Defence & Security · GS - III

The movement of foreign nationals to conflict zones to join terrorist organisations presents complex challenges for national security and international law. Analyse the challenges involved in prosecuting and rehabilitating returning foreign terrorist fighters.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 19/11/2026	GS - III	Defence & Security

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Foreign terrorist fighters, radicalisation, UNSC Resolution 2178, cross-border terrorism, evidence collection, criminal prosecution, rehabilitation, deradicalisation, international cooperation.

Model Answer

Introduction

Foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) are individuals who travel to countries other than their own to participate in terrorist activities. Their movement across borders, association with transnational networks and possible return create significant security and legal challenges.

Major Challenges

1. **Cross-border radicalisation:** Online propaganda and extremist networks facilitate recruitment and movement across national boundaries.

2. **Evidence collection:** Establishing individual involvement in terrorist activities in conflict zones is difficult due to destroyed records, inaccessible territories and unreliable witnesses.
3. **Legal accountability:** States must distinguish between direct participation in terrorism, logistical support, forced association and other forms of involvement.
4. **Security threats:** Returning fighters may retain extremist networks, operational knowledge and the capacity to recruit others.
5. **Humanitarian concerns:** Women and children associated with terrorist groups may include victims of coercion, trafficking or exploitation, requiring differentiated treatment.

International and National Responses

UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014) requires states to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. Countries need effective intelligence-sharing, border controls, financial surveillance and cooperation in criminal investigations.

Alongside prosecution, rehabilitation programmes should include psychological support, education, vocational training and community-based monitoring. Individual risk assessment is essential to prevent both indiscriminate punishment and inadequate security measures.

Conclusion

An effective response requires a balanced approach combining rule-of-law-based prosecution, international cooperation and carefully designed rehabilitation. Security measures must remain consistent with human rights and due process.

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