

TWO SPEECHES: ON MODI AND IMRAN SPEECHES AT UNGA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Pakistan

The speeches at the UN General Assembly, by [Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan](#), and a day later by [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#), were a study in contrasts. Mr. Modi focused on India's own role on the world stage and the need to reform the UN and expand the Security Council to give India more representation. Mr. Khan focused less time on Pakistan, launching a broadside against India. Mr. Modi made no reference to Pakistan, and spoke about terrorism only in broader terms. A reply to Mr. Khan's speech was left to an Indian diplomat, who described it as an "incessant rant" and "lies, misinformation and warmongering". Mr. Khan's references to India, which formed more than a third of his text, repeated the vilification in his previous speeches: accusing the Modi government of "state sponsorship of Islamophobia", of following an "extremist ideology" of the RSS, which he claims is "inspired" by Nazi concepts of "racial purity and supremacy", and of planning to "cleanse" the country of minorities. Extreme comparisons were made between the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the Nuremberg laws, as well as between detention camps in Assam and the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Next, he launched into a diatribe on Jammu and Kashmir, more or less mirroring his speech of last year, which included accusations that the government's moves to dilute Article 370 and reorganise J&K State into Union Territories were akin to a "final solution" of "genocide" for the State, and contravenes UN laws. He concluded with a reference to LoC tensions, where ceasefire violations have risen, ending on an exaggerated note that referred to Kashmir as a "nuclear flashpoint".

Mr. Khan's speech can be easily countered, and dismissed, as the government has. Pakistan's own record on minorities, including its own laws that even prevent minorities from holding high office, completely demolish Pakistan's credentials to attack India, which is a constitutionally declared secular democracy. Mr. Khan's accusations of Indian "state terrorism" come even as his country faces a decisive moment at the Financial Action Task Force in October, where Pakistan has been kept on a "grey list" since June 2018. His accusations on the reorganisation of J&K, and of attempting "demographic changes" are equally strange, given Pakistan has itself just declared Gilgit Baltistan a province and has carried out the resettlement of non-Kashmiris in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for decades. Even if some of the concerns that were raised by Mr. Khan are also being debated inside India, sans the overdramatic characterisations, they are certainly not within the purview of another country, and not a legitimate subject for his address at the UN. While India can safely disregard his barbs, it must not underestimate their intent, as part of a larger strategy to consistently hurl these allegations against India, in the hope that some of it will stick.

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