

Hizbul Mujahideen ban goes global, but will it reach the Valley?

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Written by [D. Suba Chandran](#) | Updated: August 17, 2017 7:13 pm



A policeman tears apart a photo of slain Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani at Rambagh in Srinagar on Sunday, August 14, 2016. (Express photo by Shuaib Masoodi)

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The US Department of State has designated Hizbul Mujahideen as a “Foreign Terrorist Organisation” and “Specially Designated Global Terrorist”. The above designation seeks to “deny HM the resources it needs to carry out terrorist attacks” besides blocking Hizbul’s property and interests subject to American jurisdiction and prohibiting persons from “engaging in any transactions with the group.”

From an Indian perspective, what does the above designation mean? Will it affect Hizbul’s functioning and prevent further recruitment within Kashmir Valley? Will it prevent Pakistan from supporting HM and Syed Salahudin?

Though the Hizbul has been projected as the largest “Kashmiri” militant group, during the last decade and half, it had lost the appeal to a more radical section such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad. The latter are based in Pakistan and are lethal in terms of attacks and ideological orientation.

For New Delhi, the US designation is strategic and political. While Pakistan has been pushing hard to project “Indian atrocities” in the Kashmir Valley, the latest designation of the Hizbul, and the earlier US declaration of Syed Salahudin as a global terrorist (during Modi’s visit to the US) makes a political point at global level. It shows, where the White House stands on the ongoing unrest in J&K; clearly, the Trump administration stands with New Delhi.

Does the American ban really matter to the militant groups and their patrons?

For India, the bigger challenge is Lashkar-e-Toiba. Earlier, the US has designated the following Pakistan-based groups as terrorist organisations: Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HuM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Lashkar-e-Jhanvi (LI), Ansal-al Islam (AI), Tehrike-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and Jundullah.

Outside these Pakistan based organisations, LTTE in Sri Lanka, Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami – Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Indian Mujahdeen (IM) were also designated by the US as terrorist organisations. While the LTTE disintegrated after the killing of Prabhakaran, the other two in Bangladesh and India declined due to state action and also their inability to sustain popular support.

In case of Pakistan-based groups, the above has not happened. While the HuM declined during the 1990s, LeT, TTP, LI and Jundullah continue to operate – with and outside the State patronage. The Lashkar in particular has been openly challenging the ban; recently, it even announced the formation of a political party. While Hafiz Saeed was repeatedly placed under house arrest, it has neither affected his position, nor curbed Lashkar's activities.

While the ban provides a political scoring point for India against Pakistan, the latter is unlikely to take any effective measure to curb the Hizbul. If the American military pressure and economic carrots have not prevented Pakistan's Deep State to act against the Taliban and the Huqqanis, will the US designation against Hizbul make any effective change? Less likely. For rest of Pakistan, the Hizbul will remain a "separatist" group and not militant.

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What next for Hizbul and New Delhi?

Hizbul may find another name, as Lashkar transformed itself into Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD). Syed Salahuddin may be placed under house arrest within Pakistan.

But the real issue for New Delhi would be the support and activities of the militant groups inside Kashmir. The American designation is a success for the South Block at the diplomatic level. The long term challenge for New Delhi would be to expand this, leading to the total disintegration of militancy and prevent the emergence of Burhan Wanis. For this, the North Block and the Prime Minister's Office will have to work together and carry forward the international success into Srinagar and beyond.

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