

Terrorism - UPSC Notes

Terrorism is a term that is seen in the news very regularly. It is a broad term and encompasses a wide variety of events and concepts. Terrorism affects the world deeply and India, particularly, has been a victim of various terror acts perpetrated by different groups.

In this article, you can read all about terrorism, its various forms and types, possible causes of terrorism and how India is affected by it. This is an important concept to be understood and studied for the [UPSC exam](#). Terrorism is a part of the [UPSC syllabus](#), in the GS Paper III (Internal Security, Defence).

Definition of Terrorism

The term terrorism is very broad and there is no one definition of the term. Different people and organisations have come up with their own definition of what constitutes terrorism.

- Generally, the term terrorism indicates a criminal and violent activity performed by an individual or group of individuals or an organisation in order to strike terror among the general public and send messages to the public and governments, to fulfil a goal.
- Although the victims of the terror act may be a few people (depending upon the event), the intended target is usually larger than the number of victims alone.
- The terrorists' purpose is to send a strong message to the larger public and the government. They generally claim responsibility after conducting a violent act so as to let people know of their power and capabilities and thus, inflict terror upon the people.

Some commonly-used definitions of terrorism are listed below:

UN Definition: Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for particular purpose are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.

US Department of State Definition: Terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.

A definition according to the lapsed **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act** is very inclusive and exhaustive:

“Whoever with intent to overawe the Government as by law established or to strike terror in the people or any section of the people or to alienate any section of the people or to adversely affect the harmony amongst different sections of the people does any act or thing by using bombs, dynamite or other explosive substances or inflammable substances or lethal weapons or poisons or noxious gases or other chemicals or by any other substances (whether biological or otherwise) of a hazardous nature in such a manner as to cause, or as is likely to cause, death of, or injuries to, any person or persons or loss of, or damage to, or destruction of, property or disruption of any supplies or services essential to the life of the community, or detains any person and threatens to kill or injure such person in order to compel the Government or any other person to do or abstain from doing any act, commits a terrorist act.”

In 2002, the European Union described terrorism as having the “aim of destabilising

or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country”.

Terrorist Activities

Terrorists indulge in a variety of activities for primarily three things:

1. Generate fear among people.
2. Create publicity for their goals/causes.
3. Try to convince people that the government is powerless against them.

Terrorists and/or terror groups engage in random killings/assassinations, bomb blasts in public places, suicide attacks, kidnappings, extortion, destroy public property/infrastructure, hijacking, cyber-attacks, etc. They also indulge in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear warfare. Many terror groups also engage in armed insurgency against governments.

The aim of political terror groups vary from toppling the established government of a country, to having better representation for a group of people, to seceding from a country and forming another country, to acquiring a share in the government, etc. Many other groups of terror exist solely for making illicit money and expanding their own illegal criminal empires. Many groups of organised crime are also labelled terrorist groups.

Terrorism: Origin of the term

The term 'terrorism' has been derived from the French 'terrorisme', which is in turn, taken from the Latin word, 'terreo' meaning 'I frighten'.

- The word was first used in the context of the French Revolution in France, especially in reference to the 'Reign of Terror'.
- Many cite the Irish Republican Brotherhood (1858 - 1924) as the first organisation to use modern terrorist techniques.

Types of Terrorism

Although there are several types of terrorism, we can classify terrorism into the following broad types:

1. Dissent Terrorism: Groups that rebel against the government of a country. For example, the LTTE in Sri Lanka.
2. Left wing/right wing terrorism: Terror groups that adhere to ideological leanings on the extreme end of the left-right political spectrum. Read more on [left wing extremism](#) in India.
3. Religious terrorism: Terror groups based on religious ideologies. For example, ISIS.
4. Criminal terrorism: Terror groups engaged in terror acts for criminal profit.

Terrorism can also be classified on the basis of the mode of operation such as cyber-terrorism, bioterrorism, etc.

Cross-border Terrorism

Cross-border terrorism is when the soil of one country is used to create terror or engage in terrorism against its neighbouring countries across the border. India is a victim of cross-border terrorism, generated from Pakistan.

Factors favouring cross-border terrorism

- **Porous borders:** These indicate borders which are not highly protected. India's borders with most of her neighbours cannot be physically sealed or wired due to difficult terrain, and other factors. Terror groups take advantage of such porous borders and infiltrate into another country.
- **Support from non-state actors:** India's troubled relationship with Pakistan fuels the latter's support for secessionist groups, which are provided financial support, weapons and training by the establishment in Pakistan.
- **Internal support:** Many times, terrorists find support from the local population due to varying reasons like ideological or ethnic affinity, fear, monetary lure, etc.
- **Corrupt officials:** Unfortunately, many officials in the establishment of a country can abet terrorists and allow their illegal entry for terrorist activities purely for financial benefits.

Terrorism in India

The current law in India enacted to tackle terrorism of all kinds is the [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Amendment Act](#). Click on the linked article for a detailed description and also watch a video lecture on the same.

- India faces terrorism from secessionists in Kashmir, the north-east and to an extent in Punjab, from left-wing extremist groups in central, east-central and south-central India.
- India is one of the countries most affected by terrorism in the world. According to the **Institute for Economics and Peace**, India was the seventh-most affected country in 2018.
 - It reported that from 2001 till 2018, more than 8000 people have died in terror attacks in India.
- Jammu & Kashmir is the region most affected by terrorist activities in the country.
- **The Global Terrorism Index 2019** also places India on the 7th rank in terms of most-affected country by terrorism.
- It was after the [26/11 attacks on Mumbai](#) by terrorist groups that the government formed the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#).
- India is trying to push a global intergovernmental convention called the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) to counter terrorism since the late 90s.
- India is also a member of the [FATF](#) (Financial Action Task Force), an organisation that works towards establishing global standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- India has a network of intelligence agencies such as the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Intelligence Bureau (IB), etc. which are involved in fighting terrorism emanating both inside and outside the country.
- There is also a National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) that is an integrated intelligence framework connecting the databases of security agencies of the Indian Government to gather inclusive patterns of intelligence that can be accessed by [intelligence agencies of India](#).
- The National Security Guard (NSG) is a paramilitary force that is primarily responsible for counterterrorism and anti-hijacking operations.

Also read: [Indian Intelligence Architecture - An Overview](#)

