

Linkage Of Organized Crime With Terrorism

India is confronting a deepening **security threat** as the boundaries between **organised crime and terrorism** increasingly blur. In the latest major crackdown, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has carried out extensive raids across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana to bust a large inter-state ammunition-trafficking syndicate. These developments suggest that the threat landscape is evolving: organised-crime networks are not operating in isolation, but increasingly intersecting with terrorist and extremist elements

What is Organized Crime?

According to the **UNODC**, an organised criminal group is defined as a **structured association** of at least **three individuals** that operates over a period of time and works together to carry out **serious offences** for **financial or material benefit**.

Types of Organised Crime



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Similarities between Organized Crime and Terrorism

- **Recruitment & Psychology:** Members often emerge from **marginalised groups**, attracted to **risk, thrill**, and defiance of social norms, creating similar recruitment pools.

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- **Legality & Punishment:** Both **operate outside the law**, engage in serious criminal offences, and face strict national and international penalties.
- **Technology & Methods:** Each relies increasingly on **modern technology, digital tools**, high-tech communication, **financing**, and concealment systems.
- **Organisation & Discipline:** Both maintain **hierarchical structures**, enforce strict codes of conduct with internal punishment, and carry out **well-planned operations**.
- **Secrecy & Violence:** Activities are shrouded in **secrecy**, and **violence or intimidation** is used to achieve objectives or influence the surroundings.
- **Operational Nexus:** Terror groups often **finance operations** through organised crime, while criminal syndicates may pursue political goals using terror tactics, creating a blurred and **overlapping boundary**.

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Differences between Organized Crime and Terrorism

- **Motives & Objectives:** Terrorism is driven by **ideological or political goals** aimed at transforming society, whereas **organized crime** seeks **financial gain and profit**.
- **Nature of Goals:** **Terrorist acts** pursue **specific political** or social change **using violence**, while **organized crime** focuses on **economic benefits** and legalizing illicit wealth, with minimal political intent.
- **Visibility & Messaging:** **Organized crime** maintains secrecy and **avoids publicity**, whereas terrorist groups openly declare their objectives to gain **support and demonstrate determination**.
- **Responsibility for Acts:** Terrorist organizations often **claim responsibility for attacks to maximize impact**, while organized crime groups **avoid any admission of involvement**.
- **Relationship with the State:** Terrorism confronts and **challenges the state to alter political order**, while organized crime **infiltrates state institutions** through **corruption** and selective cooperation.

Linkage Of Organized Crime With Terrorism

Understanding how **organized crime and terrorism** connect is crucial for **strong security policies**. Even though they often use **similar methods and structures**, they **pursue different goals**. Their relationship can involve **cooperation or convergence**, and most commonly, criminal activities are used to **fund terrorist operations**.

- **Financing Terrorism**
 - The **UNODC** has highlighted that **profits** from criminal activities increasingly **finance terrorism**, especially through **arms trafficking and money laundering**.
 - Examples include **Taliban funding from opium production in Afghanistan**, and **FARC financing** through cocaine trafficking, kidnapping, and extortion.
 - **Technology, communication, transport, and finance** networks now enable easier international cooperation between terrorists and criminal groups.
- **Narco Terrorism**
 - The **US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)** defines **narco-terrorism** as a form of **terrorism involving direct or indirect participation in the cultivation, production, transport, or distribution of drugs**, and using the profits to **support terrorism**.
 - The concept has a **dual nature**, depending on whether the focus is on **drug trafficking or terrorism**.
- **Financing Terrorism through Money Laundering**
 - **Money laundering** is used to **generate and move funds** for terrorism, by collecting money or property and using it fully or partially to support terrorist acts.
 - Terrorist financing involves **multiple channels**, including **banking systems, cross-border cash smuggling**, alternative transfer networks, and front organizations such as humanitarian or non-profit groups.

- The major consequences include **destabilizing financial systems, economic instability**, declined investment, loss of state credibility, and threats to national security.

- **Human Trafficking and Terrorism**

- Human trafficking is increasingly used by terrorist groups, not only for **raising funds** but also to **increase manpower, enable sexual exploitation**, and intimidate or harass populations.
- It supports the formation of **military units**, with **child soldiers and girls recruited** and later exploited for sex, logistics, or intelligence, as highlighted in **UN reports**.

- **Intellectual Property Crime and Terrorism**

- **Intellectual Property Crime (IPC)** involves the **production, transport, storage, and sale** of counterfeit or pirated goods without the **rights holder's consent**, often through trademark, patent, trade dress, or copyright infringement.

- **In 2016**, terrorist organizations in **North Africa** were linked to a **\$1 billion** contraband tobacco trade.
- Linkages in the Indian Context**

Crime and terrorism are closely connected in many regions of India, even though the relationship may not be universal. **Case studies from India** show clear patterns where **terrorist activities depend on organized crime**.

North-East India

- **Extortion is the primary source of funding** for terrorism in the region.
- **Kidnapping** is widely used to **spread fear and raise money**.
- Other **criminal activities include Human trafficking, Drug trafficking, Gun running, etc.**
- **Government officials in conflict areas** are often **threatened or bribed** to give contracts to groups supported by militants.
- Essential commodities like **rice and fuel** are diverted to militant groups, who **resell them at higher prices**, demonstrating a **direct link between organized crime and terrorism**.

Jammu & Kashmir

- Unlike the Northeast, **extortion and kidnapping are less common**.
- **External funding** plays a major role, especially from **Pakistan and Gulf countries**.
- These funds are transferred through **Money Laundering and Hawala networks**, eventually reaching militant groups.
- **Counterfeit currency** is a major source of financing- **terrorists act as couriers** of fake Indian currency in Kashmir. This currency later **spreads across India**.

Maoist-Affected Regions

- **Extortion is common** among Maoist groups.
- They have also been involved in **bank robberies, forcing cuts on drug-producing crops** to generate income.

Steps Taken by Government to Counter Organized Crime

- **Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell (MHA)** acts as the **central coordination** point for decisions and follow-up with states.
- **MWCD** funds rehabilitation through **Ujjawala (sex-trafficking victims)** and **Swadhar (women in distress)**, along with bilateral agreements with countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bahrain to curb trafficking.

- **NDPS Act, 1985 and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking Act, 1988** provide the legal backbone to combat drug production, transport and abuse.
- **Operation Dhvast (2023)** by NIA with state police targeted a terrorist–gangster–drug–arms nexus.
- **India is a signatory** to major **UN conventions** on narcotics, supporting global action through **UNODC**.
- **Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection & Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021** proposes investigation units, rehabilitation committees, protection homes, and special courts to ensure faster trials.
- **Special courts** in each **district** aim to complete trafficking **trials within a year**.
- **MCOCA, 1999 (used in Maharashtra and Delhi)** has helped reduce gang and syndicate operations, despite the absence of a national organized crime law.

Global Initiatives to Tackle Organised Crime

- The **UNTOC**, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution **55/25**, is the primary **international legal instrument** to combat **transnational organized crime**. It marks a major global commitment to address the growing threat of criminal networks and promotes strong international cooperation. By ratifying the Convention, States agree to:
 - Create **domestic criminal laws** targeting **organized criminal groups, money laundering, corruption, and obstruction of justice**.
 - Establish mechanisms for **extradition, mutual legal assistance, intelligence sharing, and joint investigations**.
 - **Strengthen law enforcement** capacities through training and technical support.
- Countries must become parties to the Convention before they can adopt its three supplementary Protocols, which focus on specific forms of organized crime:
 - **Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children**
 - **Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air**
 - **Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking of Firearms, Parts, Components, and Ammunition**
- These Protocols promote **victim protection, border controls**, arms tracing, and criminalization of trafficking and smuggling networks.
- The Convention plays a key role in **disrupting illicit financial flows**, asset laundering, and transnational criminal networks, and supports the seizure and **confiscation of criminal proceeds**. It also helps safeguard the global economy from criminal infiltration and corruption.

Challenges in Tackling Organized Crime in India

- **Weak Legal Framework:** Laws focus on **individual offenders**, not the **criminal networks**, making it hard to dismantle entire syndicates.
- **Evidence Barriers:** **Hierarchical and insulated structures** protect masterminds, making it difficult to gather **direct proof** against top leaders.
- **Slow Trials & Low Convictions:** **Delays in investigation, court procedures and poor conviction rates** reduce deterrence and discourage public cooperation.
- **Resource Constraints:** **Limited funds, manpower, training and technology** weaken policing capacity, especially in states with poor fiscal health.
- **Power Nexus:** **Collusion between criminals, politicians and officials** enables syndicates to **operate with impunity**, influencing decisions and evading action.

Way Forward

- **Institutional & Legal Reforms**
 - Create specialised units at all levels for **intelligence, documentation and investigation**, along with a **national body for data collection, analysis and information exchange** on domestic and international gangs.

7 PM Daily Initiative

- **Strengthen legal mechanisms** through **speedy extradition, Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) treaties, and strict implementation of laws such as MCOCA and the Gangster Act**, with **regular reviews and updates**.
- **Operational & Intelligence Strengthening**
- Build **military, policing and intelligence capabilities** to disrupt criminal and terror networks.
- **Share intelligence, exchange personnel, conduct joint operations** with other states and countries.
- Enhance **Interpol cooperation** to break cross-border crime–terror links and track fugitives.
- **International Cooperation**
- Promote **global coordination**, similar to **anti-human trafficking, anti-drug efforts** and the **Kimberley Process**.
- Joint actions with **UN bodies, regional blocs** and neighbouring countries to counter **funding, trafficking and smuggling networks**.
- **Community & Media Engagement**
- **Public awareness campaigns**, media outreach, workshops, and community initiatives to build **societal resistance**.
- Encourage **citizen participation in reporting, prevention and social boycott** of crime syndicate figures.
- **Technology & Capacity Building**
- Invest in **modern surveillance, analytics, cyber tools, forensics and training** of police forces.
- Improve **documentation, databases and early-warning systems** on gang activities and terror financing.
- **Unified Global Strategy**
- Adopt a **common framework**, with **data sharing and unified approach** to break the **crime–terror nexus**.
- Follow **UN guidance**, ensuring countries **criminalize participation in organized crime** and enforce the convention effectively.

Conclusion

Organized crime and terrorism are increasingly **interconnected, sharing resources, networks, and funding channels**. Criminal activities such as **drug trafficking, extortion, smuggling, and human trafficking** provide vital financial support to terror groups. **Weak law enforcement, porous borders, and corruption** allow these networks to thrive. Breaking this nexus requires **robust intelligence, strong legal frameworks, and global cooperation**. A coordinated and multi-dimensional approach is essential to safeguard national and international security.