Sehwan Attack

Why in news?

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A suicide attack by ISIS, at the Sufi shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar at Sehwan in Pakistan’s Sindh province has killed at least 80 people.

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Why Sufi Shrines are targeted?

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- Sufism is a mystical and generally moderate form of Islam that is loathed by fundamentalists.
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- Jihadis have targeted several Sufi shrines all over Pakistan for several years.
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- e.g Attacks on the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore in 2010 and that of Hazrat Shah Noorani in Balochistan in November 2016.
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- The jihadis justify their violence against Sufi shrines as **attacks against ‘impure’ manifestations of the Islamic faith**.
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- Killing ‘unbelievers,’ ‘heretics’ and ‘deviants’ is an integral part of their plan to create a purer Islamic state.
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- The same justification has been used in the past to attack Shias and Ahmadis as well as Pakistan’s Christians and Hindus.
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What is the actual reason?

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- The highly planned, well-publicised attacks on Shias in Iraq and Syria helped the IS mobilise Sunni sectarian sentiment and win recruits.
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- IS is using the same strategy in Pakistan to mobile recruits with sectarian ideology.
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- Sehwan Shrine is a prominent symbol of unity as people of all faiths in the subcontinent have been visiting it for centuries, thereby making it a particularly potent target for the IS.
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Why Pakistan could not contain repeated attacks?

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- Pakistan's ruling class sees terrorism through a geo-strategic lens and not as the consequence of its appeasement and sponsorship of Islamist extremism.
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- Some jihadi groups were reportedly nurtured by Pakistan for proxy wars in Afghanistan and against India.
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- Pakistan uses them to secure strategic advantage in the region i.e in Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir and against India
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- But some of them consider Pakistanis as legitimate targets.
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- To them Pakistan is as much their religious battlefield as Afghanistan or India.
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- One of the explanations for why Pakistan is unable to intercept jihadi terrorists targeting its own people is that the state apparatus does not outrightly consider all jihadis as its enemy.
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- They have double standards.
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- e.g 'Operation Zarb-e-Azb' targeted out-of-control Pakistani Taliban in Waziristan but spared groups based in Punjab and Karachi. Hafiz Saeed, the founder of LeT was recently detained but actions against him and Masood Azhar at the U.N. was blocked with Chinese support.
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- The jihadis responsible for attacks within Pakistan are deemed 'agents' of Indian intelligence or the Afghanistan National Directorate of Security (NDS).
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What should Pakistan do?

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- The recent attacks prove that the Pakistan’s tolerance for terror groups undermines the country.
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- It corrodes stability and civilian governance, damages the investment climate, and inflicts death and injury on thousands of innocent Pakistani citizens.
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- Therefore Pakistan should have to de-legitimate the jihadi ideology in its entirety.
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Source: The Hindu

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