

BLACK AND GREY: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON TERROR FUNDING AND PAKISTAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: FATF

The deliberations, in Beijing, of the Asia-Pacific joint group of the global watchdog on terror financing and money laundering, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), gave Pakistan some encouraging news: that it had progressed in its efforts to avoid a blacklisting. A final decision will be taken at a plenary meeting of the body, expected in Paris next month: in keeping Pakistan on the current “grey list”, downgrading it to a “black list”, or letting it off altogether for the moment. The 39-member body had determined that Pakistan was to be placed on the grey list in 2018, and presented it a 27-point list of actions. These included freezing the funds of UN Security Council entities such as 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed and the LeT, the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and other Taliban-affiliated groups. The actions entailed a sustained effort to bring legal action against these groups, and also called for changes to Pakistani law in line with global standards for measures against money laundering and financing terrorism. Unlike in October 2019, when Pakistan had completed five points, the Beijing meeting has cleared it on 14 points. While Pakistan’s progress will come as a disappointment to India — it wants more scrutiny of Pakistan’s support to terror groups lest Islamabad feels it has been let off the hook — there are a few points to consider. First, the grey listing is not new. Pakistan was placed on it in 2012, and was removed in 2015 after it passed a National Action Plan to deal with terrorism following the 2014 Peshawar School massacre. It was also placed under severe restrictions in the years 2008-2012, after the Mumbai attack. Second, this last grey list period has already seen some Indian demands met, including the chargesheeting of Hafiz Saeed for terror financing, and the addition of JeM chief Masood Azhar to the UNSC 1267 list. Finally, although the FATF is a technical organisation, there is no doubting that geopolitics and bilateral deals play a part in deciding outcomes.

As a result, New Delhi must study the politics behind Pakistan’s FATF “progress”. Officials have suggested that Pakistan’s role in ensuring Taliban talks are brought to a successful conclusion soon may have weighed with the U.S. and its allies in the grouping. Other countries may have determined that with China in the president’s chair, and the backing of Turkey and Malaysia, Pakistan could escape being blacklisted in any case, and dropped the effort. India’s recent troubles on the international stage, including the UNSC where China has been allowed to raise the Kashmir issue twice in five months, after nearly five decades, may also be a reason its objections at the Beijing discussions were not considered as carefully as in the past.

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