**How to counter growing terrorism by targeting the youth?**

India’s shared borders with the turmoil-stricken states of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka make it susceptible to the threats posed by cross-border terrorism as well as ‘home-grown’ terrorism. Reported arrests of youths from Hyderabad and Uttar Pradesh, allegedly on their way to join the Islamic State terror outfit, further highlights the imminent threat that home-grown terrorism poses to the security of our country.

Against this backdrop, the issue of radicalization of youths and the factors that exacerbate it gain prominence as the driving factors of home-grown terrorism. In most cases, the depraved economic condition of communities renders them vulnerable to the hatred-driven agenda of terror outfits. The extreme poverty, coupled with a misunderstanding of religious texts drives the youth from such communities to take up arms as a means of social justice. Typically, such communities suffer from a long history of social and political exclusion, and in the absence of a legal recourse, the anti-state emotions manifest themselves as a punitive terror-strike. The increasing digital footprint that many terror organizations now boast of only adds fuel to the fire as they are now able to reach a wider audience.

Post the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, the government set-up the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to gather intelligence and carry out counter-terrorism operations. These measures, though welcome steps towards securing the security of the mainland, seek to curb the symptoms of the problem, rather than attacking the root cause of radicalization. It is imperative that the state recognizes the opportunities that de-radicalization and anti-radicalization approaches offer. By providing productive education and economic opportunities to the youth from aggrieved communities, the government can lift them from extreme poverty- the primary issue that drives them to take up arms. Similarly, by tackling the issue of social and political exclusion head-on, and implementing schemes to provide such communities with more representation in their governance, the state can counter the hatred being propagated by terrorist organizations. Also, it is imperative that the government reaches out to the clergy, and ensures the message of peace imbibed in every religion is highlighted to educate the society at large.