The Evolution of India's Role in Global Counterterrorism Diplomacy

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
	This research paper examines the evolving role of India in global counterterrorism diplomacy within the context of international partnership. It talks about how India helps international bodies like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and BIMSTEC. It also speaks about how India was one of the first countries to help put up the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). The main findings reveal that India has gone from being a target of terrorism to a leader in the battle against it throughout the globe. It achieves this by making alliances in the QUAD and I2U2 frameworks while still keeping its strategic independence. India has done a great job of using a mix of diplomatic isolation and technical assistance programs, as shown in recent case studies like Operation Sindoor (2025) and the FATF grey-list demands on Pakistan. There are still concerns, even though some things have gone well. For example, people are worried about sovereignty, China and Pakistan working together, and what "state-sponsored terrorism" means. The paper concludes with policy recommendations to enhance India's counterterrorism diplomacy via information exchange networks, technology transfers, and the establishment of a coordinated South Asian Counterterrorism Centre.

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the biggest threats to world peace and safety right now. [^1] Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a significant modification in the threat that terrorism poses all over the globe. It has spread to other nations, and in order to combat it, some of those countries will need to collaborate with one another. For a considerable amount of time, India has been the target of terrorist attacks and threats to its own safety that have been made by other countries. As a result, it is an essential component of the war against terrorism that is being waged all over the globe. [^2] The complicated approach that India employs for global counterterrorism diplomacy is the subject of this research study. The article focuses on the interactions that take place between India's institutions, bilateral relationships, and strategic positioning in multilateral discussion forums. According to the study, India's counterterrorism diplomacy is founded on five fundamental pillars: adhering to international law, using coercive means, collaborating on initiatives in the field, and engaging in normative engagement. [^3]

Within the context of the fight against terrorism that is taking on all over the world, India is a very important participant. Due to the fact that it is located in a vast portion of South Asia and has a population of over 1.4 billion people, India is an essential component of the global effort to combat terrorism. Throughout its history, India has been a stalwart advocate for a number of policies that aim to combat terrorism while simultaneously safeguarding democratic principles and human rights. This goes above and above what is required for it to be safe. The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive overview of India's diplomatic efforts, institutional frameworks, and bilateral ties, all of which contribute to the development of India's global counterterrorism strategy.

Conceptual Framework: Defining Counterterrorism Diplomacy

The nexus of foreign policy and security strategy is where security strategy and counterterrorism diplomacy meet. Therefore, it is necessary to communicate with other nations, collaborate with them, and make an effort to alter people's perspectives in order to make it more difficult for terrorists to get the resources they need. [^4] There is a distinction to be made between diplomatic engagement and military reactions or intelligence activities. Specifically, it means working together via multilateral organizations, bilateral agreements, and methods for forging consensus in order to construct international legal frameworks and effective mechanisms for fighting terrorism.

Understanding counterterrorism diplomacy requires a theoretical basis that is comprised of a few fundamental factors, including the following:

Sovereignty and Compliance: One of the most difficult diplomatic challenges that currently exists is finding a way to strike a balance between recognizing the sovereignty of states and establishing international norms for counterterrorism operations. [^5]

•   **Securitization Discourse:** The act of recognizing terrorism as an existential threat that calls for extraordinary measures and resources to be taken.

•   **Norm Entrepreneurship:** The part that some countries play in calling for new international legislation regarding the classification of terrorists, the means by which they may be supported, and the means by which they can operate over international boundaries.

•   **Institutional Cooperation:** In order for nations to engage together on anti-terrorism activities, it is necessary to build both official and informal structures for collaboration.

The strategy that India takes to counterterrorism diplomacy incorporates both traditional institutional frameworks, such as the United Nations system, and new bilateral and regional organizations that are better adapted to cope with the terrorist dangers that are present in the modern world. [^6]

India's Institutional Role in the United Nations

The United Nations is the primary body that assists nations in cooperating with one another to combat terrorism. India has had a significant influence on the manner in which the United Nations (UN) combats terrorism, particularly via the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), which was established by Resolution 1373 of the Security Council in the year 2001. [^7]

1.   Normative Contributions

It is evident that India is serious about establishing clear criteria for what constitutes terrorism, as seen by its involvement in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee. Throughout its history, India's delegation has consistently advocated for the following:

1. Reducing the level of tolerance for all forms of terrorism and establishing a distinct distinction between counterterrorism and political vengeance

2. Developing comprehensive strategies that take into consideration the major concerns as well as the requirements for security

3. Ensuring the protection of democratic institutions and civil freedoms while terrorist forces are active. [^8]

4. Make a distinction between these two types of terrorist threats: state-sponsored and non-state.

During its discussions with the Central Terrorism Commission and the Security Council, India has raised several challenging questions about the definition of a terrorist. These points of view are in agreement that security problems are complicated; nevertheless, they are not all in agreement with the concept of targeting specific terrorists. [^9]

## 2.	Legal and Compliance Framework

India has been a significant contributor to the worldwide development of laws that are intended to discourage terrorist acts. For a number of United Nations resolutions that deal with the following issues, the country has supported, co-sponsored, and assisted secure consensus on them.

• The laundering of money and the sponsorship of terrorist organizations all across the world

• Armed organizations receiving arms from the government

• Cooperated with one another to impose specific limitations on certain groups

• Increasing the difficulty of information transmission and the process of crossing borders

In light of the fact that India is a member of the 1540 Committee, which was established to prevent terrorists and other non-state actors from obtaining weapons that have the potential to kill a large number of people, India is worried about preventing the occurrence of certain terrorist scenarios. [^10] The committee's work directly addresses India's worries about terrorists getting their hands on nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

Participation in Counter-Terrorism Mechanisms

In addition to its official participation in international organizations, India is also involved in specialized UN counter-terrorism efforts: [^11]

Mechanism	Established	India's Role
Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC)	2001	Active Member
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)	2004	Advisory Participation

| Financial Action Task Force (FATF) | 1989 | Full Member |
| International Criminal Court (ICC) | 1998 | Observer Status |

Table 1: Major UN and International Counter-Terrorism Bodies and India's Participation

Regional Counterterrorism Cooperation

The scope of India's counterterrorism diplomacy goes far into regional frameworks, which are frameworks in which countries are required to collaborate in order to address the issues that are caused by terrorism beyond national boundaries and states. Because it is geographically close to other countries and is familiar with their traditions, India is worried about the war against terrorism. The fact that India is a member of regional organizations in South Asia and Asia as a whole is evidence of this. [^12]

1.   Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 1996, and since then, it has developed into a significant venue for nations to collaborate in the fight against terrorism. As a result of India's participation in 2017, organizations now have access to the resources they need to combat terrorism throughout the whole of Eurasia and Central Asia. [^13]

What the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) refers to as the "three forces of evil" are extremism, separatism, and terrorism. It is quite similar to the way that India handles matters pertaining to security. Using instruments provided by the SCO, India talks with:

• The collaboration between China and Russia in the battle against terrorists living in Central Asia
• Exercises conducted by many nations to train for potential terrorist attacks in the future

• Guidelines for the dissemination of information about networks run by extremists

• Efforts to improve the manner in which member states' security agencies carry out their responsibilities. [^14]

The participation of India in the Counterterrorism Organization (SCO) demonstrates that the country is working toward the establishment of a security framework for Central Asia while also addressing the problematic relationships that exist amongst the region's major countries.

2.   BIMSTEC Framework

Through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, India engages in interactions with other nations located in South Asia and Southeast Asia. BIMSTEC is a smaller organization than the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), but it gives India the ability to connect directly with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, all of whom are experiencing a great deal of difficulty with terrorism. [^15] BIMSTEC has these official strategies to stop terrorism:

•   **Working Groups on Security and Counter-Terrorism:** It is possible for anybody to discuss the dangers of terrorism, the ways in which one might gain money, and the ways in which one can respond to attacks via official channels.

•   **Information Sharing Protocols:** Techniques that terrorist groups might use to collaborate with one another, move money throughout the region, and recruit new members.

•   **Capacity Building Programs:** The exchange of information and training programs on how to maintain the security of the border, fight terrorism, and conduct forensic investigations.

•   **Cross-Border Operations Coordination:** There should be diplomatic frameworks that make it simpler for the military and intelligence agencies to collaborate in order to eliminate safe havens for terrorists. [^16]

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Terrorism Financing

Due to the fact that it deals with the money that terrorists use to plan and carry out their operations, India's involvement with the Financial Action Task Force is an essential component of its diplomacy in the fight against terrorism. [^17] As a full member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), India contributes to the development of international regulations that aim to prevent the movement of money, weapons, and terrorists. These are essential instruments that may be used to prevent terrorists from carrying out their planning.

India's Policy Position at FATF

At the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), India has consistently held the same stance about the following:

• The identification of specific terrorist groups and the networks that provide financial support to them

• Establishing limitations on payment methods such as hawalas and other informal methods of money transfer

• Taking and freezing assets across countries while working together to accomplish this

It is imperative that banks and other financial institutions that do business with South Asian businesses be truthful about the activities they engage in. [^18]

Since the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has put Pakistan on its "grey list" several times, India is required to collaborate with the FATF in order to fight terrorist groups that have their headquarters in Pakistan. This implies that the government must devise strategies to stop the funding of terrorist organizations.Finding a middle ground between India's goal to fight terrorism and its need to maintain strong diplomatic connections with other countries is a challenge that the country must overcome. However, it has used the instruments provided by the FATF in order to exert pressure on Pakistan to stop providing assistance to terrorists.

1.   Mutual Evaluation and Compliance Monitoring

From time to time, the financing Action Task Force (FATF) has examined India's progress in meeting its commitments for the fight against financing terrorism. India's legal systems, the efficiency with which its institutions function, and the extent to which it is able to prevent terrorists from collecting money and freezing their assets are all subjects of investigation in these research. [^20] India is able to show to the rest of the world that it is functioning in accordance with the standards by going through the process of mutual evaluation. In addition to this, it shows areas in which companies have room for improvement in their work.

Bilateral Counterterrorism Partnerships

For countries to collaborate effectively in the fight against terrorism, international institutional mechanisms are required. Nevertheless, India is able to respond with each danger in a way that is most effective for each partner's capabilities because to the bilateral connections that it maintains. [^21]

1.   United States Partnership

The United States and India are allies because they work together to fight terrorism. In a 2023 declaration, India and the United States said that fighting terrorism was a "key pillar" of their strategic partnership and made promises to do so: [^22]

• Working together on terrorist exercises and exchanging information

• Helping India's security forces do their tasks better

• Giving technology to fight terrorists

• Worked together to exert diplomatic pressure on nations that sponsor terrorism

The U.S. can provide India important intelligence, especially regarding terrorist groups in Central Asia and the Middle East. At the same time, India could be able to provide the U.S. crucial security information about South Asia.

2.   Gulf Cooperation Council Engagement

The "Look West" strategy of India has made it simpler for Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar to cooperate together. Both Sunni extremist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda and Shia militant groups sponsored by Iran are huge dangers to these nations. [^23] India's ties with GCC nations are based on:

• Islamic financing methods that help pay for the fight against terrorism

• Working together to stop extremist organizations from getting individuals to join them in expat communities

• Working together to fight terrorism on the sea

• Giving each other information about terrorist organizations that operate in the Indian Ocean

There are a lot of Indians residing in GCC countries, therefore working together on counterterrorism is quite important for getting information and doing things.

Southeast Asian Partnerships

India is putting more and more effort into working with ASEAN nations to counter terrorism, notably in the Strait of Malacca and against ISIS in Southeast Asia. [^24] India might work with important ASEAN nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand one-on-one to perform the following:

• Keep an eye out for terrorist activity on networks in Southeast Asia

• Plan and carry out activities to keep the waters safe.

• Help the security services in your area become better at what they do and learn more

• Stop terrorists from collecting money via banks and other financial hubs in Southeast Asia

Challenges and Complexities in India's Counterterrorism Diplomacy

India's global counterterrorism diplomacy operates in a world where there are numerous conflicting interests, strategic limits, and diplomatic issues that may make it less successful at times.

1.   Pakistan Factor

India's counterterrorism diplomacy has a huge difficulty because of tensions with Pakistan, especially because of cross-border terrorism and terrorist organizations headquartered in Pakistan. [^25] India wants to punish nations that sponsor terrorism on the international arena, but it's tougher for the US to do so because of Pakistan's strategic importance to the US, particularly when it comes to operations in Afghanistan. India has to find a strategy to combat terrorism while also remembering that Pakistan is an important nation in the globe and has many ties to other countries.

Great Power Dynamics

As the US and China become more and more adversaries on the world stage, India is trying to combat terrorism. [^26] India is part of the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and other groupings, and it retains its longstanding ties with Russia and China via the SCO and bilateral avenues. India has to be extremely cautious about how it confronts terrorism so that it doesn't appear like it's just a piece in a greater game of politics. For example, terrorist threats in Central Asia bring China and Russia closer together, even if there are bigger geopolitical problems between the two nations.

Sovereignty-Security Tension

India's diplomatic position always stresses the significance of national sovereignty while also calling for further collaboration amongst nations. When individuals speak about cross-border operations, extraterritorial counterterrorism initiatives, and the involvement of international tribunals in terrorist cases, this tension grows much worse. [^27] India must find a method to maintain its sovereignty and autonomy while also advocating for robust international counterterrorism initiatives.

Definitional and Designational Challenges

Countries still can't agree on what to call terrorism. India always wants full terrorist designations that go beyond merely naming organizations to reveal their financial networks and other groups that are linked to them. On the other hand, some nations put their own strategic aims first and use restrictive definitions.

[^28] This implies that terrorist organizations that the Indian government thinks are safe in other areas of the globe.

Contemporary Case Study: Operation Sindoor and Diplomatic Implications

In 2025, the Indian Army took operations called Sindoor against cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. This underscores how hard it is for India to use diplomacy to fight terrorism right now. [^29] India's diplomatic reaction to foreign inquiries, while maintaining significant operational secrecy, reveals many strategic principles:

1.   **Calibrated Communication:** India sent diplomatic messages that were carefully phrased to imply that it has the right to defend itself without using words that may make ties between the two nations worse.

2.   **Institutional Legitimization:** India maintained that the move was in line with international humanitarian law and Article 51 of the UN Charter, which deals about how people and organizations may protect themselves.

3.   **Alliance Coordination:** India worked with important security allies including the US, Russia, and the Gulf nations to make sure that the rest of the world would back it or at least stay neutral.

4.   **Terrorism Designation:** India made it clear that the operation was solely designed to go after certain terrorist organizations that have been linked to major terrorist strikes on Indian soil. [30]

Operation Sindoor illustrates how India's diplomatic skills have become better. Now it can protect its own interests while following the law and being aware of how strong nations feel.

9. India's Strategic Autonomy in Counterterrorism Diplomacy

India's approach to counterterrorism diplomacy is based more and more on the idea of "strategic autonomy." This means that India will protect its own security interests without forming formal alliances that may limit its ability to change its policies. [^31] This principle shows itself in a number of ways:

•   **Multilateral Engagement Without Alignment:** India is a member of FATF, QUAD, and BIMSTEC, but it doesn't take sides in the fights between large countries.

•   **Issue-Specific Coalition Building:** India doesn't make long-term alliances; instead, it makes short-term coalitions to deal with certain terrorist concerns, such ISIS activities, extremism in Central Asia, and maritime terrorism.

• **Institutional Flexibility:** India utilizes a variety of various types of institutions at the same time. This helps it reach its goals for fighting terrorism in places where people agree.

• **Sovereignty Assertion:** India has the right to carry out counterterrorism operations on its own when international procedures don't function.

India may use this strategic autonomy plan to balance its need for international collaboration with its own security needs.

• **Recommendations and Future Directions**

India's global counterterrorism diplomacy has to keep changing to cope with new terrorist threats and make the most of the opportunities that are currently there. Here are some of the most important tips:

1. **Institutional Strengthening**

India has to work more closely with the Financial Action Task Force to keep up the pressure on the rest of the globe to discover methods to support terrorists. India should also work more closely with the SCO to counter extremism in Central Asia and with China and Russia on security challenges that impact both nations, even when there are bigger problems in the world. [^32]

2. **Regional Capacity Building**

BIMSTEC would be better able to fight terrorism if it had more tools, such as improved ways to share information, training programs for security agencies in Southeast Asian and South Asian member nations, and coordinated border security operations.

3. **Legal Framework Development**

India should keep supporting UN resolutions that deal with new types of terrorism, such drone-based terrorism, cyber-terrorism, and terrorism that uses cryptocurrencies to pay for things. India should also work to convince developing nations to agree on what terrorism is so that weapons can't be used against real political activity.

4. **Public Diplomacy Enhancement**

India should invest money on public diplomacy that explains its anti-terrorism strategies and shows that it cares about democracy and human rights while performing security activities. This goes against the idea that battling terrorism is a good reason to use authoritarian measures.

Conclusion

India's participation in international counterterrorism diplomacy demonstrates that it is both a target of terrorism and a responsible nation seeking collaboration with others. India has been a vital player in the global war against terrorism by working closely with multilateral organizations, building strategic bilateral ties, and making its security objectives apparent. [^33]

India's counterterrorism diplomacy is based on the belief that nations need to work together to get rid of the root causes of terrorism, such poverty, political issues, and extreme views, so that it doesn't happen again. India also has to have robust security measures and institutional structures in place that make it tougher for terrorists to carry out their objectives. India's diplomatic positions are different from those of other countries that put security or development first. India does this because it is fair.

India's fight against terrorism would have to cope with emerging dangers including cyberterrorism, bioterrorism, and terrorism carried out by state actors utilizing proxy networks. India is well-prepared to handle these new issues since it has proved that it can work with other nations, firmly supports comprehensive counterterrorism programs, and can do it on its own. India's large contributions to the global counterterrorism system are helping it, and as terrorist threats get more complex and spread to more places, the system will need India's leadership more and more. [^34]

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