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How Does India Deal With Radicalisation?

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(This editorial is based on the article “How Does India Deal with Radicalisation?” which appeared in the “Times of India” on 9th March 2019.)

In the aftermath of recent terrorist attacks in Kashmir, executed by local militants owing allegiance to Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM), debate surrounding **home grown radicalisation** has raised whose sources of inspiration may be abroad.

Recently NIA busted an Islamic State (IS) ‘inspired’ module in Amroha, in conjunction with several other instances discovered earlier.

A huge local population engulfed by systematic radicalisation can create a major challenge as there seems not much preparedness in this direction.

Types of Radicalisation

Right-Wing Extremism – It is characterized by the violent defence of a racial, ethnic or pseudo-national identity, and is also associated with radical hostility towards state authorities, minorities, immigrants and/or left-wing political groups.

Politico-Religious Extremism – It results from political interpretation of religion and the defence, by violent means, of a religious identity perceived to be under attack (via international conflicts, foreign policy, social debates, etc.). Any religion may spawn this type of violent radicalization.

Left-Wing Extremism – It focuses primarily on anti-capitalist demands and calls for the transformation of political systems considered responsible for producing social inequalities, and that may ultimately employ violent means to further its cause. It includes anarchist, maoist, Trotskyist and marxist-leninist groups that use violence to advocate for their cause.

Spreading Radicalisation

There are many different theories and models describing how radicalisation happens. However there is no single process in which someone becomes radicalised, and it is dependent on a number of different circumstances.

Extremist groups often try to recruit new young members online through the use of social media, people become radicalised because of the people they associate with, some are exposed to extremist views at home, sometimes it is completely based on one's understanding of events and experience.

Instances of radicalisation in India

- Cases have revealed instances of internet-facilitated indoctrination and active radicalisation in multiple states.
- Instances of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) have grown despite the continued government intervention. Encounters, ambushes and arrests still occur with regular frequency in the red corridor districts.
- On the other end of the spectrum increased incidents of mob lynching, cow vigilantism and the string of assassinations of rationalists such as Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and Gauri Lankesh point towards rising extremism in the right wing cadres.
- These instances signify the stark reality of the threats to internal security that stare India in the face, from both the right wing as well as the left.

Tackling Extremism

- The threat from radicalisation remains highly underestimated and understudied in India. In the absence of official Indian policy on radicalisation and de-radicalisation situation has turned even worse, aggravating the problem.
- In order to face and counter such threats effectively and conclusively, policy addressing and trying to reverse the process of radicalisation that forces an individual or a group to idealise and act upon extremist ideas is needed.
- The programme should focus upon the four aspects of the individual, family, religion and psychology and seeks to bring about a lasting change in the individual's belief system.
- However, instead of seeing it as a rehabilitative, reformatory and preventive approach it is looked with a security centric perspective severely undermining the gravity of the problem.

Challenges in Formulating a Policy

Initiatives have been taken to counter the menace of growing radicalisation by state governments through their respective De-radicalisation programs; however the programs have turned out to be weak in many ways:

- Firstly, they aim only at those individuals who under goes radicalisation and does not deal with people who have not crossed the boundaries of law under the influence of the radical doctrine.
- People or communities affected by radicalisation often belongs to marginalised and neglected section having little or no trust on law enforcement agencies, blocking any attempt at constructive dialogues with minority communities.
- Any policy in isolation without a comprehensive policy or legal framework from the Centre makes policy weak and results in delays in intelligence gathering and swift action.
- In the absence of a central policy or legal framework, any efforts at countering radicalisation will only be dealing with superficial aspects as radical content is primarily disseminated through the internet which requires greater cooperation from centre given the pan-Indian nature of the problem.

Way Forward

- Programme with respect to radicalisation must be based upon objectively researched conclusions based on strong evidence and not merely the subjective experience of an officer.
- India's federal structure requires the Centre to develop an umbrella of legal framework aimed at facilitating, guiding and coordinating efforts of individual states to combat radicalisation therefore any such framework should not be limited to any one community or source of radicalisation.
- The problem of radicalisation has seen an uptrend and in absence of any clear policy will continue to spread. It is important therefore to conduct meaningful research to aid the development of a framework that not only deals with de-radicalisation but also rehabilitate the misguided youth of the nation.