering terrorism.
- Discuss the existing intelligence agencies, identify key challenges faced by these agencies in countering terrorism, and also suggest reform for better coordination.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

India's intelligence agencies play a crucial role in safeguarding national security, especially in countering terrorism. Agencies such as the **RAW**, the **IB**, and the **NIA** are at the forefront of intelligence gathering, and counter-terrorism operations. Despite key successes, challenges like **poor coordination** hinder their effectiveness.

#### Role of Indian Intelligence Agencies in Countering Terrorism:

- **Intelligence Gathering & Analysis:** **RAW** is responsible for gathering external intelligence, focusing on threats from neighboring countries like **Pakistan** and **China**, as well as groups like **LeT** and **JeM**, which were behind attacks such as the **2001 Parliament attack** and **26/11 Mumbai attacks**.
  - The **IB** monitors **homegrown terror networks**, including **Indian Mujahideen** and **SIMI**.
  - Established in 2009, the **NIA** investigates and prosecutes terrorism-related offenses, including bombings and bomb threats, with a nationwide mandate.
- **Preventive Measures:** Intelligence agencies use **inputs to conduct preventive operations**, including **intercepting communications** and deploying tactical forces to thwart attacks before they occur.
  - Agencies like the **National Security Guard (NSG)**, supported by intelligence, respond to high-profile terrorist incidents, such as the **Mumbai attacks of 2008**, to neutralize immediate threats.
- **International Cooperation:** Indian intelligence works with **global counterparts** like the **CIA(America)**, and **Mossad (Israel)** to track transnational terrorist networks, share intelligence, and engage in joint operations, especially concerning cross-border terrorism.

#### Challenges Faced by Indian Intelligence Agencies:

- **Coordination Gaps:** Despite the establishment of the **Multi-Agency Centre (MAC)** to enhance coordination, gaps between central and state intelligence agencies persist, resulting in **overlapping roles and missed opportunities**.
  - Agencies often work in silos, weakening the overall intelligence system.
- **Inadequate Technological Capabilities:** India's intelligence agencies face challenges in

keeping up with **cyber-terrorism and online radicalization**.

- Agencies like the **NTRO and DIA** are still adapting to the complexities of big **data surveillance**, and real-time intelligence processing remains a work in progress.
- Moreover, the lack of **specialist technical manpower**, such as data analysts, cyber experts, and language specialists, adds to the challenge.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Bureaucratic red tape significantly delays decision-making and hampers the swift dissemination and action of intelligence, particularly during high-stakes counter-terrorism operations.
- **Manpower Shortages: Recruitment issues and poor cadre management** further exacerbate these gaps.
  - Most agencies rely on deputations from the police and military, which has led to a lack of **dedicated intelligence officers** with the specialized training required for modern intelligence work, such as cybersecurity and counterterrorism operations.

### **Need for Structural Reforms and Enhanced Coordination:**

- **Institutional Reforms:** A national-level **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** should be upgraded to facilitate seamless and swift data sharing among all intelligence and law enforcement agencies.
  - This can centralize the operations of various intelligence agencies, improving real-time information sharing.
  - The **Kargil Review Committee (1999)** recommended better intelligence sharing and improved coordination among agencies to counter cross-border terrorism.
- **Cyber Intelligence: Modernization of intelligence infrastructure** is vital, especially in **cybersecurity** and **big data analytics**. This can be achieved through **public-private partnerships**.
  - India can benefit by integrating AI-powered surveillance systems, such as facial **recognition and predictive analytics** to detect cyber-terror threats.
- **Human Resource Optimization:** Establish a **dedicated intelligence cadre** to recruit personnel with specific skills, such as **cybersecurity, technical analysis, and language expertise**.
  - **Partnerships with academic institutions and specialized training programs** will help build a skilled workforce capable of handling emerging threats.
- **Oversight Mechanisms:** A structured intelligence oversight should establish a **National Intelligence Oversight Committee (NIOC)** of senior political leaders and security experts for accountability, while the **National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)** continues its advisory role on strategic and internal security.

## **Conclusion**

A more **integrated** approach to intelligence work, along with better coordination between agencies, will allow India to better tackle the evolving nature of terrorism. Political leadership, committed to long-term reforms, is essential to drive these changes and ensure India's intelligence agencies can effectively counter terrorism in the future.