

HARDENING MOOD ON TERRORISM

The level of approval of the government's handling of terror has fallen as compared to early-2009

Theme: **TERRORISM**

There is a paradox in the current public mood on terrorism. Public opinion seems to be hardening as terrorism appears to be fading from the political agenda. Surveys in early 2009 in the wake of the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror strikes had revealed a remarkable level of maturity and poise in the response of the Indian public. But the response was a shade more hawkish when a question on similar lines was posed in the wake of the relatively smaller serial terror attacks in Mumbai on July 13, 2011. The CNN-IBN & CNBC-TV18 'State of the Nation Poll,' conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), and presented by *The Hindu*, throws light on perceptions of the terrorism threat and the Centre's response to it.

Information on the 26/11 Mumbai blasts had received wide publicity, especially in western India and in all the cities. But the level of approval of the government's handling of terror has fallen dramatically in comparison to the post-attack rating in 2009. Those who approve of the government's handling of terrorism still outnumber those who do not, but the gap is much smaller and the position gets reversed in western India and among BJP voters. Asked to assess the general handling of terrorism by the United Progressive Alliance government over the last two years, the verdict is negative; for every person who thinks that the situation on the terrorism front has improved over the last two years, there are three who think it has worsened.

Compared to 2009, there has been a certain coarsening in the public



COARSENING ATTITUDES: Surveys done in the wake of the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror strikes found a remarkable level of maturity and poise in the response of the public. But the response was more hawkish following the July 13, 2011 attacks. - PHOTO: AP

DEALING WITH PAKISTAN		
	The government is right in pressuring Pakistan on terrorism through diplomacy and dialogue	Diplomacy and dialogue are not enough and the government needs to take stronger action against Pakistan
All respondents	29	37
By gender		
Men	31	41
Women	27	32
By region		
North	30	36
Central	21	47
West	22	41
East	27	38
South	36	32
By education		
Non-literate	22	27
Up to primary	26	36
Up to matriculation	31	42
College and above	38	47

Question asked: I am going to read out two statements. Please tell me whether you agree with statement one or statement two.

Most respondents are not satisfied with India just talking to Pakistan and want the government to take stronger action against its neighbour. This sentiment is stronger among men than women, and among the more educated. Central and western India seem to be the most strident on the issue. Interestingly, respondents in the border State of Punjab are more in favour of 'diplomacy and dialogue' (33 per cent) than taking 'stronger action' (19 per cent).

attitude towards matters of internal security. The proposition that terror is related to one religion (a reminder of the allegations linking terror to Islam) is rejected by an overwhelming majority. Yet the proportion of those who hold the opposite opinion has gone up. Similarly, while there is a recognition that terror strikes can take place anywhere, the proportion of those who feel that India is a soft target has increased. All this leads to a hawkish demand that India must go beyond diplomacy and dialogue and take "strong action" against Pakistan for its sponsorship of terrorism. As yet the pressure is not very intense — given the low salience of foreign policy-related opinions, this is not strong enough to upset the Prime Minister's peace diplomacy — but significant enough for Indian policymakers to take note of.

It is not clear what explains this paradoxical shift in the public mood. It could be that the alacrity with which UPA-I responded to the Mumbai terror strikes in 2008 was missing in the response to the July 2011 blasts. It could also be a consequence of the difference in the timing of the surveys: the figures for 2009 were from a post-election survey while the present survey (done across 19 States in a total of 1,300 randomly selected locations) was held within weeks of the July blasts in Mumbai.

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(Queries about the survey may be sent to election@csds.in)

PERCEPTION ON 'TERROR AND RELIGION'						
	All Hindus	Rural Hindus	Urban Hindus	All Muslims	All Sikhs	All Christians
Terror has no religion and a terrorist can belong to any religion	46	44	52	59	50	46
These days terrorism is somehow related only to one religion	30	28	35	17	15	33

Question asked: Please tell me whether you agree with statement one or statement two.

Compared to Muslims, many more Hindus and Christians are of the opinion that terror is somehow related to one religion. Urban Hindus are most vocal on the issue of linking terror with religion. While a majority of urban Hindus feel that terror has no religion, there is also a sizeable number among them that links the two. This could be due to the fact that terrorism is largely an urban phenomenon.

TERROR NOT LINKED TO RELIGION, BUT ...		
	2009	2011
Terror has no religion and a terrorist can belong to any religion	53	47
These days terrorism is somehow related only to one religion	20	28

Question asked: Please tell me whether you agree with statement one or statement two.

A large number of respondents still feel that terror has no religion. However, compared to 2009, their proportion has come down. On the other hand, the number who feel that terrorism is related to only one religion has gone up.

BJP VOTERS MORE STRIDENT ON TERROR ISSUE			
	All respondents	Congress voters	BJP voters
Terror strikes can take place in any country, no matter what security arrangements are made	42	45	42
Our country is an easy target for terror strikes because our internal security is weak	35	32	41

Question asked: Please tell me whether you agree with statement one or statement two.

Compared to Congress voters, voters of the BJP seem slightly more strident on the issue of terrorism. The sentiment that India is an easy terror target because of weak internal security is stronger among BJP voters than Congress voters.

AWARENESS OF JULY 2011 MUMBAI BLASTS		
Those who have heard about the recent Mumbai blasts		
All respondents	Rural	Small towns
59	52	76
Cities	Western India	
84	72	

Question asked: Recently there was a bomb blast in Mumbai. Did you hear about it?

Most people are aware of the recent blasts in Mumbai. The awareness is much higher in towns and cities compared to rural areas. Among all regions (North, South, Central, West and East) of the country, awareness of the blasts was highest in western India, of which Mumbai is a part.

LESS SATISFACTION WITH TERROR CONTROL		
	2009	2011
Yes, satisfied	61	38
No, dissatisfied	23	30

Question asked: What is your opinion about the steps taken by the Central government to curb terrorism? Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with it?

The proportion of those who are 'satisfied' with the steps taken by the government to control terrorism is slightly higher than those who are 'dissatisfied.' However, compared to 2009, there is a big shift towards 'dissatisfaction.'

DISSATISFACTION HIGHER IN WESTERN INDIA								
Satisfied with steps to control terrorism?	All respondents	By region					By locality	
		North India	Central India	South India	East India	West India	Rural India	Urban India
Yes, satisfied	38	43	39	39	36	32	37	40
No, dissatisfied	30	27	27	30	30	37	27	39

Question asked: What is your opinion on the steps taken by the Central government to curb terrorism? Are you 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' with them?

While both urban and rural areas are more or less equally 'satisfied' with the government's performance on curbing terror, 'dissatisfaction' is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. North India is the 'most satisfied' and West India is the only region where 'dissatisfaction' exceeds 'satisfaction.'

CONGRESS VOTERS MORE SYMPATHETIC			
Satisfied with steps taken by government to control terrorism?	By voting preferences		
	Congress voters	BJP voters	Voters of other parties
Yes, satisfied	44	37	34
No, dissatisfied	25	39	31

Question asked: What is your opinion about the steps taken by the Central government to curb terrorism? Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with it?

Congress voters are more satisfied with the steps taken by government to control terrorism, than voters of the BJP and other parties. Among BJP voters, 'dissatisfaction' exceeds 'satisfaction.'

GROWING IMPATIENCE ON THE ISSUE		
	2009	2011
Terror strikes can take place in any country, no matter what security arrangements are made	48	42
Our country is an easy target for terror strikes because our internal security is weak	26	35

Question asked: I am going to read out two statements. Please tell me whether you agree with statement one or statement two.

While the proportion of those who say that 'terror strikes can take place in any country no matter what security arrangements are made' is still quite high, it has come down compared to 2009. Conversely, the number of those who feel that 'our country is an easy target for terror due to weak internal security' has increased substantially. The sentiment is more or less the same in both urban and rural areas.

UPA-II HAS FAILED TO CONTROL TERRORISM			
	Efforts at curbing terrorism ...		
	Have become better	Have remained the same	Have worsened
All	12	29	35
Rural	12	28	32
Urban	12	30	42

Question asked: Please tell me whether the following has improved or deteriorated during the last two years since UPA-II came to power.

Most respondents feel that the control of terrorist activities has deteriorated under UPA-II. The sentiment is much higher in urban areas when compared to rural areas.

How to read the tables

- All figures in percentage and rounded off.
- Data for 2009 based on the National Election Study conducted during the Lok Sabha polls.
- If figures do not add up to 100 per cent, it is because some respondents had no opinion.

