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## No Lakhvi for India: Pak Sells India another Dummy

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By Bhaskar Roy

The joint statement issued by India and Pakistan in Ufa, Russia following the talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was as light as the paper that it was written on. The two prime ministers met on the side-lines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit to which the two countries were made full members.

The critical paragraph of the five point statement is the one: “Both sides agreed to discuss ways and means to expedite the Mumbai case trial, including additional information like providing voice samples”. The other points like meeting of the two National Security Advisors (NSAs) in New Delhi to discuss all issues connected to terrorism, early meetings between the chiefs of border forces of the two countries, meetings of the two DGMOs, release of fisherman held by the two countries within 15 days and religious tourism are all nominal. They would have made sense if the operative paragraph would have specifically mentioned with seriousness about Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi, the mastermind of “26/11” Mumbai carnage and the role of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) at least to start with.

But the operative paragraph is vague, open to many interpretations, and without any time frame. The words “agreed to discuss ways and means” can take India back to the drawing board and bring the Lakvi trial in Pakistan to a stop. It is the surest means to scuttle the trial itself. Seven years have elapsed since the Mumbai carnage, and Lakhvi is walking free on bail.

Before the ink on the paper could dry, providing voice samples of Lakvi (and others involved) have been scuttled. Both Lakhvi’s lawyer and the public prosecutor in the case have told the media that this cannot be done, voice samples are not acceptable as evidence in their courts, and the relevant court’s views have been quoted to support their argument.

Pakistan's position on countering terrorism is nothing now. They have always said they are ready to fight terrorism in all its forms. But they have never acted. They have decided to attack their home grown terrorists, the Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP) when their organization turned against the state, especially the Pakistani army.

It is pertinent to look at the statement issued by the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan at Ufa on the issue. It said "Both leaders condemned terrorism in all its forms and agreed to cooperate to eliminate this menace from South Asia". This is a vague political statement absolving Pakistan from all acts of terrorism, and with no focus.

This is particularly so when ISI operatives posted in their Bangladesh High Commission in Dhaka, were caught red handed by the Bangladeshi agencies distributing money to terrorists to launch attacks both in Bangladesh and India. The manager of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in Dhaka was also expelled from the country for similar offences. Those happened earlier this year. What is Pakistan going to do with their cutting edge spy agency the ISI, which is an arm of Pakistan's armed forces and an agency of state. What answer does Pakistan have? It has been proved time and again that Pakistan is a state sponsor of terror and should be condemned by the relevant resolution of the UN Security Council. An answer must also be sought from China. Pakistan must save Lakhvi and the LET by all means because it is not only Lakhvi. The LET group that attacked Mumbai were trained by the army. Kasab, the only terrorist caught alive from that group, has mentioned details of these involvements in his confessions. There were two serving Pakistani army officers who took active part in the attack and gave the terrorists directions over cell phone. Their voice samples are also available with the Indian government.

The evidence given by David Headley, the Pakistani American, who cased Mumbai for the ISI, has simply been forgotten. Abu Jindal, one of the terrorists who was in Pakistan and actively helped the ISI in this attack is in Indian custody now. He was hiding in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi government was cooperative enough to hand him over to India. The Saudi leadership had enough from quietly helping extremists spreading Wahabism in other countries. Some of them are coming home to roost.

Evidence given by Abu Jindal should in time be shared with the international community and also made public. Full mileage must be extracted by India with haste.

The role played by China in the Lakhvi case and in general, absolving Pakistan from acts of terrorism is critical. The Chinese envoy vetoed India's move in the UN Security council to designate Lakhvi as a terrorist citing enough evidence was not provided by India. The other four P-5 members were, however, satisfied with evidence provided by India.

Modi took the matter immediately to the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang over telephone. He again raised the matter with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Ufa. The answer was the same. The Chinese did not even agree to reconsider their decision, as the Chinese say, “China is never wrong”.

China’s position on the Lakhvi case and others India brought to UN authorities forebodes a dangerous development. China claims that it is a target of terrorism, and China’s terrorists have had support from Pakistan’s territory. It had blamed Pakistan till recently for its terrorist problem in Xinjiang bordering Pakistan. It appears Beijing has struck a bargain with Islamabad. Under the conditions, Pakistan is in no position to try Lakhvi and bring him to justice. It will fall apart.

The international community, especially the UN, must review the whole affair with clarity and honesty. The global war against terrorism stands severely dented. The whole development suggests that Beijing can support terrorism through a surrogate if its own purpose is served.

The Narendra Modi government has no option but to review its diplomacy with Pakistan. Discussions on terrorism will allow Islamabad to raise all kinds of counter charges against India and obfuscate the real issue. It will go nowhere.

It is accepted that India should talk to Pakistan. But how and what line to take is something that needs to be worked out. The present direction is on a no-where road.

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