



EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

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Realism, not machismo, to counter terror

Syllabus: GS2/ Government Policies & Interventions; GS3/ Science & Technology, Challenges to Internal Security

In Context

- The parallels are recently being drawn by experts in between Hamas' recent attack on Israel & the Mumbai attacks in 2008 (known as 26/11).

Attack on Israel & the Palestinian issue

- Recently, the Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a devastating attack on Israel known as **Operation 'Al-Aqsa Storm**.
 - Israel retaliated under the code name **Operation Iron Sword**.
- **Outcome:**
 - Hamas attacked Israel when the Saudis and Israelis were on a path to peace, which would have led to the Palestinian cause taking a back seat.
 - Terrorists strike in the hope of eliciting a response that will highlight their cause.
 - With Israel's violent response, the **Palestinian issue has taken centre stage** now.

Mumbai attacks & India's 'No' response to Counter terror

- **About:**
 - Similar to recent attacks by Hamas, India went through the trauma of the Mumbai attacks in 2008 (known as 26/11).
 - The Indian government led by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, refrained from immediate retaliation.
 - A few experts call this 'No' response a **“remarkable act of restraint”** in not attacking Pakistan immediately after the Mumbai attacks.
 - Some critics condemn India's past inaction as an **act of cowardice**. (This is perhaps because India prides itself on its air strikes on Balakot in Pakistan in 2019 to avenge the Pulwama terror attack).
 - India, rather **opted to ally itself with the 'war on terror'**, which was being fought across continents.
- **Outcome:**
 - The gravity of the 26/11 attacks was **equated to that of the 9/11 attacks** in the U.S.

- The path-breaking **India-U.S. Civil Nuclear agreement was operationalised** just a month before the attacks in Mumbai.
- Soon after the attacks, many world leaders condemned the attacks, and India was praised for being a “**responsible nuclear power**”.
- In addition, the global **financial crisis had just hit**, with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers.
 - In India too, the stock market crashed by 41% between June and December. A **war would have been disastrous**.
 - The result of a war would have been not just reprimanding from the international community, but also the **loss of international money**.

India’s air strikes on Balakot

- India’s ‘No’ response post 26/11 attacks **does not reduce** the vital importance of the **air strikes on Balakot**.
- Those were carried out when **India’s defence capability had vastly improved**, its **economy was strong**, and it enjoyed a solid relationship with the western partners.
- The strikes were carefully calibrated to send a **signal to Pakistan** that its **terrorism was not cost-free**.
- Importantly, it **freed Indians** from a **defensive mindset**.

India’s present challenges

- **Kashmir:**
 - The security situation in Kashmir did take a turn for the good after the abrogation of Article 370 with respect to organised terror, but new challenges emerged in the form rise in lone-wolf attacks and increased use of drones for cross-border terrorism.
- **Sikh separatism:**
 - The dormant sentiments of Sikh separatism are increasingly showing signs of revival, with the socio-political situation in Punjab taking a radical turn.
- **Cross-border narco-terror networks:**
 - In both Kashmir and Punjab, a growing trend of increased drug abuse is fuelled by cross-border narco-terror networks.
- **Terror drones:**
 - India is still not adequately equipped to tackle the challenge of terror drones, whose sightings had multiplied significantly in 2022.
- **Formalisation of terrorism:**
 - Many states continue to use armed non-state actors for their own objectives, indicating a worrying trend in the formalisation of terrorism.
- **Good & bad terrorism approach:**
 - Pakistan’s policy of treating the groups that threaten its internal security, such as the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), as enemies and the Indian focussed groups such as Jamat ud Dawa (JuD), as friendlies shows its convenient policy stand towards terrorism.

Suggestions to counter terror

- **Pragmatic approach:**

- Recalibration to balance out the **attention between the northern and western borders** will ensure **greater pragmatism** and the proper security focus.
- The **strategic community and the media** must assume a larger and more pragmatic role to tackle such events.
- **Need of coordinated efforts:**
 - There is also a clear need for counter-terrorism agencies across the world to function in a more coordinated manner, exchanging both intelligence and tactics.
- **No good or bad terrorism:**
 - What is most needed by world leaders is not to treat some terrorists as good and others as bad, **based on each nation's predilections.**
- **Reactivating the proposal for the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT):**
 - The next step is to reactivate the proposal for the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) that has been on hold and finalise the list of items needed to check terrorism globally.
 - India first proposed this in the 1990s.
 - Once the CCIT is accepted by the UN, the war on terror would gain a new salience.
- **Newer patterns of terror:**
 - World needs to take stock of the newer patterns of terror such as 'enabled terrorism' and 'remote control terrorism'.
 - **Remote control terrorism:** Violence conceived and guided by controllers thousands of miles away, positing the dangers of Internet-enabled terrorism.
 - Counter-terrorism experts will again need to enlarge their expertise to accommodate multi-domain operations, and **undertake terror 'gaming'**, all of which have become essential in today's day and age.

India's action plan at UNSC

- In January 2021, at the **20th anniversary of the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1373**, India presented an **eight-point action plan to deal with the scourge of terrorism.**
 - Summoning the political will to unhesitatingly combat terrorism.
 - Decrying double standards in the fight against terrorism.
 - Reform of the working methods of the Committees dealing with Sanctions and Counter-Terrorism.
 - Firmly discouraging exclusivist thinking that divides the world and harms the social fabric.
 - Enlisting and delisting individuals and entities under the UN sanctions regimes objectively not for political or religious considerations.
 - Fully recognising and addressing the link between terrorism and transnational organized crime.
 - Combating terrorist financing.
 - Immediate attention to adequate funding to UN Counter-Terrorism bodies from the UN regular budget.

Way ahead

- There is no question of raging machismo given that India and Pakistan are nuclear powers.
- All nations worldwide must keep up with their counter-terrorism efforts and address real or perceived grievances that make radicalisation possible.

Daily Mains Question

[Q] Counterterrorism is to be carried out with due thought and realism. Examine in the light of Israel's violent response against Hamas.