



Changing Nature of Terrorism

For Prelims: [Sahel](#), [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#), [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#), [Deepfake](#), [AI](#), [Cryptocurrency](#), [FATF](#), [BIMSTEC](#), [SAARC](#), [UAPA](#), [NIA](#).

For Mains: Changing nature of terrorism and ways to counter them.

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Why in News?

New terror methods and terror attacks are evolving, influenced by **geopolitical instability**, [digital radicalization](#), and **evolving strategies** of extremist groups.

How is the Nature of Terrorism is Changing?

- **Unpredictability:** Terrorism trends are **unpredictable**, allowing dormant groups like [Hamas](#) and [Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham](#) (HTS) (Syrian terrorist organization) to resurface with major impact.
 - The earlier belief that **terror groups would not engage in full-scale war** but Hamas attack on Israel in **October 2023** has **blurred this predictability**.
 - **Self indoctrinated and radicalised** youths are leading to unpredictable [Lone-wolf attacks](#). E.g., **New Orleans attacks 2025 in the US**.
- **State Sponsored:** Both **Syria and Afghanistan** now governed by terrorist groups (HTS and the Taliban, respectively) prolonging terrorism.
- **Evolving Tactics:** Modern terrorism relies on **sympathizers, sleeper cells, ideological debates on use of violence**, unconventional attacks like **vehicle ramming**, and a rising number of **educated professionals** joining extremist networks.
- **Expanding Geographic Reach:** [ISIS-K](#)'s growing presence in **Afghanistan** threatens South Asia.
- **Technology as a Force Multiplier:** Terrorists are using advanced technology like **drones, 3D printing**, and **cyber tools** to boost their capabilities, potentially enabling high-profile attacks that **amplify propaganda**.
 - E.g., **Houthi attack on Saudi Aramco's oil facilities** in 2019 showcased use of **precision drones**.
- **Cross-Group Cooperation:** Terrorist groups are collaborating to increase their area of influence and threaten regional stability.
 - E.g., Iran's **Axis of Resistance (Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iraqi militias)** working against Israel.
- **Domestic Terrorism in the West:** **Political polarization** in the US and Europe is driving extremism, while **immigration tensions** risk violence, as seen in the **El Paso shooting 2019** in US

What are the Reasons for Changing the Nature of Terrorism?

- **Weakened Global Governance:** Institutions like the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) and the [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) are proving **ineffective** in **dismantling terror groups** and **preventing their funding**, making global counter-terrorism efforts **weak**.
- **Emergence of Terror Regime:** The collapse of the **Assad regime** and rise of **HTS** in Syria indicate potential for **strengthening of terror infrastructure** due to political shifts.
- **Global Terrorist Networks:** Increased globalization has facilitated the **movement of people, money, and weapons** across borders.
 - E.g., **Al-Qaeda and ISIS** presence in **Africa, South Asia, and Europe** beyond the Middle East.
- **Shift in Ideological Motivations:** Terrorism now stems from **religious extremism, identity grievances, and personal motives**, not just political goals.
 - E.g., the **Christchurch shootings 2019** were driven by white supremacist extremism.
- **Proxy Warfare:** State-backed terrorist groups complicate terrorism by **fueling instability** in rival countries. E.g., [Jaish-e-Mohammed](#) carried out attacks in **India** with **Pakistan's** support.

How the Changing Nature of Terrorism Impacting India?

- **Homegrown Radicalization:** Terror organisations have recruited **Indian youth**, with radicalization cases in **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka**.
 - E.g., India identified **62 locals and 68 overseas Indians** linked to **ISIS**, with **95% from South India**.
- **Low-Cost Attacks:** Low-cost, high-impact attacks are rising e.g., low key attacks like **Coimbatore car blast 2022** for which **resources** can be arranged **locally**.
- **Radicalization in Local Dialects:** Terrorists use social media and **encrypted apps** for propaganda, recruitment, and planning, while [deepfake technology](#) and **AI** pose rising misinformation threats in **local dialects** which are **hard to detect** on the **formal social media platforms**.
- **UAV-Based Terrorism:** Drones are now used to **drop arms, explosives, and drugs** across the India-Pakistan border.
 - E.g., Two **explosives-laden drones** crashed into the **Indian Air Force station** at Jammu in 2021.
- **Hawala Transactions:** Increased reliance on [hawala networks](#), [cryptocurrency transactions](#), and **fake NGOs** run by fugitive people like **Zakir Naik** to fund terrorism.
 - E.g., channeling of foreign funds for unlawful activities by the now banned [Popular Front of India \(PFI\)](#).

Way Forward

- **Global Cooperation:** Strengthen international counterterrorism frameworks, including the **UNSC** and [FATE](#), to curb terrorist financing and transnational networks.
 - India should strengthen intelligence-sharing with neighbors via [BIMSTEC](#) and [SAARC](#).
- **AI & Cybersecurity Measures:** Develop AI-driven surveillance and [deepfake detection tools](#) to counter online radicalization and misinformation in local languages.
 - Work with tech companies to curb extremist content and propaganda spread through encrypted apps.
- **NGO Scrutiny:** Strictly monitor **NGOs** receiving foreign funds to **prevent terror financing** under the guise of charity.
- **Counterterrorism Laws:** Update laws like [UAPA](#) and [NIA Acts](#) to tackle new-age threats like one-wolf attack.

Drishti Mains Question:

How is the nature of terrorism evolving globally? Discuss the role of technology and geopolitics in shaping modern terrorism.

Mains

Q. Keeping in view of India's Internal Security, analyse the impact of cross-border cyber-attacks. Also, discuss defensive measures against these sophisticated attacks. (2021)

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. Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchange could help generate goodwill between the two countries. Discuss with suitable examples. (2015)

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