

A REALITY CHECK: ON U.S. DRAFT RESOLUTION TO BLACKLIST MASOOD AZHAR

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The [U.S. move to take a listing request for Jaish-e-Mohammad founder](#) Masood Azhar directly to the UN Security Council is an indicator of the frustration of a majority of the Council's permanent members with China's refusal to budge on the issue. The many obvious reasons to ban Azhar have been repeated often: the JeM was banned in 2001 with a listing at the UNSC that names Azhar as its founder and financier; he was accused of working with al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden; and he was seen by the entire world on TV screens as he was exchanged for hostages at Kandahar following the 1999 Indian Airlines hijack, after being released from an Indian prison where he was held on charges of terrorism. Since 2001, the JeM and Azhar have claimed responsibility for several terror attacks that resulted in the deaths of dozens of innocent persons, including, most recently, the February 14 attack on a CRPF convoy in Pulwama. Even so, China has used its veto on Azhar's listing at the 1267 UNSC Sanctions Committee four times in the past decade, evidently to protect Pakistan. Its stand on Azhar is at variance with the otherwise tough stand on terror in Xinjiang province. Also, it has allowed terrorists and groups based in Pakistan to be listed at the UNSC since 2001 and agreed to "grey list" Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force for terror financing. Just on Thursday, it joined other UNSC members in passing a resolution against terror financing.

China slams U.S. for circulating draft on banning Masood Azhar in the UN Security Council

With the latest proposal, the U.S. plans to "shame" China by bringing the Azhar listing to a public debate at the UNSC. And if that fails, it is reportedly considering a UN General Assembly statement condemning Azhar. The listing of Azhar is an unfinished task India is justified in pursuing. However, the latest U.S. move comes with some concerns. To begin with, there is no indication that China is ready to change its stand, particularly in the face of coercion or threat from the U.S., and it could veto this proposal as well. There appears to be little to be gained at present by forcing China further into Pakistan's corner, especially as New Delhi has said it would pursue the Azhar listing with China with "patience and persistence", in keeping with its desire not to sacrifice the bilateral relationship over the issue. It is equally unlikely that a world power like China would be moved by the threat of public humiliation. New Delhi must applaud the strong support the U.S. and the other UNSC members have provided on the issue of cross-border terror threats, and on the vexed issue of Azhar's listing. But it must be careful not to stake too much on an immediate win at the UNSC *vis-a-vis* China, and keep its expectations realistic.

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