

BRICS: Focus on Terrorism

Rajya Sabha TV programs like 'The Big Picture', 'In Depth' and 'India's World' are informative programs that are important for UPSC preparation. In this article, you can read about the discussions held in the 'Big Picture' episode on "BRICS: Focus on Terrorism" for the [IAS exam](#).

Anchor – Vishal Dahiya

Guests – Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Dhruv C. Katoch, Director, India Foundation; Ashok Sajjanhar, Former Ambassador; Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, Foreign Affairs Editor, Hindustan Times.

Background:

- **BRICS** member nations have urged for concerted efforts to fight terrorism in accordance with international law.
- The declaration at the end of the 11th BRICS summit stressed the need to tackle the misuse of information and communication technologies for terrorist activities and combating illicit financial laws.
- BRICS is a supplement on what is being done in the United Nations, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
 - Speaking at the plenary session of the summit Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had said that terrorism had caused, "a loss of approximately 1 trillion dollars to the world economy and 2.25 lakh people have lost their life due to terror acts in over a decade."

Details regarding the Discussion:

- It was the fourth round of the joint working group on counter-terrorism in BRICS.
- BRICS is an important tool being used to contain Pakistan's terrorism against India.
- They've decided to welcome five sub-groups to aid in the strategic fight against terrorism.
 - A number of countries close to Pakistan have signed up for a set of proposals on terrorism.

Highlights of the Brasilia Declaration:

- It's a very comprehensive declaration and it deals with the issue of terrorism.
- The Brasilia Declaration deals with two key features which are:
 - Commitment to tackle misuse of information and communication technology
 - Terror financing should be put in check.
 - **FATF– Financial Action Task Force**– an intergovernmental organization to combat money laundering. The mandate was expanded in 2001 to include Terrorism Financing.
 - FATF is a very important instrument used by many countries to see that the countries that are supporting terrorism are stopped from funding terrorists in whatever way possible.
- There are no special references to Pakistan in the Declaration.
- The declaration states that it won't be associated with any religion, nationality or civilization.
- The declaration is important, because after the 4th meeting- 5 subgroups were to be made. The sub-groups made were to focus on each of the following areas:
 - Terror financing
 - Use of the internet for terrorist purposes
 - Countering radicalization
 - Issue of foreign terrorist fighters
 - Capacity building

- FATF received a detailed coverage and treatment as far as this declaration is concerned.
- Its mentioned that the responsibility for curtailing the terrorism and taking action relies on the respective state government's to ensure that there is no incidence of:
 - Money laundering and
 - No use of **ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)** for criminal purposes or for promoting terrorism.
- In the declaration at Shaman in 2017, all terrorist groups operating against India and Afghanistan from Pakistan were mentioned such as Jesse Mohammed, and Lashkar-e-Taiba.
- The effectiveness of these declarations depends upon the implementation of these declarations by the countries.

Significance of the Brasilia Declaration:

- When looking at the five BRICS nations, they form nearly 50% of the global economy and the economic losses faced by these countries only due to terrorism is huge.
- 90% of terrorism is based on an ideology and the availability of finances. So when the five nations got together, they decided to operate comprehensively on:
 - The financial aspects and on
 - Controlling communication networks.
- Finances spread through direct and indirect sources such as through drugs, arms smuggling, and direct contribution of people for a cause.
- Ideology spreads through the web more commonly in the current situation than through word-of-mouth.
- When these five countries get together and form common action plans to see how terrorism can be controlled while operating under the UN on the two pillars- financial terrorism and controlled communication network, then the whole world gets involved making us move in a constructive and forward way, which is a very beneficial step, especially for India.

The approach of Nations towards terrorism:

- Each of these five countries has a separate approach towards terrorism.
- **Brazil** doesn't have much of a terrorism problem. There's very little terrorism problem in Latin America with the exception of very little Islamic activity in some areas.
- **South Africa** does not face much terrorism again with the exception of a few Islamic activities. Biggest African terrorist groups such as Boko Haram al- Shabaab do not operate in southern Africa.
- Russia China and India are the three countries for whom it is a major concern and are genuinely affected.
- Terrorism in a broad sense is a problem concerning all the nations, but it's a genuine and a real problem for three of the countries, and each of the three countries has a slightly different perspective and angle to its implementation:
 - **Russia:**
 - The primary focus is on the terrorism that has emanated out of Chechnya and the Caucasus region and they're also getting extremely worried about Central Asia, afraid that if the Taliban were to come back to Afghanistan, it will create instability in Central Asia.
 - That is the ostensible reason behind why Russia wants to approach the [Taliban](#) via Pakistan and have a discussion with them.
 - **China:**
 - It is taking an extreme step to effectively try to eradicate Islam in its culture and society to handle the problem of Islamic terrorism on its soil by eradicating the entire culture and size of the society.

- Xinjiang: they've put more than a million Uighur people in prison as an attempt to control terrorism. They've changed the local demographic of the Xinjiang by replacing the local Uighur population with the Han population.
- As far as where Pakistan is concerned; Pakistan's terrorism against India or against Afghanistan, they don't worry much as long as it doesn't affect the Chinese people working in CPEC Corridor or Baluchistan.
- Cross-border terrorism is simply not acceptable for them because of their relationships with Pakistan.
- Treats terrorism on parallel tracks, on one track they take a very strict action notwithstanding what the world says about it and on the other they are quite lax about it.
- **India:**
 - The Islamic State is a concern for India.
 - Situations involving sudden attacks by the Islamic state such as in the sudden attack in Sri Lanka recently by the Islamic state.
 - Lashkar-e- Taiba and Al-Qaeda operate in the bay of Bengal and is a direct threat to India.
- Terrorism financing and online radicalization is an area of convergence.
- Terrorism financing is highly fungible as the same networks may be used by several different networks although they may have nothing to do with each other.
- Common elements of problems would be:
 - Terrorism financing and
 - Misuse of ICT

Way Forward:

- **Utilize the availability of Forums:** We've to take full advantage of all forums available, such as FATF, [G20](#), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation ([SCO](#)) or UN and raise the question of terrorism and that the world should act together without any double standard or division between terrorists as bad and good.
 - The organization although having been formed only in 2016, has added significantly to the fight against terrorism. Using this forum, all other forums also have to be channelized to win this fight.
- **Send a wider message to the World:** Every country has to fight its own battle of terror, but the advantage of a large forum like BRICS is, that it sensitizes a large segment of the society, making the other countries which aren't facing terrorism currently realize that terrorism is an ever-present threat which they might face in future.
 - The Easter Attack by Islamic fundamentalists in Sri Lanka was completely unexpected. So instead of distancing oneself from the topic that it isn't concerning oneself, a forum like BRICS allows you to talk about it in one voice.
- **The importance of other forums:** Financial terrorism and the spread of ideology through social media requires a whole world approach. Hence all of the forums available such as the UN are equally important.
 - So BRICS should be treated as one of the important forums and not as the only important forum.
- **Financial Terrorism:** It's the glue for all five nations to work together.
 - Russia and China are attempting to set up a parallel structure for interbank payment as their version of a SWIFT Structure and India has joined China in supporting their version of a world bank called [AIIB](#) (**Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**).
 - India can use the BRICS as a platform to insist that these new structures should incorporate anti-terrorism mandates and rules and regulations making it difficult for countries like Pakistan to use such alternate sources.

Conclusion:

The crux of the 11th summit of the BRICS against terrorism is that while these five nations might have their own different threats as far as terrorism is concerned, but going by with the economic and humane costs of the threat of terror not only these five nations but the entire world seemingly will have to come together and fight the issue of terror with all its might.

