



Designating Russia as a 'State Sponsor of Terrorism'

For Prelims: Location of Russia, International Atomic Energy Agency, UNHRC, UNSC

For Mains: Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, Russia-Ukraine Conflict and its impact on global geopolitics

Why in News?

Recently, Ukraine has requested US to **designate Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism"**.

- The designation would **activate perhaps the harshest suite of sanctions available with the US** against Russia.



What is Terrorist Designation?

- **About:**
 - The US Secretary of State (the minister primarily in charge of foreign relations) has the power to designate countries that **"have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism"** as **"State Sponsors of Terrorism"**.
 - The US can **place four categories of sanctions on countries** that are on this list:
 - Restrictions on US foreign assistance
 - A ban on defence exports and sales
 - Certain controls over exports of dual use items
 - Miscellaneous financial and other restrictions

- Sanctions can **also be placed on countries and persons** that engage in certain trade with designated countries.
- **Countries on the List:**
 - As of now, there are **four countries on the list** of state sponsors of terrorism.
 - **Syria** (Designated on 29th December 1979)
 - **Iran** (Designated on 19th January 1984),
 - **North Korea** (Designated on 20th November 2017).
 - **Cuba was re-designated** as a state sponsor of terrorism on 12th January 2021

What are the Statutes which authorise Designation?

- There are currently **three statutes that authorise the Secretary of State to designate a foreign government** for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism:
 - **Foreign Assistance Act of 1961:** It prohibits the transfer of most aid,
 - **Arms Export Control Act (AECA):** It **prohibits exports, credits, guarantees, other financial assistance, and export licensing** overseen by the State Department, and
 - **Export Controls Act of 2018**
- Of these three statutes, **only the AECA identifies objectionable activities** as part of the definition while none of the three Acts defines the overarching term **“international terrorism.**

What has been India’s Stand on Russia - Ukraine Conflict?

- Initially, India **abstained** on a US-sponsored **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** resolution that deplores in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine.
- India again **abstained** from voting at the UNSC on the Russia drafted resolution on the Humanitarian situation in Ukraine which demanded that calling for a negotiated ceasefire for enabling safe, rapid, voluntary and unhindered evacuation of civilians.
 - Unlike during the past abstentions relating to Ukraine, it was the **first time that India sided with the West in this conflict (even if by an abstention).**
- India **abstained on a vote at the UN Human Rights Council** in Geneva. The Council moved the resolution to set up an international commission of enquiry into Russia’s actions in Ukraine.
- India, China and 33 other nations recently abstained from a **United Nations General Assembly** resolution that censured Russia for its military actions in Ukraine.
- India also abstained from the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** resolution that was related to safety at four nuclear power stations and a number of nuclear waste sites including **Chernobyl**, as the Russians seized control of them.

Way Forward

- The **Russia’s attack on Ukraine**, although a gross violation of international law, is not terrorism for the purposes of this designation but Russia has provided plenty of other grounds in the past decade.
 - To designate a country as a state sponsor of terrorism, the secretary of state **must determine that the nation’s government has repeatedly provided support for acts** of international terrorism, such as assassinations or financing terrorist groups.
- India has good ties with both the countries. If the tension between the two - USA and Russia escalates, it is **important for India to rationally balance the relationships.**
 - India’s relations with Russia are not as multifaceted as India’s ties with the U.S., Europe, or even Japan. They are focused primarily on energy and defence.
 - India-Russia bilateral trade stands at only USD 11 billion — but Indian purchases of Russian military equipment are its most significant element.

Source: IE

