India’s Secret Agency - R&AW

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- Politicisation of India’s intelligence community has impacted R&AW’s accountability.
\n
- There is a need for transparency.
\n

\n\n

What is R&AW?

\n\n

\n
- The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) is the primary foreign intelligence agency of India.
\n
- It is a specialised, independent agency dedicated to foreign intelligence gathering.
\n
- The agency's primary function is gathering foreign intelligence, engaging in counter-terrorism, promoting counter-proliferation, advising Indian policymakers, and advancing India's foreign strategic interests.
\n
- It is also involved in the security of India's nuclear programme.
\n
- It moderates mass anxieties about India’s troubles such as terrorism from Pakistan and the constraints posed by stubborn China.
\n

\n\n

What are the successful operations of R&AW?

\n\n

\n
- The R&AW is considered highly capable in undertaking covert operations

abroad allegedly including,
\n

- The promotion of unrest in Pakistan.
  \n
- Military training to Tibetan exiles.
  \n
- Initial support of and subsequent war with Tamil rebels in Sri Lanka.
  \n
- Delivery of victory in the Bangladesh War of 1971.
  \n
- Building a formidable presence in Afghanistan.
  \n
- It develops advanced technological intelligence capabilities.
  \n

\n\n

What are the issues with the agency?

\n\n

\n

- Unlike other democracies, India has been shy to declassify intelligence files, or even authorise an official history of the R&AW.
  \n
- It is lacking parliamentary oversight and reporting directly to the Prime Minister’s Office.
  \n
- There is no systematic way to assess how R&AW ensures accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness.
  \n
- The intake is mostly from other departments, it raise issues of bureaucratic politics and inconsistency in training standards.
  \n

\n\n

How politicisation affects R&AW?

\n\n

\n

- Only few leaders had understood the value of offensive covert capabilities and utilise them effectively.
  \n
- Due to this offensive operations are only a small element of the role of intelligence agencies in foreign policy.
  \n

- It is reducing R&AW’s effectiveness, instead of a professional intelligence arm meant to assess and shape India’s strategic environment.
  \n
- The pinnacle of the political leadership in many instances has misused R&AW, this creates public mistrust over the agency.
  \n
- If ambitious prime ministers could misuse R&AW in the past, there is no guarantee it may not happen again.
  \n

\n\n

How the issues can be addressed?

\n\n

\n
- Parliamentary accountability of India’s agencies is the only way towards attracting top quality recruits.
  \n
- Many activists want classified files to become the subject of public scrutiny.
  \n
- Declassifying historical documents for public consumption and accepting parliamentary oversight is critical to ensure that the functioning of the agency is optimised.
  \n
- This will prevent the agency from becoming a tool of abuse by the political leadership.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Business Line

\n

