

Report on Counter-Terrorism Workshop

Event Title: Counter-Terrorism Workshop

Date: September 9, 2024

Organized by: Pankaj Kumar Jha Centre for Security Studies (PKJCSS) in collaboration with Diplomania

Facilitator: Prof. Shashank Ranjan, Director, PKJCSS

Introduction

On September 9, 2024, the Pankaj Kumar Jha Centre for Security Studies, in collaboration with Diplomania, hosted a comprehensive workshop on counter-terrorism. Led by Prof. Shashank Ranjan, the workshop aimed to engage students in realistic simulation exercises that mirrored various terrorism scenarios prevalent in South Asia. The event fostered critical thinking, negotiation skills, and collaborative problem-solving among participants as they navigated through complex terrorist situations.

Workshop Structure

The workshop was structured around seven distinct scenarios, each representing a different aspect of terrorism that has impacted South Asia. Participants were divided into small groups, with roles assigned to simulate various stakeholders, including terrorists, law enforcement, military personnel, and civilians. This dynamic approach allowed students to experience the multifaceted nature of counter-terrorism efforts.

Scenario Overview

1. Bomb Threat in a School Building

- **Scenario:** A credible bomb threat was reported at a popular school in the capital, posing significant risks to infrastructure and the safety of children.
- **Objectives:** The exercise aimed to test bomb disposal teams, evacuation procedures, and communication strategies to prevent panic.
- **Discussion:** Students acting as terrorists demanded the release of imprisoned comrades while police and military personnel worked to ensure the safety of students and staff during negotiations.

2. Maritime Terrorism (Strait of Malacca)

- **Scenario:** A terrorist group hijacked a cargo ship in the Strait of Malacca, threatening to disrupt international shipping lanes.
- **Objectives:** Participants evaluated naval responses, international cooperation, and crisis management strategies.
- **Discussion:** Groups debated the implications of maritime security and the necessity for coordinated international responses.

3. Cross-Border Terrorism Incident (India-Pakistan)

- **Scenario:** A cross-border terrorist infiltration led to an attack in a border town.
- **Objectives:** The focus was on evaluating border security, intelligence-sharing, and diplomatic responses between India and Pakistan.
- **Discussion:** Participants discussed the complexities of regional politics and the importance of intelligence collaboration.

4. Mumbai Terror Strikes (2008)

- **Scenario:** The 2008 Mumbai attacks, characterized by coordinated shooting and bombing attacks across multiple locations.
- **Objectives:** Multi-site terror response, hostage rescue, and coordination between local and national agencies were key focus areas.
- **Discussion:** Students explored the need for effective communication and rapid response strategies among various agencies.

5. Sri Lanka Easter Bombings (2019)

- **Scenario:** Coordinated suicide bombings targeted churches and luxury hotels across Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday.
- **Objectives:** Participants examined mass casualty management and inter-agency coordination.
- **Discussion:** The group analyzed the social and religious tensions that can exacerbate such attacks and the importance of community resilience.

6. Pulwama Terror Strike (2019)

- **Scenario:** A suicide bomber targeted a convoy of Indian paramilitary forces, escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.
- **Objectives:** The focus was on counter-insurgency operations and diplomatic crisis management.
- **Discussion:** Participants debated the effectiveness of military responses and the need for diplomatic channels to prevent escalation.

7. Evolving Threat: Radicalisation in a Community

- **Scenario:** A fictional urban community in South Asia faced growing radicalisation among its youth due to external influences and local grievances.
- **Objectives:** Detection and monitoring of radicalisation signs, community engagement strategies, and intervention programs were discussed.
- **Discussion:** Students highlighted the importance of community involvement and proactive measures to prevent radicalisation.

Group Dynamics and Role Play

Prof. Ranjan facilitated the workshop by splitting participants into rotating groups, ensuring that each student experienced different roles across scenarios. This method encouraged participants to view situations from multiple perspectives, enhancing their understanding of the complexities involved in counter-terrorism.

Each group was allotted 10 to 12 minutes to discuss their assigned scenario. During this time, they formulated arguments based on their roles, allowing for a robust exchange of ideas. The role-playing aspect of the workshop proved instrumental in helping participants understand the motivations of various stakeholders involved in terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts.

Key Takeaways

1. **Understanding Terrorism and Insurgency:** Understanding the difference between terrorism and insurgency in the context of agency of the local community. This is the most crucial facet towards resolution of challenges in mid and long term
2. **Collaboration Across Borders:** The need for international cooperation in addressing maritime and cross-border terrorism was emphasized, highlighting the interconnectedness of global security.

3. **Community Engagement:** Engaging communities in counter-terrorism efforts can help identify and mitigate radicalisation risks before they escalate into violence.
4. **Crisis Preparedness:** The workshop underscored the necessity for preparedness in the face of potential terrorist threats, advocating for regular training and simulations to enhance response capabilities.
5. **Dynamic Role Understanding:** By rotating roles, participants gained insights into the challenges faced by different stakeholders, fostering empathy and a comprehensive understanding of counter-terrorism dynamics.