



New Claims of Hitler-Modi Link Incite Dispute Between India and Pakistan

SINGAPORE — Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that a Hindu group associated with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been inspired by Adolf Hitler, inciting the latest verbal feud between the two typically hostile neighbors.

India's Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological parent of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, gets its inspiration from Hitler, claimed Zardari at the UN Security Council on December 16.

His comments were in response to remarks made by Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar labeling Pakistan the epicenter of terrorism.



AP Images
Narendra Modi

"I'd like to remind the honorable Minister for External Affairs of India that Osama Bin Laden is dead, but the butcher of Gujarat lives and he is the Prime Minister of India," riposted Zardari, alluding to religious protests in Modi's home state in 2002 shortly after he became chief minister.

Over 1,000 people, mainly Muslims, were killed in Gujarat province due to sectarian rioting. Although human-rights groups accused Modi of not doing enough to halt the violence, Modi himself dismissed these allegations. Also, India's Supreme Court cleared Modi of complicity in the 2002 riots.

"This is the Prime Minister of the RSS and the Foreign Minister of the RSS. The RSS draws its inspiration from Hitler's SS," Zardari added.

India's Ministry of External Affairs slammed Zardari's remarks as "uncivilized."

"These comments are a new low, even for Pakistan," it declared in a statement on Friday.

Zardari's attack on Modi intensified the dispute, resulting in even more Indian opposition leaders to defend India.

"When it comes to standing up for the country internationally, we are all one," Shashi Tharoor, a former junior foreign minister and a lawmaker from the main opposition Congress party, posted on Twitter.

Pakistan has witnessed an increase in terrorist attacks following the Taliban's seizure of power in neighboring Afghanistan. It now tops the list of countries at the highest risk of having new mass killings, based on a report by the Early Warning Project, a research organization that identifies countries vulnerable to mass violence.

India was ranked eighth, as Modi's Hindu nationalist government has escalated its systematic discrimination against the country's Muslim minority, the report said.

Times Now, an English news channel in India owned and operated by *The Times Group*, tried to counter Zardari's claims by explaining that the RSS simply means "National Volunteer Organization."



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 21, 2022

The organization was set up by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar on September 27, 1925. The name RSS was chosen from four suggested names — *Jaripatka Mandal*, *Bharat Uddharak Mandal*, *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh*, and *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* — importantly, two of the names do not contain the “SS” that Zardari alluded to.

After India’s independence in 1947, RSS changed its Sangh “*Pratijna*” (pledge) — which until then was for the liberation of the Hindu Rashtra — to support “*Sarvangeena Unnati*” (all-round development) of the nation.

Enrollment into the RSS is voluntary and there is documented evidence depicting the RSS’ involvement in various rescue and relief operations, the *Times Now* article said. Such works are unheard of in the case of Hitler’s SS (Schutzstaffel), which was established in April 1925, and is believed to be responsible for the killing of millions during the Holocaust.

Adolf Hitler’s SS, which meant Protection Squadron, was a paramilitary force initially created as Hitler’s personal bodyguard unit. *Times Now* also asserted that RSS was neither created as a personal protection unit nor was it ever an armed force. Even today, the only “arm” the RSS swayamsevaks carry are “sticks” called *danda*.

Zardari is, nonetheless, not the only one to have compared RSS to Hitler’s ideology.

In August this year, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had insinuated that India’s institutions were being controlled by the RSS.

He then went on to say, “Hitler had also won elections, he too used to win elections. How did he do it? He had control of all of Germany’s institutions.... Give me the entire system, then I will show you how elections are won.”

According to *WION News*, Hitler in Indian popular culture is equivalent to rigidity. For instance, Indians can allude to their boss or a strict teacher as “Hitler.”

For many Indians, the anecdotes of the Holocaust seem like tales from far away. After all, during the early 1940s when Hitler was carrying out his brutal killings, India was experiencing its final years under British rule.

Indian nationalists back then saw Hitler as a supposed “no-nonsense” man.

Besides, Indian leaders back then shared a common enemy with Germany, i.e., Great Britain.

In 1942, Hitler met the Indian freedom fighter and leader of the Indian National Army — Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose wanted Hitler’s aid in creating a revolution in India. During the years of Auschwitz, Hitler’s ties with India were considerably characterized by interactions with Bose.

Bose’s plan included distracting Britain with an uprising in India to distract British forces in their war against Germany. Based on Bose’s reasoning, Germany would defeat Britain, and the domino effect would liberate India as a result.

Hitler, however, declined to help Bose. Historians note that one of the reasons was because Bose had asked the Nazi leader to omit some passages from *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s autobiographical manifesto.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that it would be preferable for India to remain under British rule. Bose’s plan did not fall into place.

That being said, the Germans aided Bose to flee to Japan.



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Even Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Hitler in 1939, after Germany's occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Also, *WION News* asserted that Hitler was a fan of Indian hockey legend Dhyan Chand. Germany's loss to India in the 1936 Olympics made Hitler reach out to Dhyan Chand.

He even offered Dhyan Chand a position in the German army, which the latter declined.

Ties between Hindu-dominant India and Muslim-majority Pakistan have been fraught with bitterness since both gained independence from British rule in 1947.

Both countries have fought three wars since then, two over the disputed region of Kashmir, an area in the Himalayas claimed in totality and ruled in part by both. The two sides frequently exchange barbs, particularly over Kashmir.



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