

Does Azhar's UNSC terror listing really matter?



In what is seen as a huge setback for India's expectations, China on Wednesday - once again, for the fourth time - has blocked Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar's listing as "global terrorist" in the UNSC. But the bigger question is, how much does Azhar's UNSC terror listing really matter, and whether it would have served India's purpose?

Newsrooms are flooded with the story of the day ? the JeM chief has escaped from being tagged as "global terrorist" under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 sanctions committee, yet another time. And once again, it was Beijing's veto that pushed down the proposal moved by three permanent members of the Council to ban Azhar - freezing all his assets, arms embargo and travel around the world. This comes as a diplomatic setback for India, which has been pushing for the ban in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack claimed by JeM.

The 1267 UNSC listing was largely presented as a way to stop the terror outfit from using countries like Pakistan as breeding grounds to spread terrorism - and vice versa. For India, it was seen as a way to block Pakistan from using terror groups as instruments to achieve strategic goals in India - specifically, Kashmir. However, history and present is proof that the 1267 has turned out to be remarkably ineffective in ending any of the aforementioned activities - in any country.

Statistically speaking, the UNSC had updated a "consolidated list" of 262 individuals and 82 entities under the 1267 sanctions - of which over 100 are from Pakistan. Unfortunately, that has made absolutely no difference in their activities in Pakistan, nor has it stopped their ability to expand, commute and conduct attacks beyond the borders. For Pakistan has somehow learned to adjust to the 1267 sanctions, and it seems to be least interested in changing its fundamental ways to stop using these groups as instruments towards achieving its strategic objectives in India or Afghanistan.

On other hand, the UNSC listing has proven itself largely ineffective on its own. For the JeM and LeT have been in that list for nearly 20 years, the Al Rasheed Trust since 2002, the Al Akhtar Trust International since 2005 and the JuD since 2008. The question is, has that stopped any of these terror outfits from crossing the Indian borders? Records from past five years show that the number of terror attacks on India is on the rise each year - with 966 incidents in 2017 - compared to 180 incidents in 2000. Somehow, the terror heads have found ways to enter their target lands ? India, in this context.

All this means, regardless of the UNSC outcomes announced on March 13, 2019 - India is losing way too much of its sleep and national energy on 1267 list. Sure, it would have served a diplomatic victory for Delhi to flaunt "achieving something that was impossible since years", and having "beaten" Beijing with "diplomatic pressure" would only add to the 56 inches. But more than wasting resources on 1267, India should divert the resources to ensure that such groups and individuals get zero chances to set a foot on Indian soil.

And that is not happening with just securer borders, it will happen with putting our own house in order - that implies to taking care of what has gone so terribly wrong in Kashmir since years. So the key to peace in India is not in the UNSC list, nor is it in open war with Pakistan - the key is in fixing the broken in Kashmir with a soft hand and an open mind. Other than that, the list of global terrorists is, and will always remain just what it is - a list.