**India's counter-terrorism strategy**

**Terrorism and insurgency are the unending battles India has been fighting since Independence.**

**In the** [**first part**](http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/apr/03spec)**of his analysis on terrorism, B Raman discussed its causes, the distinctions between religious and non-religious terrorist groups, their sources of funding and their sanctuaries.**

**In** [**Part II**](http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/apr/04spec.htm)**, he explained how most Indian Muslims have refused to fall prey to the gambits of Pakistan-backed terrorist organisations.**

**Today, he underlines how India's continued focus on economic development and democratic freedom has effectively countered both terrorism and insurgency.**

India's counter-terrorism set-up consists of the following:

*The state police and its intelligence set-up:* Under India's federal Constitution, the responsibility for policing and maintenance of law and order is that of the individual states. The central government in New Delhi can only give them advice, financial help, training and other assistance to strengthen their professional capabilities and share with them the intelligence collected by it. The responsibility for follow-up action lies with the state police.

*The national intelligence community:* This consists of the internal intelligence agency (the ministry of home affairs' Intelligence Bureau), the external intelligence agency (the Cabinet secretariat's Research and Analysis Wing), the Defence Intelligence Agency that was set up a year ago, and the intelligence directorates general of the armed forces.

The IB collects terrorism-related intelligence inside the country and RAW does it outside. The DIA and the intelligence directorates general of the armed forces essentially collect tactical intelligence during their counter-terrorism operations in areas such as Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, etc, where they are deployed.

*Physical security agencies*: These include the Central Industrial Security Force, responsible for physical security at airports and sensitive establishments; the National Security Guards, a specially trained intervention force to terminate terrorist situations such as hijacking, hostage-taking, etc; and the Special Protection Group, responsible for the security of the prime minister and former prime ministers.

*Paramilitary forces*: These include the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force, which assist the police in counter-terrorism operations when called upon to do so.

*The Army:* Their assistance is sought as a last resort when the police and paramilitary forces are not able to cope with a terrorist situation. But in view of Pakistan's large-scale infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir and the presence and activities of a large number of Pakistani mercenaries, many of them ex-servicemen, the army has a more active, permanent and leadership role in counter-terrorism operations here. What India is facing in J&K is not just terrorism, but a proxy war being waged by the Pakistani Army through its jihadi surrogates.

In recent months, there have been two additions to the counter-terrorism set-up:

A multi-disciplinary centre on counter-terrorism, headed by a senior IB officer, within the IB, expected to be patterned on the CIA's counter-terrorism centre. Officers of various agencies responsible for intelligence collection and counter-terrorism operations will work under a common umbrella and be responsible for joint analysis of the intelligence flowing in from different agencies and co-ordinated follow-up action.

A counter-terrorism division in the ministry of external affairs, expected to be patterned after the counter-terrorism division of the US state department. It will be responsible for co-ordinating the diplomatic aspects of counter-terrorism, such as briefing other countries on Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism against India, processing requests for extradition and mutual legal assistance, servicing the work of various joint working groups on counter-terrorism which India has set up with a number of countries, etc.

**Counter-terrorism techniques followed by India**

The techniques followed by India stress the following:

The importance of a good grievances detection, monitoring and redressal machinery so that the build-up of grievances in any community is detected in time and the political leadership alerted and advised to take prompt action to redress them. The intelligence agencies have an important role to play as the eyes and ears of the government in different communities to detect feelings of anger and alienation which need immediate attention.

The importance of good, preventive human intelligence. This is easier said than done because of the difficulties in penetrating terrorist organisations, particularly of the religious kind.

The importance of timely technical intelligence, which is generally more precise than human intelligence.

The importance of objective and balanced analysis to avoid over-assessing the strength and capabilities of the terrorists, which could lead to over-reaction by counter-terrorism agencies, thereby aggravating the feeling of alienation within the affected community, driving more people into the arms of terrorists. Such analysis is particularly difficult in the case of human intelligence. For every genuine source who gives correct intelligence, there are often two or three spurious sources who, out of greed to make more money or at the instance of the terrorists themselves, give false information. This tends to make security forces over-react or take wrong action.

The importance of reverse analysis so that one is trained to analyse possible scenarios not only as a good intelligence analyst, but also as an irrational terrorist.

The importance of prompt and co-ordinated follow-up action on well-assessed intelligence from all agencies, without allowing inter-agency jealousies and rivalries to come in the way.

The importance of effective physical security measures so that even if intelligence fails, security agencies are able to prevent acts of terrorism.

The importance of an effective crisis management apparatus so that if both intelligence and physical security measures fail, one is able to deal effectively with the resulting crisis or disaster.

The importance of good investigative machinery, specially trained to investigate terrorism-related cases.

The importance of not over-projecting the personality and capabilities of terrorist leaders, so that they do not become objects of idolisation in their community.

The importance of constantly underlining to the public that just because some people of a particular community or religion have taken to terrorism, the entire community or religion should not be looked upon with suspicion.

The importance of highlighting the positive aspects of the affected community or religion to prevent the build-up of a negative image of the community or religion in the eyes of the public.

The importance of active interaction with the media to ensure that they do not make terrorist leaders appear like heros or prejudice the minds of the public about the affected community or religion or create problems for effective counter-terrorism operations.

The importance of well-designed psychological war operations to project the terrorists for what they are -- irrational killers.

The importance of observing human rights during counter-terrorism operations.

The importance of periodic refresher training of all those involved in counter-terrorism operations through special classes, seminars, opportunities for interaction with those who have distinguished themselves in counter-terrorism operations, etc.

**Intelligence-sharing with other countries**

Even before 9/11, arrangements for intelligence-sharing on terrorism amongst the agencies of different countries existed. 9/11 brought the realisation that terrorism is an absolute evil whatever be the cause and that unless the intelligence agencies of the world network themselves as effectively as the terrorist organisations, they might not be able to eradicate this menace. This has improved intelligence-sharing.

India's success in bringing Sikh terrorism in Punjab under control before 9/11 might not have been possible but for the valuable intelligence inputs received from agencies of many countries. Some of the significant successes in different countries against Al Qaeda were apparently possible due to increased intelligence-sharing without reservations.

While this is welcome, one has to remember that political considerations peculiar to each country influence their perceptions of terrorism and this is bound to have an effect on intelligence-sharing. Hence, while continuing to benefit from increased intelligence-sharing, the important task of strengthening one's national intelligence collection capability should not be neglected.

**Regional cooperation in South Asia**

Regional cooperation in the battle against terrorism has not been as successful in south Asia as it has been in the southeast Asian region. This is largely because of Pakistan's policy of using terrorism as a weapon to keep the Indian security forces bleeding and pre-occupied with internal security duties and Bangladesh's tolerance of the activities of terrorists from its territory. Unless these two countries realise the folly of their policies and actions, which have made their own territories playgrounds for terrorist groups of different hues and irrationalities, there is very little scope for any meaningful co-operation.

India has been facing the problem of Pakistani state-sponsored terrorism for over 40 years and nearly 40,000 civilians and 3,500 members of the various security forces have been killed. This has not prevented India from becoming self-sufficient in agriculture, emerging as a major manufacturing country, developing educational, particularly technological, institutions of excellence the like of which no other Asian country can boast of, becoming the leading information technology software power of the region, and building up a foreign exchange reserve of US $72 billion, which, at this rate, should cross the US $100 billion mark in a couple of years.

India can continue to fight Pakistan-sponsored terrorism for another 40 years and yet move forward on its path of development as a major power in the region. Pakistan, on the other hand, has not had the required funds for educational and social development and for the economic advancement of its people because of its obsessive urge to keep India bleeding through terrorism. In its attempt to lift a big boulder and throw it at India, it is dropping it on its own feet.

**What are the results already achieved by India through its counter-terrorism policies and techniques?**

There is peace in Nagaland with a duly elected government promoting the economic development of the state. Only a small group of Nagas from the bordering areas of Manipur has not yet given up arms, but it is observing a ceasefire and negotiating with the government.

There has been peace in Mizoram for nearly 20 years now.

There has been peace in Punjab since 1995. However, Pakistan has not yet given up its efforts to re-kindle terrorism in Punjab through some terrorist leaders and hijackers given sanctuary in its territory.

The Ananda Marg has been dormant since 1995.

As the economic and social development of the states affected by Maoist terrorism moves forward, these groups are bound to wither away.

In J&K, the opposition has come to power after last September's election and is trying to reduce the alienation of the people and deal effectively with the Pakistani jihadis.

The Indian Muslim community, despite feeling hurt because of the large-scale anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat last year, has remained fiercely loyal, law-abiding and forward-looking. It has kept its distance from Al Qaeda and the IIF and repulsed the approaches of Pakistani jihadi organisations aligned with Al Qaeda.

Southeast Asian countries have been increasingly affected by pan-Islamic jihadi terrorism spawned in madrasas and training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Cadres of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayaaf of the southern Philippines had fought along with Pakistani jihadi and Afghan mujahideen groups against Soviet troops in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The links built then have been sustained.

Pakistan's HuM, which is a member of Osama bin Laden's IIF, has been training the Abu Sayaaf group and providing it with arms and ammunition. HuM leaders claim that many of its cadres fought against Filipino security forces along with Abu Sayaaf, achieved 'martyrdom' and are buried there. In 1998, Abu Sayaaf became a member of bin Laden's IIF.

The Jemmah Islamiyah, which has been co-ordinating pan-Islamic jihadi activities in southeast Asia, is sought to be patterned after the IIF. It is believed to have many cadres of Afghan jihad vintage in its ranks and leadership.

Last year, the total number of students from southeast Asia studying in Pakistan's pan-Islamic madrasas was estimated at 400. Some of them had gone to Afghanistan and fought against American troops in order to get jihadi experience.

The Pakistan branch of the Tablighi Jamaat is very active in southeast Asia. It ostensibly teaches the Muslims of the region to be better Muslims, but actually acts as the front organisation for IIF jihadi members for recruiting local volunteers for training and funnelling financial and other assistance.

India has a good database on these organisations and their activities and valuable experience in dealing with them. Close interaction between the counter-terrorism agencies of India and countries of the southeast Asian region would, therefore, be of mutual benefit.