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**Analysing official versions**

On a TV talk show recently, in which I was appearing as an analyst, nearly all speakers were unanimous that the 27th UN monitoring report exposed India as a country that had been supporting terrorist activities in Pakistan.

Before going into the details of the report, we must note that both print and electronic media in India are much more jingoistic and nationalist in tone and tenor than in Pakistan; the arrogance and one-sided portrayal of claims and events remains unsurpassed in India. They do not waste a single minute in blaming Pakistan for hatching conspiracies against each other. Indian anchors such as Arnab Goswami are also chauvinists and ultra-patriots pining for the blood of their purported enemies.

Be it the ‘acclaimed’ surgical strikes in Pakistan or a bout with the Chinese in Ladakh, the Indian foreign office is ever ready to project its failure as a resounding success; and the Indian media is even more willing to pedal the falsehoods at full throttle. Even if no international observer validates the so-called surgical strikes and the Indian fighter plane goes down and Pakistan captures the pilot, the Indian foreign office and the compliant media sound the bells of victory. This failure by media personnel to question their official claims is unethical and unprofessional.

The illegal, unconstitutional and unilateral announcement of annexing Occupied Kashmir also got similar treatment from both the Indian foreign office and their media. There were not many Indian analysts and journalists who challenged the version of the Indian government. The continued brutalities of the Indian occupation forces and relentless curfews and crackdowns seldom get a mention on Indian media. There is no more talk about the Gujarat massacre that Modi himself masterminded and clandestinely facilitated as the chief minister of Gujarat in the early 2000s.

Pakistan too has seen the media looking only at one side of the story over the years – for example, during the East Pakistan fiasco and the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Dictator General Ziaul Haq forcibly threw Pakistan into the Afghan fire and still there were not many sane voices who could challenge these follies. Yes, there were a couple of politicians such as Benazir Bhutto, Bizenjo and Wali Khan, and some leaders and journalists who were left leaning who spoke and wrote against the claims of the good general, but overall there was silence. For eleven long years we suffered under the yoke of not only internal suppression but also an external adventure that was bound to have a devastating and far-reaching impact on Pakistan.

Overall, the media accepted the version of the Foreign Office. Again, in the 1990s, the Foreign Office led us to believe that the Taliban were the best option for Afghanistan, as the earlier warriors had exhausted their potential and were no good for us. During the second government of Benazir Bhutto – from 1993 to 1996 – the Taliban scored one victory after another, though BB herself apparently had nothing much to do with it. From 1996 to 2001, for a full five-year period only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE recognized the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan and accorded them full diplomatic protocol. The Pakistani media did not question this wisdom of our Foreign Office. Again, when another usurper General Pervez Musharraf took an about-turn, and the Foreign Office too had a volte-face, the media followed suit. Fast forward another two decades, and you hear that the world has supported Pakistan on Kashmir. Though even our supposed friends such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have reservations about condemning India.

And now we come to the recent report by the UN monitoring team. The 23-page report is dated Feb 3, 2021 and concerns the "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council.” It is the 27th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. The report is not about India and Pakistan. The entire report does not mention India at all.

Both in summary and in Section I – ‘Overview and evolution of the threat’ – the discussion is about the Middle East and the role of ISIL and Al-Qaeda there. Section II discusses regional development, again beginning with Iraq and the Levant. It goes on to discuss the Arabian Peninsula and then gives full four pages to various regions of Africa. After Europe we come to Central and South Asia where just one paragraph highlights as follows:

“Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was reported to (sic) have overseen a reunification of splinter groups that took place in Afghanistan and was moderated by Al-Qaida. This was expected to increase the threat to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region. Five entities pledged alliance to TTP in July and August, including the Shehryar Mehsud group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Hizb-ul-Ahrar, the Amjad Farooqi group, and the Usama Saifullah group (formerly known as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi). This increased the strength of TTP and resulted in a sharp increase in attacks in the region. Member State assessments of TTP fighting strength range between 2, 500 and 6, 000. One Member State reported that TTP was responsible for more than 100 cross-border attacks between July and October 2020.” (Paragraph 68, page 16)

Then on the last page of the report there is an annex with a sub-headline of Pakistan: "The action brought by the Al Rashid Trust regarding the application of the sanctions measures against it remains pending in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, on appeal by the Government of an adverse decision in 2003. A similar challenge brought by Al-Akhtar Trust International remains pending before a provincial high court. In addition to the two cases mentioned above, the challenge by a trustee of the Pakistan Relief Foundation (listed as an alias of Al-Akhtar Trust International) of the freezing of his bank account remains pending.” In the footnotes of page 23, it clarifies that this information was provided by Pakistan.

If I claim to be an analyst or a journalist, one of my ethical and professional duties is to do a reality check. If I fail to highlight the facts, perhaps I better be a government spokesperson in India or Pakistan, or in any other country.

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