



A global label

With Masood Azhar listed as a terrorist, India must work to ensure the mandated sanctions

Masood Azhar's listing as a designated terrorist by the UN Security Council at long last closes an important chapter in India's quest to bring the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief to justice. He eluded the designation for 20 years, despite his release in 1999 in exchange for hostages after the IC-814 hijack, and his leadership of the JeM as it carried out dozens of deadly attacks in India, including the Parliament attack of 2001, and more recent ones like the Pathankot airbase attack in 2016 and the Pulwama police convoy bombing this year. China's opposition to the listing has long been a thorn in India's side, given the toll Azhar and the JeM have exacted, and Beijing's veto of the listing three times between 2009 and 2017 had driven a wedge in India-China relations. Despite the frustration over China's last hold on a proposal moved by the U.S., the U.K., and France just weeks after Pulwama, the government has done well to approach Beijing with what the Ministry of External Affairs called "patience and persistence". There is much disappointment, however, over the final listing released by the Security Council, with no mention of Mr. Azhar's role in any of the attacks against India, or directing the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. A specific reference to Pulwama, which was in the original proposal, was also dropped, presumably to effect China's change of mind on the issue. Pakistan's claims of a victory in this are hardly credible; Masood Azhar is one of about twenty 1267-sanctioned terrorists who have Pakistani nationality, and more are based there, which is hardly a situation that gives it cause for pride. It is necessary to recognise that India's efforts and those of its partners in the Security Council have been rewarded with a UNSC designation at its 1267 ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee. The focus must now move to ensuring its full implementation in Pakistan.

But this is easier said than done. Pakistan's actions against others on the 1267 list have been far from effective, and in many cases obstructionist. Hafiz Saeed, the 26/11 mastermind and Lashkar-e-Toiba chief, roams free, addresses rallies, and runs a political party and several NGOs without any government restrictions. LeT's operations commander Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi was granted bail some years ago despite the UNSC sanctions mandating that funds and assets to the sanctioned individuals must be frozen. It will take constant focus from New Delhi, and a push from the global community, to ensure that Masood Azhar is not just starved of funds, arms and ammunition as mandated, but that he is prosecuted in Pakistan for the acts of terror he is responsible for. Azhar and his JeM must lose all capacity to carry out attacks, particularly across the border. Global terror financing watchdog Financial Action Task Force will also be watching Pakistan's next moves closely, ahead of a decision, that could come as early as in June, on whether to "blacklist" Pakistan or keep it on the "greylist". Both financial and political pressure should be maintained on Islamabad to bring the hard-fought designation of Masood Azhar to its logical conclusion.

Lost lives

India must meet the Maoist challenge in a holistic manner

The death of 15 security personnel in a landmine attack in Gadchiroli on Wednesday is another grim reminder of the Indian state's continued failure to crush naxalism. Less than a month ago, a legislator and some security personnel lost their lives in a similar attack in the neighbouring State of Chhattisgarh ahead of polling. That this attack should occur despite the deployment of 30 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force – a company comprises 135 personnel – and 13 companies of the State Reserve Police Force as well as 5,500 personnel of the local police in Gadchiroli and neighbouring Chandrapur district shows not only the audacity of the perpetrators but also the unpreparedness of the security forces. A Quick Response Team was going down the road to Dadpur in Kurkheda where extremists had set fire to three dozen vehicles of a road construction company earlier in the day when the explosion blasted the team to smithereens. The ease with which the extremists were able to torch so many vehicles is alarming, and the manner in which the response team blithely drove into an ambush is a shocking example of poor planning. The naxals set the bait and the security forces blindly took it. In the process, standard operating procedures, including letting a road-opening team lead the way, seem to have been ignored. Yet, the authorities still remain in a state of denial.

It is no coincidence either that the perpetrators chose the Maharashtra Foundation Day, after the polling in the district, to send this violent message. That the naxals should be able to control the narrative, remain on top of the intelligence, stay nimble and several steps ahead of the security planners should be a matter of deep concern. It is some comfort that the polling percentages in both Gadchiroli and neighbouring Chandrapur have risen, compared to the 2014 Lok Sabha election, from 70.04% to 71.98% and from 63.29% to 64.65%, respectively. But the path of the voter to the polling booth in the naxal-dominated districts is still paved with disincentives. And, the security forces deployed in the region have not been able to instil in them a greater level of confidence. On top of everything else, most of the police personnel who perished in this latest attack seem to have been local citizens. What effect could this have on the larger process of weaning away the populace from the naxalites? Reality beckons. Even in the prevailing circumstances of a hostile external environment, India cannot afford to take the challenges of internal security lightly.

Don't give in to polarisation

In Sri Lanka, the challenge is to turn national mourning into a call for coexistence and democracy



AHILAN KADIRGAMAR

As reports about those behind the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka emerge, many questions remain about the motives of the extremists. The full picture of the formation of this extremist force and the objectives behind their heinous crimes may take time. However, they have succeeded in creating a spectacle of death, mayhem and fear.

I focus here on the historical backdrop and the broader consequences of these attacks. In the months ahead, the climate of fear is going to drastically shape the workings of the state, the political character of future regimes and relations between communities.

The political leadership in the country has descended into a blame game with this being an election year. The progressive forces committed to a plural and democratic society have a historical challenge before them, as Sri Lanka is on the verge of falling into the abyss of polarisation.

Historical turn

The Easter attacks have implanted horrendous images in the minds of Sri Lankans. The fallout can tear apart the body politic of Sri Lanka with political shifts similar to the U.S. after September 11, 2001 and the July 1983 pogrom in Sri Lanka.

The "war on terror" in the U.S. after 2001 led to the draconian USA PATRIOT Act, the detention and surveillance of Muslims and the institution of Homeland Security, undermining the democratic and liberal structures within the U.S. With many other countries

sucked into the "war on terror" coupled with the Bush regime's military adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, great social and political turmoil was created in West and South Asia, and fuelled extremist Islamist forces.

In Sri Lanka, the "war on terror" manoeuvred an internationalised peace process between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), by pushing for a deal between a so-called "failed state" and a "terrorist organisation". Eventually, as the peace process failed with heightened international engagement, Sri Lanka's version of a brutal "war on terror" cataclysmically ended the civil war with tens of thousands of lives lost in May 2009.

On the other hand, the armed conflict itself escalated following the government-orchestrated July 1983 pogroms where over 2,000 Tamil civilians were massacred. That pogrom over-determined the political economy of the country with an ethnic conflict over the next two and a half decades. Indeed, the Easter massacre leading to hundreds of casualties is loaded with dangers of religious forces entering the mix of a country historically fraught with ethno-nationalist tensions and conflicts.

Polarised politics

Some actors are drawing parallels between the perpetrators of the Easter attacks and the LTTE. However, the similarities are limited to the LTTE's use of suicide bombings and targeting of civilians. The LTTE had a clear agenda of creating a separate state and worked to build a base within the Tamil community through a combination of separatist nationalist mobilisations, totalitarian control and ruthless elimination of dissent.

The extremist Muslim youth behind the Easter attacks are a fringe group and their nihilist politics



without a social base is one of divisiveness and isolation. They have drawn as much on globally circulating contemporary technologies of terror as on the alienation of Muslim youth with rising global Islamophobia, but their politics are eschewed by the Muslim communities in Sri Lanka.

In this context, even though the attacks were mainly against Christian churches, the fallout may take unpredictable forms. Thus far, the Christian communities' response has been restrained. However, chauvinist Sinhala Buddhist forces see these attacks as targeting state sovereignty and feel vindicated in their distrust of Muslims. Their anti-Muslim campaigns have greatly influenced the Sinhala population's prejudices against Muslims over the last decade; the Mahinda Rajapaksa regime stoked anti-Muslim violence and the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government hardly addressed its continuation.

Even as reports of the perpetrators behind these harrowing attacks unfold, many international and national actors are projecting narratives to suit their geopolitical and power seeking agendas. The number of international actors now providing assistance to confront "terrorism" does not bode well given the disastrous history of internationalised engagement in Sri Lanka.

There are social and political dangers in projecting hasty solu-

tions either removed from or with limited understanding of problems. While security in the aftermath of the attacks is a real concern, a solution solely focussed on militarised policing and surveillance is worrying. For close to a decade, progressives have called for demilitarisation. However, the current state of Emergency with militarised check points and surveillance are further militarising the country. In weeks before the Easter attacks there was much discussion of repealing the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act enacted in 1979, which in no small measure was linked to torturing and alienating Tamil youth during the war and Sinhala youth during the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna insurrection. We are now looking into the black hole of a far severe legal and surveillance regime, with little discussion of its long-term impact on democratic freedoms.

Political ramifications

In the panic and clamour for a security response, the ideological, economic and political ramifications of the current crisis are missed. Drawing on Islamophobic discourse, Muslims characterised as the "other" are called to explain and take responsibility for the Easter attacks. There are escalating demands to ban madrasas and Muslim women's attire without extensively consulting the Muslim community. Furthermore, as with the previous riots that targeted Muslim businesses, scapegoating Muslims for future economic problems is a real fear.

The fragile national economy is bound to decline with a major hit on the significant tourist industry. The July 1983 pogrom and the armed conflict brought tremendous disorder and isolated Sri Lanka at a time when its peers such as Malaysia and Thailand gained economically from major foreign investments. In these times of pro-

tectionism, an economic shock affecting international investment, capital flows and trade with Sri Lanka can lead to a national economic crisis.

Even more dangerously, an authoritarian anti-terrorist leadership is now the kneejerk call for the upcoming presidential elections. Predictably, the Rajapaksa camp gaining ground over the last year capitalising on mounting economic problems, is seeking further political gain out of this disaster. They claim only a strongman leader can redeem the country. They are projecting their role in decimating the LTTE as the solution for the current crisis. However, the defeat of the LTTE was about taking on a totalitarian organisation with a pyramidal military structure, where the decapitation of the leadership led to its end.

The challenge now beyond the immediate security concerns is mainly of social and political proportions. The attacks by extremist Islamist forces on the Christian churches can shift into conflicts that involve chauvinist Buddhist and for that matter Hindu reactionary forces. Hindutva in India, Buddhist extremism in Myanmar and the circulation of their ideologies and practices are imminent dangers for an already fraught Sri Lankan polity.

The liberal and left forces in the country, and the Sinhala intelligentsia in particular, have to find the courage and discourse to take on the chauvinist anti-Muslim rhetorical barrage. A likely casualty of the Easter attacks is going to be the rights of Muslim youth and the broader freedoms of the citizenry. The challenge before the country is to turn national mourning and grief into a call for coexistence and democracy.

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The gender ladder to socio-economic transformation

More than a 'more jobs' approach, addressing structural issues which keep women away from the workforce is a must



DIVITA SHANDILYA

India is in the middle of a historical election which is noteworthy in many respects, one of them being the unprecedented focus on women's employment. The major national parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, have reached out to women, and their respective manifestos talk of measures to create more livelihood opportunities in rural and urban areas, which include incentives to businesses for employing more women.

What data show

Currently, the participation of women in the workforce in India is one of the lowest globally. The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India fell from 31.2% in 2011-2012 to 23.3% in 2017-2018. This decline has been sharper in rural areas, where the female LFPR fell by more than 11 percentage points in 2017-2018. Social scientists have long tried to explain this phenomenon, more so in the context of rising levels of education for women.

The answers can be found in a complex set of factors including low social acceptability of women working outside the household,

lack of access to safe and secure workspaces, widespread prevalence of poor and unequal wages, and a dearth of decent and suitable jobs. Most women in India are engaged in subsistence-level work in agriculture in rural areas, and in low-paying jobs such as domestic service and petty home-based manufacturing in urban areas. But with better education, women are refusing to do casual wage labour or work in family farms and enterprises.

Education and work

A recent study observed a strong negative relationship between a woman's education level and her participation in agricultural and non-agricultural wage work and in family farms. Essentially, women with moderately high levels of education do not want to do manual labour outside the household which would be perceived to be below their educational qualifications. The study also showed a preference among women for salaried jobs as their educational attainment increases; but such jobs remain extremely limited for women. It is estimated that among people (25 to 59 years) working as farmers, farm labourers and service workers, nearly a third are women, while the proportion of women among professionals, managers and clerical workers is only about 15% (NSSO, 2011-2012).

However, it is not the case that women are simply retreating from the world of work. On the con-



trary, time-use surveys have found that they devote a substantial amount of their time to work which is not considered as work, but an extension of their duties, and is largely unpaid. The incidence and drudgery of this unpaid labour is growing. This includes unpaid care work such as childcare, elderly care, and household work such as collecting water. The burden of these activities falls disproportionately on women, especially in the absence of adequately available or accessible public services. It also encompasses significant chunks of women's contribution to agriculture, animal husbandry, and non-timber forest produce on which most of the household production and consumption is based.

Any government which is serious about ensuring women's economic empowerment and equal access to livelihoods must address the numerous challenges that exist along this highly gendered continuum of unpaid, underpaid and paid work. A two-pronged approach must entail facilitating women's access to

decent work by providing public services, eliminating discrimination in hiring, ensuring equal and decent wages, and improving women's security in public spaces. It must also recognise, reduce, redistribute, and remunerate women's unpaid work.

An ActionAid document, which has compiled a people's agenda through extensive discussions across States, provides critical recommendations to policymakers on issues of concern to Dalits, tribal people, Muslims and other marginalised communities with a focus on the needs of women. On the question of work, women's demands include gender-responsive public services such as free and accessible public toilets, household water connections, safe and secure public transport, and adequate lighting and CCTV cameras to prevent violence against women in public spaces and to increase their mobility. Furthermore, they want fair and decent living wages and appropriate social security including maternity benefit, sickness benefit, provident fund, and pension.

Women have also expressed the need for policies which ensure safe and dignified working and living conditions for migrant workers. For example, in cities, governments must set up migration facilitation and crisis centres (temporary shelter facility, helpline, legal aid, and medical and counselling facilities). They must also allocate social housing spaces for

women workers, which include rental housing and hostels. They must ensure spaces for women shopkeepers and hawkers in all markets and vending zones.

Recognition as farmers

In addition, women have strongly articulated the need to enumerate and remunerate the unpaid and underpaid work they undertake in sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. Their fundamental demand is that women must be recognised as farmers in accordance with the National Policy for Farmers; this should include cultivators, agricultural labourers, pastoralists, livestock rearers, forest workers, fish-workers, and salt pan workers. Thereafter, their equal rights and entitlements over land and access to inputs, credit, markets, and extension services must be ensured.

Women also reiterate the need to recognise and redistribute their unpaid work in the household. For this, the government must collect sex-disaggregated household level data with suitable parameters. Unless policymakers correctly assess and address the structural issues which keep women from entering and staying in the workforce, promising more jobs – while a welcome step – is unlikely to lead to the socio-economic transformation India needs.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Azhar listing

The UN Security Council has finally designated Masood Azhar as a global terrorist and it is a symbolic win for India (Page 1, "UN Security Council designates Masood Azhar as global terrorist", May 2). Now, how much of terrorism pursued by this man in India can be arrested remains to be seen. The common man also needs to know the exact details about the behind-the-scenes diplomatic activities. The role of certain countries in West Asia in supporting terrorism needs to be exposed which could be difficult as the U.S. supports some of these regimes.

A. BHUYAN, Nagaon, Assam

In reality, it is the European countries and the U.S. and the U.K. that played pivotal roles in pressuring China to toe the line. But there is no denying the fact that the UNSC's action will be extremely beneficial for India which has also been working hard to ensure that Pakistan is forced to initiate action against Azhar. India should now mount pressure on the UN and the clutch of nations that are on the same page as India as far as fighting terrorism is concerned to ensure that India's most wanted are extradited to face trial in Indian courts.

C.V. ARAVIND, Bengaluru

Election 2019

The general election in 2019 is a historic one as its results

will affect Indians for many years. The narrative this time is mostly on race and religion rather than an evaluation of progress made from 2014. The discerning public would like to know the truth about demonisation, two crore new jobs and steps to recover black money. This election is very much about the role of the Election Commission of India, which is supposed to monitor all candidates and ensure that the rules are followed. However, the EC is either too timid or biased against the Opposition. Most candidates in the ruling party are polarising the electorate. The worst part is the Indian media which is not being objective. An independent media is the backbone of India's democracy and if it is

being strangled, democracy and freedom will be impacted.

ZEN BHATIA, Ontario, Canada

Against natural justice

It is unfortunate that the former Supreme Court staffer, who has alleged sexual harassment by the Chief Justice of India has been denied even the basic opportunity of being assisted by a lawyer which goes against the principles of natural justice (Page 1, "Ex-SC staffer walks out of Bobde panel hearing", May 1). In such a situation, the judges concerned on seeing the woman's plight, helplessness and inexperience, should have come forward to help her. The obstacles she faced (listed in the report) give the

impression that the inquiry is a mere procedural formality. If this facility had been given, nothing would have been lost. For example, in *Board of Trustees of the Port of Bombay vs. D.R. Nadkarni*, the Supreme Court held that when an employee is pitted against trained prosecutors, it would amount to denying the principle of equality when an employee is denied permission to engage a legal practitioner to defend themselves. Such an inference can be drawn when a helpless employee is

pitted in an inquiry conducted by Supreme Court judges. The committee has to remind itself that the preamble to the Constitution, which is part of the basic structure, begins with the words 'We the people'. The committee has to ensure that the inquiry should satisfy the people of India that it has been more than fair.

N.G.R. PRASAD, RAM SIDDHARTHA, Chennai

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the report, "CJI appears before panel probing sexual harassment charge" (May 2, 2019), there was a reference in the penultimate paragraph to the crisis in the Supreme Court when a clutch of websites published allegations against the CJI on Easter Day morning. It should have been April 20 morning.

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