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.
- o **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.
- o 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.
- o 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.
- o 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

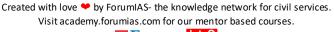
Crime and terrorism are closely connected in many regions of India, even though the relationship may not be universal. **Case studies from India** show clear patterns where **terrorist activities depend on organized crime**.

North-East India

- **Extortion is the primary source of funding** for terrorism in the region.
- o **Kidnapping** is widely used to **spread fear and raise money**.
- o 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.





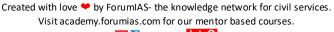
- NDPS Act, 1985 and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking Act, 1988 provide the legal backbone to combat drug production, transport and abuse.
- **Operation Dhyast (2023)** by NIA with state police targeted a terrorist-gangster-drug-arms nexus.
- India is a signatory to major UN conventions on narcotics, 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.





- 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
- o Build **military**, **policing and intelligence capabilities** to disrupt criminal and terror networks.
- o **Share intelligence, exchange personnel, conduct joint operations** with other states and countries.
- o 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.
- o Encourage **citizen participation in reporting, prevention and social boycott of crime syndicate figures.**
- Technology & Capacity Building
- o Invest in **modern surveillance, analytics, cyber tools, forensics and training** of police forces.
- o Improve **documentation**, **databases and early-warning systems** on gang activities and terror financing.
- Unified Global Strategy
- o Adopt a **common framework**, with **data sharing and unified approach** to break the **crime-terror nexus**.
- o 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.

