



# India's Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Its Neighbourhood: A Critical Analysis

Marami Devi

Student

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya

## ABSTRACT

India's neighborhood has been plagued by terrorism, with Pakistan being a major contributor to this threat. Despite various efforts to combat terrorism, India continues to face several challenges in its counter-terrorism efforts. This study provides a critical analysis of India's counter-terrorism strategy in its neighborhood, focusing on the country's response to terrorism emanating from Pakistan. This study examines the evolution of India's counter-terrorism approach from reactive to a proactive strategy and assesses its effectiveness in deterring terrorist attacks. This study also analyzes the key challenges facing India's counter-terrorism efforts, including the lack of effective international cooperation, the presence of terrorist safe places in Pakistan and the need for greater coordination between different agencies which involved in counter-terrorism efforts. This study employs a qualitative research approach and which draws on official data, media reports, government statements etc. The findings of the study highlight the need for a more proactive and coordinated approach to counter-terrorism which includes greater international cooperation, more effective use of intelligence and improved coordination between different agencies which are involved in counter-terrorism efforts. This study also analyzes the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism including poverty, social inequality and unemployment.

**Keywords:** India, Terrorism, Strategy, Neighbourhood.

**Introduction:**

Terrorism has become a complex phenomenon that threatens global peace, security and stability. The menace of terrorism has assumed various forms and manifestations, making it a highly dynamic and adaptable threat. India has been grappling with challenges of terrorism for several decades, with its neighborhood being a hotbed of terrorist activities. The subcontinent of India comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka has been vulnerable to various forms of terrorism including cross-border terrorism, insurgency and left-wing extremism. The region's borders, diverse demographics and complex geopolitics have created an environment conducive to the growth and spread of terrorist ideologies. Pakistan, in particular has been accused of harboring and supporting various terrorist groups including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul Mujahideen. This groups have been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in India including the Mumbai terror attack in 2008 and the Pulwama attack in 2019. The government of India has responded to these threats by implementing various counter-terrorism strategies including strengthening its intelligence agencies, launching military operations against terrorist groups and enhancing border security. However, the effectiveness of these strategies has been debated, with some arguing that they have been inadequate in addressing the root causes of terrorism. Others have raised concern about human rights implications of these strategies highlighting the need for a more multi-faceted approach to counter-terrorism. Furthermore, the rise of social media and the internet has help terrorist groups to spread their ideologies and recruit new members more easily. The use of cryptocurrencies and other digital technologies has also facilitated the financing of terrorist activities. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the terrorism threat in India's neighborhood, especially focusing on Pakistan. The study will examine the historical and contemporary context of terrorism in the region and the Indian government's response to these threats. By exploring the complexities of terrorism in India's neighborhood, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of this persistent threat and also inform the development of effective counter-terrorism strategies.

**Statement of the problem:**

India's neighborhood has been plagued by terrorism, with Pakistan being a major contributor to this menace. Despite various efforts to combat terrorism, India continues to face significant challenges in its counter-terrorism efforts. The recent terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India highlights the need for a critical analysis of India's counter-terrorism strategy in its neighborhood.

**Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives of the present study are as followed-

- (1) To analyze the key components of India's counter-terrorism strategy in its neighborhood.

- (2) To evaluate the effectiveness of India's counter-terrorism strategy.
- (3) To identify the major challenges and limitations faced by India in its counter-terrorism efforts.

### **Research Questions:**

- (1) What are the key components of India's counter-terrorism strategy in its neighborhood?
- (2) How effective has India's counter-terrorism strategy been in addressing the threat of terrorism in its neighborhood?
- (3) What are the major challenges and limitations faced by India in its counter-terrorism efforts?

### **Methodology of the Study:**

The study is qualitative in nature. For collecting data on this research topic, the investigator has conducted an extensive review of existing literature including academic articles, books and also government reports also analyze documents from reputable sources like the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Investigation Agency and international agency like United Nation to gather data on India's counter-terrorism efforts.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

Jamwal (2003) conducted a study on "Counter Terrorism Strategy. The purpose of the study was to find out the major strategy of India for counter the terrorist attack. Findings from the study indicate that India have not a proper counter-terrorism strategy till now. This study suggests some measures that might from part of a possible counter-terrorism strategy for India.

Asthana (2010) conducted a study on "Cross-border terrorism in India: Counter-terrorism strategies and challenges." This study discussed the India's own approach to counter-terrorism and also traced the origins of terrorism in India, with particular reference to the country's rivalry over Kashmir with neighboring Pakistan. This study concludes with recommendations for improving India's institutional capabilities, inter-agency coordination and international cooperation in order to more effectively combat cross-border terrorism.

Malhotra (2011) conducted a study on "Terrorism and Counter Terrorism in South Asia and India: A case of India and her Neighbours." This study discussed the terrorist groups involved in South Asia in detail and India in particular. Terrorist affected areas in South Asia and the effect of Terrorism has also discussed in detail. The Naxal movement in India also been discussed in detail. Findings from the study indicate that South Asia as well as India have not any strong counter terrorism strategy and through this study the researcher recommended some counter-terrorism measures and strategy for South Asia as well as for India.

Sahoo (2017) conducted a study on "Narendra Modi's anti-terrorism strategy and Indias's Islamic neighbours". This study discussed the strategy which is adopted by Modi's government for counter-terrorism.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a policy after the Uri terrorist attack, advocating the elimination of terrorism from the subcontinent. After the terrorist attacks in Peshawar, Modi had stated that there is no “good” or “bad” terrorism. The findings of the study discussed the effectiveness of this policy.

Mahadevan (2011) conducted a study on “ The Politics of Counter-terrorism in India : Strategic intelligence and national security in South Asia”. This study discussed the three cases, Sikh separatist, Kashmir separatist and Pan-Islamist groups, focuses on the efforts of India’s decision-makers and intelligence agencies to create coherent and effective counter-terrorism policies and actions. The findings of the study indicate the valuable information for those examining strategy-making and counter-terrorism practitioners as well as researchers in addition to those interested in the politics of India.

Kalyanaraman (2020) conducted a study on “Thinking about Counter Terrorism in India’s National Strategy”. This study discussed the comprehensive and periodic assessment of the threat of terrorism facing India , and also argues that this is an essential prerequisite for designing a counter terrorism strategy. It also highlights identity as the root cause of terrorism in the Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. The findings of the study indicate a broad framework for thinking about a counter-terrorism strategy for India.

### **Evolution of India’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy :**

India’s counter-terrorism strategy has emerged significantly over the years, with a shift from a purely defensive approach to a more proactive one. India’s counter-terrorism strategy has undergone significant changes since the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008. At first India’s response to terrorism was reactive, focusing on responding to attacks after they had occurred. But after rise of terrorist groups like Lashker-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, India began to adopt a more proactive strategy. The 2016 Surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot airstrike marked significant shift in India’s counter-terrorism strategy. This operation demonstrated India’s willingness to take action against terrorist groups operating from Pakistan. Recently, Operation Sindoor launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack in 2025.

### **Operation Sindoor : A new paradigm in India’s counter-terrorism strategy :**

Operation Sindoor marked a significant expansion of India’s response to terrorism. This operation involved precision strikes against terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. This operation shows India’s capability to inflict significant damage on terrorist groups operating from Pakistan. This operation also demonstrated India’s willingness to adopt a more proactive approach to counter-terrorism. By launching this strike against terrorist groups, India sent a strong message that it will no longer tolerate terrorism emanating from Pakistan.



## **Key Components of India's Counter-Terrorism Strategy :**

**(1) Legislative Measures :** India has enacted various laws to prevent and address terrorism, including the Unlawful Activities( Prevention) Act (UAPA),1967 and the Prevention Of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2002. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has been established for investigated terrorism related crimes.

**(2) Intelligence Gathering and Sharing:** India's intelligence agencies such as Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) play a significant role in tracking terrorist groups. India has also been an active participant in intelligence sharing networks, like Interpol and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

**(3) Military Responses and Surgical Strikes:** India has adopted a more assertive military strategy, with surgical strikes being a key component of its counter-terrorism approach. The success of these strikes has enhanced national security and also sent a clear signal to terrorist groups and their sponsors.

**(4) Diplomatic and Global Engagement:** India has been advocating for a comprehensive United Nations convention on international terrorism and also engaged in joint counter-terrorism training programs with countries like Israel and United States. India also raising the issue of state-sponsored terrorism in global forums, particularly highlighting Pakistan's role for supporting cross-border terrorism.

**(5) Cybersecurity Measures:** India has adopted various cybersecurity measures to counter terrorism, focusing on protecting critical infrastructure, fostering cooperation with private and international partners and enhancing law enforcement capabilities. Some measures includes establishing specialized cybersecurity centers, conducting cybersecurity drills, developing cyber crisis management plans and promoting public-private partnerships etc.

**(6) Community Engagement:** Community engagement is a crucial aspect of India's counter-terrorism strategy. It involves building trust and partnership with local communities, particularly in areas vulnerable to terrorist influence. It also adopt various initiatives to educate citizens about the dangers of terrorism and importance of national security.

**(7) Regional counter-terrorism efforts :** India's engagement with regional organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) demonstrate India's commitment to combating terrorism and promoting regional stability.

**(8) United Nations office of Counter-Terrorism(UNOCT) :** India has contributed to UNOCT's efforts to counter terrorism and also provided financial support to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (CTTF).

Thus, India adopted various strategy for fight against terrorism. India's counter-terrorism strategy is a dynamic and evolving approach which requires continuous adaptation and innovation to address the changing nature of terrorist threats.

### **Effectiveness of India's Counter-Terrorism Strategy:**

India's counter-terrorism strategy's effectiveness is mixed, marked by significant improvements in response to attacks. After major terrorist attacks, India has shown a firmer, more unified approach, seen in Operation Sindoor, which combined diplomatic, economic and military actions. The creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) aims to improve coordination among military services and enhance overall combat capabilities. However critics argue the response often lacks strategic coherence, with short-term measures replacing a unified doctrine and also concern remain about the focus on the Muslim minority and human rights violations by security forces, especially in Kashmir.

### **Challenges and limitations of India's Counter-Terrorism Strategy :**

Despite its comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy, India faces various challenges and limitations. These include :

**(1) Cross- Border Terrorism:** India's cross-border terrorism is a complex issue primarily fueled by neighboring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. The country's extensive and varied international borders which stretch over 15,000 Kilometers, make it challenging to secure. Cross border terrorism from Pakistan remains a significant concern, with groups like Lashkar-e Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad operating from Pakistani soil.

**(2) Internal Terrorism:** Which includes home-grown extremist groups and the rise of radicalization among certain sections of society. The presence of internal insurgencies particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, the North-East and the Naxalite affected areas which adds another layer of complexity to India's counter-terrorism strategy.

**(3) Intelligence Gaps and Coordination Issues:** It also hinder India's counter-terrorism efforts. The need for effective intelligence gathering and sharing among different agencies is crucial in preventing and responding to terrorist attacks.

**(4) Diplomatic Limitations:** India's efforts to isolate Pakistan in the global arena have not been completely successful due to geopolitical complexities, particularly involving China and some Western powers have hindered progress.

**(5) Global Terror Networks:** The rise of global terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS poses a new set of challenges for India. The spread of global terror groups has led to increased radicalization and recruitment of Indian citizens, which further complicating India's counter-terrorism efforts.

**(6) Radicalization and Extremism:** The spread of radical ideologies and extremism among certain groups of society poses a significant challenge to India's internal security and counter-terrorism efforts.

**(7) Emerging Technologies:** Terrorist groups utilize emerging technologies such as virtual currencies, drones and encrypted communication, making traditional counter-terrorism methods less effective.

**(8) Lack of Resources:** Inadequate international coordination, lack of universally defined legal frameworks hinder the India's counter-terrorism strategy.

**(9) Reactive Strategy:** India's counter-terrorism response is criticize as short-term focus strategy which unable to address the root cause of the problem. It is implemented only after an attack occurs.

**(10) Weak and Politicized Multilateral Mechanisms:** The effectiveness of international counter-terrorism mechanisms is compromised by a lack of transparency, agendas leading to a politicization of efforts.

**(11) International Political will:** A general lack of political will in the international community prevent the global community from consistently and uniformly addressing terrorism.

#### **Suggestions for removing the challenges faced by India in its counter-terrorism strategy:**

For Removing the challenges posed by global terror networks requires a multi-faceted approach that involves various stakeholders, including governments, law enforcement and civil society. Some of the strategies for removing these challenges are –

**(1) International Cooperation:** Foster international cooperation to share intelligence, best practices, and resources to combat terrorism.

**(2) Capacity Building:** Build the capacity of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute terrorist cases effectively.

**(3) Border Security:** Strengthen border security to prevent the movement of terrorist and their materials.

**(4) Cybersecurity Measures:** Implement robust cybersecurity measures to prevent terrorist groups from using the internet and social media for propaganda, recruitment and planning.

**(5) Community Engagement:** Engage with local communities to prevent radicalization and promote counter-narratives.

**(6) Education and Awareness:** Educate the people about the dangers of terrorism and the importance of reporting suspicious activities.

**(7) Conflict Resolution:** Address underlying conflicts and grievances that terrorist groups exploit to recruit and radicalize individuals.

**(8) International Frameworks:** Strengthen international frameworks and laws to combat terrorism, such as the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism strategy.

Implementing these strategies requires a collective efforts from civil society, governments, international organizations and the private sector.

### **Conclusion:**

India's counter-terrorism strategy in its neighborhood is a complex and multifaceted one, involving a combination of diplomatic, military, legal measures and intelligence. While India has made significant progress in combating terrorism, various challenges and limitations still remain. To overcome these challenges, India must continue to adapt its strategies and strengthen international cooperation to ensure the safety and security of its citizens and contribute to global counter-terrorism efforts. While the effectiveness of this strategy can be debated, it is clear that India is no longer willing to tolerate terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

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