

Internal Security Priorities for the New Government: Institutional Reforms

Internal Security Centre

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Summary

The IDSA policy brief looks into the complexity of internal security challenges and how best to deal with it. The brief suggests building a Centre-State synergy to cope with contemporary trends like increasing urbanization, growth of mega cities, demographic shift, rising expectations of the youth and social media.

Since the Mumbai terrorist attacks on 26th November 2008, the complexity of internal security challenges faced by the nation has increased. In order to deal with these challenges, a concerted, coordinated institutional approach based on the widest possible political consensus and improved Centre-State synergy is required. In addition, new internal security challenges arising out of contemporary trends like increasing urbanization, growth of mega cities, demographic shift, rising expectations of the youth and social media, need to be taken into account. If not addressed urgently, these challenges will become more complex and go out of hand.

A huge debate has taken place in the country on the nature of internal security challenges and how to deal with them. The Group of Ministers Report in 2001 had made a series of recommendations many of which have been implemented. Yet, we are still some distance away from being confident about handling these challenges. A large number of recommendations have been made by various experts and expert committees. The implementation of the recommendations has, however, been poor. The political consensus on implementing the key recommendations, for instance, the setting up of the National Counter-Terrorism Centre has proved to be elusive.

Following is a selection of recommendations¹, which if implemented urgently, could prove to be transformative in addressing the internal security challenges. A time bound implementation will create a broader consensus on the internal security issues which is urgently needed.

Centre-State Relations:

In the past few years, strained relationships and absence of effective communication between Centre and the States have created hurdles in addressing problems of internal security constructively. Political consensus on internal security issues is lacking. Therefore it is recommended that:

1. The Prime Minister should hold right in the beginning of his tenure meetings with the Chief Ministers and political parties to build a political consensus on carrying out institutional reforms, implementing recommendations of various committees set up by the Government of India and setting up a comprehensive agenda for internal security reform.
2. The constitutional mechanisms like the National Integration Council (NIA), Development Council, etc. should be reinvigorated to discuss internal security issues between the Centre and the States.

¹ These recommendations were based on a series brainstorming sessions held at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Analyses (IDSA).

Counter-Terrorism

The absence of a Central Institution to tackle terrorism has resulted in a fragmented approach to terrorism. Therefore it is recommended that:

1. Set up urgently an NCTC like body to fight terrorism. If need be, examine the existing draft and modify.
2. Operationalize the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) and strengthen national Investigation Agency (NIA)
3. Explore ways to curb the internal sources for terrorist funding.

Policing Reforms

Shortage of policemen, lack of proper training and inadequate infrastructure has constrained the effective functioning of the Police. Steps recommended are:

1. Start a recruitment drive and bring the police population ratio to the UN prescribed norm of 222 per 100,000 people. Follow it up with good policing and training infrastructure as well as judicial reforms.
2. Provide adequate legal cover to central police forces for counter terrorism operations.

Border Management

Lack of a well-coordinated approach towards border management has rendered the country's borders insecure. The problem is further aggravated by sense of alienation displayed by people residing along the border areas. To amend the situation, recommendations are:

1. Constitute a Border Management Commission for formulating a common vision for border management and developing strategies and policies. A Similar commission should be set up for coastal security.
2. Ensure regular visits of central leaders to the border areas as well as neighbouring countries and reach out directly to the people.

International Cooperation

Terrorist threat has international dimensions. On the diplomatic dimension of Internal Security, recommendations are:

1. Achieve cooperation with other countries with regard to counterterrorism

2. Have extradition treaties and agreements on criminal matters
3. Get training and expertise from other countries

Research

Any long-term sustainable approach to deal with internal security issues will need to be based on systematic research of the different dimensions of internal security challenges. Thus, there is a need for setting up research institutions dealing with issues such as ethno-cultural studies of populations groups, languages, social media and its impact, police and crime, conflict resolution, insurgencies etc. Specialized research institutions should be set up to help formulate proper internal security policies.

Emerging issues

There are various emerging issues which require immediate and adequate attention. These are:

1. **Perception management** has been the weakest link in India's fighting against internal security problems. The government has not been able to win the battle of narratives and counter-narratives. To strengthen perception management, uniform and whole government approach towards a specific issue should be ensured. Counter narratives to the propaganda of the terrorists and insurgents should be developed and popularized.
2. **The internet and the social media** are fast emerging as the arenas for competing narratives. Urgent steps should be taken against the growing radicalization through them.
3. **Cyber security reforms** should be ushered in by enhancing capabilities through training and setting up of Cyber forensics.
4. Emphasis should be on preparation of **big data**, their mining and analyses. Private sectors should be involved for such exercises and most of the expertise lies outside the government.
5. By 2050, 50 per cent of India will be urbanized. These **urban and peri-urban areas** could emerge as areas of dissonance, which require attention through competent urban policing. Governance of mega cities also their own challenge.