

AFTER CHINA'S VETO

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The technical hold by China on a proposal to list Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar under United Nations Security Council resolution 1267 was not entirely unexpected. The proposal, first moved by France, found as many as 13 co-sponsors in the Security Council. Aside from the US and UK among the other permanent members of the Security Council, 10 non-permanent and non-member countries joined the proposal as co-sponsors.

Going by Beijing's muted reaction to the "counter-terrorist" air-strike by India in [Balakot](#) inside Pakistan, Delhi nursed a small hope that China might finally be ready to co-operate in Masood's designation by the Da'esh and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the Security Council. In a last minute bid to persuade China against blocking the proposal, the US put out a statement saying that failure to designate Masood would go against the "shared goal" of regional stability and peace.

The Chinese statement that a solution "acceptable to all" had to be found was a definite indication that Beijing was not on board. This is the fourth time China has used the "technical hold" to block Azhar's listing. Clearly, this act of kindness to Azhar by Beijing, despite its own oft-stated position against terrorism, means that it believes its own interests are better served by staying out of an international alliance against Pakistan.

This episode is not the end of the matter for India. The listing definitely would have been a diplomatic victory, but the unsuccessful effort does not mean that Masood Azhar is not a terrorist in the eyes of the world. In fact, just the opposite, as seen from the number of countries that supported the proposal. Each of those non-permanent members is a representative of its region in the Security Council. No one doubts that the JeM is headquartered in Pakistan, and that Azhar is based there too. India has succeeded in making clear both the JeM's role in the February 14 Kashmir bombing, and its own intention of not holding back on exercising a military option against terrorist groups based inside Pakistan.

The proposal, too, will remain under active consideration of the Security Council for the next 12 months. But while India should keep up efforts for Azhar's listing, it would be unwise to invest too much diplomatic capital on this alone. For one, it runs the risk of reducing India's multifaceted relationship with China to one issue, which is hardly the way in which two civilisational powers should be doing business. For another, the benefits of listing are hardly clear — especially India-focussed terrorists based in Pakistan — going by how Hafiz Saeed, leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa, has flourished in the 10 years since he was put on the list. It would be better, instead, to keep up diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to give up its "strategic assets" in a range of other ways, including through the Financial Action Task Force.

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