Counter-terror Diplomacy

What is this article about?

This article talks about the Counter-terror Diplomacy of India after it hosted the special session of the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (UNSC-CTC) in October 2022 in Delhi and Mumbai.

In December 2022, when India takes over the UNSC Presidency for the last time before its two-year term in the Council ends, India will chair a special briefing on the Global Counter Terrorism Architecture.

What must be the focus?

- The current focus is on the future of the fight against terrorism.
- But, it is important to look at some of the challenges that already exist, especially when the world's attention is consumed by the war in Europe, the aftermath of COVID-19, and global economic recession.

What are the challenges related to GWOT?

- The "Global War On Terrorism" (GWOT) conceived by a post-9/11 United States is over now after the US had negotiated with the Taliban, and then withdrew from Afghanistan. This is the first challenge.
- Moreover, the GWOT itself was **built on an unequal campaign**.
- When India had asked for help to deal with the IC-814 hijacking (1999) less than two years prior to the 9/11 attacks (2001), its pleas fell on deaf ears in the U.S., the UK, the UAE, Pakistan, etc.,
- But, in later years, all of these countries were hit by the same terrorists who the Indian government in 1999 was forced to release.
- The maximum India received in terms of global cooperation was actually from economic strictures that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s grey list placed on Pakistan, which has been cleared now.
- In addition, the weak international reaction to the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan demonstrates rising fatigue levels in dealing with "another country's problems".

For India, the future of counter-terrorism cooperation is going to be less cooperative, and the counter-terror regimes such as the UNSC Resolutions 1267,

1373, etc. rendered outdated and toothless.

What is the challenges related to definition?

- **Growing global polarisation** over the Russia-Ukraine war is blurring the lines on what constitutes terrorism.
- Away from the battlefield, the polarisation has rendered the UNSC, the body tasked with global peace, paralysed. This is because
    1. The UNSC is unable to pass any meaningful resolutions that aren't vetoed by Russia or western members.
    2. China has been able to block as many as 5 terror designations requested by India and the US.
- The biggest opportunity lost due to the UNSC's other preoccupations has been the need to move forward on India's proposal, of 1996, of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

What is the challenge related to technologies?

- The next challenge comes from emerging technologies and the weaponisation of different mechanisms for terrorism purposes.
- Drones are already being used to deliver funds, drugs, weapons, ammunition and even improvised explosive devices.
- After the COVID-19 pandemic, worries have grown about the use of biowarfare, and [Gain-of-Function (GoF) research](#) to mutate viruses and vectors which could be released into targeted populations.
- In a future that is already here, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) systems and robotic soldiers makes it even easier to perpetrate mass attacks while maintaining anonymity.
- **Terror financing** uses bitcoins and cryptocurrency, and **terror communications** use social media, dark web and gaming centres.

There is a need for a global consensus on regulating the use of these emergent technologies by all states, in order to distinguish their use from those by designated terror entities, or state-sponsored terrorists.

What is needed?

- There are no globally accepted norms on how and in what measure one is to respond to those attacks: whether it is
    1. The U.S.'s flattening of Afghanistan post-9/11,
    2. Pakistan's aerial strikes in Swat and Balochistan,
    3. India's crossing of the UN-monitored Line of Control after the Uri attack (2016) and missile strikes on Pakistani territory (Balakot, in 2019) after the Pulwama suicide bombing (2019), or
    4. Israel's bombardment of buildings in Gaza.
- Without some consensus on what constitutes terror, no war on terrorism can be truly

global.

What is next?

- Global inequity, climate change, pandemics, and food and energy shortages are going to be the next big drivers of violence in the world.
- But, at present, the global stakeholders are distracted by territorial disputes and narrow political differences.
- Terrorist acts of the future will grow more lethal, will need fewer people to carry out, and with their sponsors having more and more anonymity.
- India, as host of these counter-terrorism events, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the next G-20, must
    1. Stop fighting the "last war" on terrorism and
    2. Steer the global narrative towards preparing for the next ones.

Reference

1. [The Hindu | 'No consensus' is derailing counter-terror diplomacy](#)
2. [UN | UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee adopts Delhi Declaration](#)
3. [Live Mint | What is the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism?](#)

Quick Facts

Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism

- The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) was proposed by India in 1996.
- It provides a legal framework which makes it binding on all signatories to deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups.
- The original draft that was tabled in 1996 and discussed until April 2013 included following major objectives:
    1. To have a universal definition of terrorism that all 193-members of the UNGA will adopt into their own criminal law
    2. To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps
    3. To prosecute all terrorists under special laws
    4. To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.
- India has condemned terrorism in its all forms and stressed that it requires a holistic approach and collective action to tackle it.