

Realizing Prime Minister Modi's Policy of Zero Tolerance for Terrorism: Some Suggestions for Effective Indian Counterterrorism Diplomacy

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1. Indian Prime Minister Modi has often reiterated his firm resolve and conviction to execute a policy of zero tolerance for terrorism.
2. There are certain steps that the Government of India has already taken or may like to take to help realize the Prime Minister's vision.
3. First, the bilateral counterterrorism engagements that the Government of India has conducting are a welcome sign. A number of agreements emanating from these engagements and spanning the substantive breath of bilateral counterterrorism expertise have been signed and measures are being taken to implement the provisions of these bilateral agreements.
4. Second, the Government of India's counterterrorism efforts have turned out to be largely futile on the multilateral front. Its initiatives relating to United Nations Al-Qaida designations and the constant insistence on the need for a Comprehensive Treaty on International Terrorism (both are elusive) have drained precious Indian diplomatic capital over the years. Recent reports regards efforts at blocking of the financial assets of listed UN Al-Qaida associated Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad as mandated by FATF are no cause for exultation; often times in the past compliance with FATF standards has turned out to be plain window-dressing. Moreover unlike UN sanctions, compliance with FATF standards is not binding. Also, the house arrest of a notorious UN listed individual, the suspension of his armed licenses, and the clampdown on his communications appear to be an effort to create the mirage of implementation of the sanctions measures against him. Unless the assets (both fixed and moveable) of UN listed individuals are actually frozen (and such freezing action clearly documented) and the impact of designated clearly demonstrated by way of data on reduction in terrorist financing activity by listed

individuals and entities, these sanctions measures remain mere tokens of international resolve and exact only notional acquiescence on the part of member states (in particular those with the lack of political will to do so), if that at all.

5. The undue reliance on legal instruments to combat terrorism—grand strategies, treaties, and resolutions brings to light a rather aspirational view on the part of the Indian diplomatic establishment. Unfortunately, non-state actors and terrorists as well as member states supporting them do not subscribe to this utopian legal view when killing innocent civilian victims and brave soldiers or law enforcement personnel. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, such instruments at the international level do not always yield the expected dividends. A good fifteen plus years after the attacks on the Indian Parliament, Masood Azhar is roaming footloose and fancy free; more than eight years after the terrorist attacks on Mumbai, we are talking about opening yet another investigation into Hafeez Saeed’s role in engineering and plotting that pogrom. What have the global legal counterterrorism instruments done in providing justice and relief to the bereaved kith and kin of the hapless victims of the Mumbai attacks that included both brave Indians and Americans?

6. Prime Minister Modi personal credo is action and the enunciation of clear-cut parameters to demonstrate such action; consequently, those charged with Indian counterterrorism diplomacy may need to lay down clear cut metrics for diplomatic success—namely arrests, seizures, prosecutions, extraditions, convictions, assets frozen, assets confiscated, etc. And counterterrorism diplomacy is likely to be successful when it is backed by the use of, the threat of use of, or the projection of force. It may be a useful idea to include representatives of the Indian military, police, and paramilitary forces (those that represent personnel on the frontlines and battle lines of counterterrorism operations and represent ‘force’) as part of all diplomatic teams that negotiate on counterterrorism matters (in addition to their presence in the extant inter-ministerial working groups on counterterrorism at the bilateral level). The recent initiative to build policy (including counterterrorism) muscle within the Ministry of External Affairs is laudable, however this newly acquired policy expertise needs to be complemented with the valuable inputs of the policy implementers, i.e. the aforementioned military, police, and paramilitary officials. The Indian diplomatic service is well versed in the tools of diplomacy and statecraft and in concert with its peers, the counterterrorism experts within the Government of India, can work towards achieving and executing a smart and effective counterterrorism diplomacy mission.

7. Prime Minister Modi's clarion call to engage the Indian diaspora in contributing to their home country is legendary. In consonance with the wishes of the Prime Minister and in order for those in the diaspora to answer his call, it would be a great idea for Indian Ambassadors and their Deputy Chiefs of Mission to open their doors to those within the diaspora wanting to lend their unique counterterrorism expertise to help enrich Indian counterterrorism policy formulation and its implementation.
8. Lastly, the Government of India may like to stand on guard against certain current and former functionaries (and their associates) belonging to certain international organizations, who with their strong anti-India and anti-Indian actions, activities, preferences, and associations, may in the guise of offering counterterrorism advice penetrate the Indian national security establishment with the intention of sabotaging it from within, thus playing to the advantage of India's adversaries and compromising India's national security in the process.
9. Indian counterterrorism diplomacy has thus to keep pace to realize Prime Minister Modi's policy and vision of zero tolerance against terrorism. And with an inspiring and dynamic leader like him at its helm, no task is tall enough for the Government of India.