

Facing Jihadism in Russia

Why in news?

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A Deadly attack on St. Petersburg metro was carried out by a suicide bomber from the central Asian Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

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How Russia presently deals with the jihadists?

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 - Russia has been reaching out to enemies of the Islamic State, in an effort to isolate the jihadist formation.
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 - It also backed the Taliban's calls for the withdrawal of western troops from the country while giving covert assistance to jihadists fighting the Islamic State.
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 - Russia justifies these actions in the name of self-defence.

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- It sees the rise of the Islamic State in West Asia as a part of western strategy to seed chaos in Russia's near-neighbourhood.

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How valid are its fears?

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- It is true that the destruction of nation-states by ill-conceived Western policies created an enabling environment for the Islamic State to flourish.

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- But there is nothing to show the IS is the product of any planned conspiracy.

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- Moscow's paranoia is a part of a well-established great-power pattern.

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- e.g Great Britain's expansion into Tibet, Afghanistan and Central Asia was founded on the belief that Russia was headed for the Indian Ocean. But it was pure fantasy, as Russia had no such plans.

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Will the current strategy work?

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- Russia's problems with jihadism long predate the rise of the Islamic State.

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- Islamist terrorism in Chechnya, as well as the Central Asian Republics, has persisted because it remains as the only surviving medium of dissent against the authoritarian regimes that Moscow backs.

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- It will not be addressed by opportunistic deal-making with rival jihadists.

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- The use of force by Russia's counter-insurgency shows that it can do only to a limited extent in solving these problems.

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- Through its outreach to jihadist rivals of the Islamist State, Moscow risks

perpetuating the problem it faces, not solving it.

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Source: Indian Express

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