

## J&amp;K CRICKET'S GLORIOUS MOMENT

Jammu and Kashmir cricket team entering the final of Ranji trophy calls for a huge celebration. This is no ordinary deed; something the boys achieved for J&K after 66 years that too after defeating formidable team and a former champion – West Bengal. Well, victories are not miracles that happen overnight. It's culmination of a process that is backed by a vision, plan of action and years of talent hunt. The cricketers who finally show up their splendid game and remain unbeatable participate in the final show and their contribution is absolutely indispensable. There is a concept when things start getting better it happens all over. The spirit of goodness spreads and brings best out of the humans. Credit goes to Mithun Manhas, the BCCI chief whose mission as the administrator of the J&K Cricket board was to transform the team. He embodies the truth that it takes just one idea and vision to change the world. Manhas, who now is at the helm of affairs of the Indian cricket, had inherited a team with brilliant players who probably did not know how to crack into the top league. J&K Team was a assortment of brilliant individual players, who together lacked the yearning to win. Something was missing at a time when cricket was flourishing in India. The entire cricket fraternity is praising the J&K Team and appreciating their spirit to win. This victory has filled the youth with immense spirit and buoyed the spirits of all the sportspersons of J&K. The cricket team's reaching the finals and hoping to clinch the trophy, is the finest moment for J&K's sports fraternity. It is surely going to encourage a lot of young men and women to give up drugs and use their energies to bring glory to the UT. Again the J&K Cricket team, selected on merit, also displays the unity of the people of the UT and is a rebuttal to those who keep calling for separation of the two regions.

## Uttam Kumar Sinha

At a Pakistan-hosted Arria-Formula meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 31 January, Pakistan's Permanent Representative Asim Iftikhar Ahmad argued that India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is "not merely a bilateral concern" but a "test case for the international system". If a binding treaty governing shared natural resources can be set aside unilaterally, he warned, then no agreement anywhere is safe from politics.

It was a carefully timed intervention ahead of the UK and US presidencies of the Security Council, intended to pull the IWT out of its bilateral and technical setting and recast it as a question of global treaty sanctity and moral indictment. By this logic, India appears to be weakening the rules-based international order.

The strategy has deep historical roots. In 1952, Pakistan's

first foreign minister, Zafrullah Khan, stood before the Security Council and accused India of repeatedly "turning off" the waters flowing into Pakistan. His words were emotive by design. In a land where every drop revived "parched earth" and sustained human life, he said, India's conduct was "most callous". A question of river regulation was reframed as a humanitarian outrage caused by an upper riparian.

Five years later, in October 1957, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then a young minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet and part of Pakistan's UN delegation, advanced the argument during debates in the General Assembly on defining aggression. Any definition, Bhutto insisted, must include "economic or indirect aggression" if a lower riparian was deprived of its natural river rights. Interference with irrigation waters, he warned, could bring Pakistan to "total annihilation".

Across decades, the vocabulary evolves but the design holds. Zafrullah framed water as humanitarian injury. Bhutto framed it as economic aggression. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad now frames it as a threat to the global treaty system. The objective never changes, to brand India as an upper riparian that can turn water into a weapon. The flaw in this narrative, then and now, is that it treats treaties as sacred texts detached from the conduct of the parties bound by them.

The IWT, signed in 1960 after years of negotiation, was a practical arrangement meant to keep hostility away from river management so both countries could use water for development. Peace did not follow between India and Pakistan, yet the treaty survived the wars of 1965, 1971 and 1999, prolonged tension, and cross-border terrorism because it relied on restraint and good-faith implementation.

That foundation has eroded.

Over the years, Pakistan has used the treaty's dispute resolution provisions less for clarification than for delay. Every Indian hydroelectric project permitted under the treaty has been contested. Neutral experts, courts of arbitration, and procedural appeals have been activated in parallel and sequence, turning what was meant to be a technical process into a rolling legal contest. This is the context Pakistan will obscure at the UN, and India must ensure it is brought squarely into the discussion.

Treaties do not exist in isolation. They operate within a broader environment of political conduct. For decades, India upheld the treaty despite provocation and cross-border terrorism. The expectation that one side must show permanent restraint cannot endure indefinitely. Treaty sanctity cannot mean that one party can freeze the rights of another through constant legal activation and then claim

moral high ground in global forums.

This is where Pakistan's historical messaging and present tactics converge. By raising water at the UN across generations, Pakistan has cultivated a diplomatic memory in which India appears as a potential water aggressor. That memory is now being activated at a moment when India has questioned the misuse of treaty mechanisms after the Pulwama terror attack by suspending routine cooperation such as hydrological data sharing and participation in arbitral processes. Pakistan portrays this as treaty abandonment. India must insist that this is a dispute about how the treaty is being used, not whether it should exist. The distinction matters. If Pakistan's framing prevails, it creates a troubling precedent. Any state could immobilise another's treaty rights by constantly triggering legal procedures and then appealing to

international opinion when resistance follows.

Pakistan is also attempting to bring the World Bank back into the conversation. As the original broker of the Indus negotiations, the Bank occupies a unique place in the treaty's history. With Ajay Banga now heading the institution and simultaneously part of President Donald Trump's advisory "Board of Peace", new diplomatic channels open up that Pakistan will seek to leverage. The aim is the same as in 1952 and 1957, to widen the discussion beyond the bilateral framework. India cannot afford to treat these moves as isolated episodes. They form part of a long, consistent strategy accompanied by a record of cross-border terrorism that has steadily eroded the trust on which the treaty functions. India's response at the UN and other international platforms must be firm, factual, and historically aware. It must remind the world that

the treaty survived wars because India honoured it. It must underline that the present strain arises from the gradual breakdown of cooperative conduct, not from any sudden departure by India.

River treaties can anchor peace, but their stability is not the responsibility of the upper riparian alone. It rests equally on the conduct of the lower riparian.

Nearly three quarters of a century after Zafrullah first raised water in the Security Council, and after Bhutto cast it as aggression, Pakistan is repeating the same script in updated language. India now needs a diplomatic script of its own, one that recognises this continuity and answers it with clarity, context, and confidence.

The writer is Senior Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi; views are personal

## India's rise and the echoes of colonial mindset

## Balbir Punj

History often surprises us with impossible parallels. In today's turbulent geopolitical landscape, two seemingly unrelated figures – US President Donald J Trump and India's Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi – are, in their own ways, responding to a shared seismic shift: the rise of a confident, nationalist India that no longer seeks validation from old power centres, whether at home or abroad.

One individual, rooted in transactional values, speaks from the vantage point of a superpower accustomed to commanding global deference. The other, bearing the entitlement of a political dynasty that once ruled India as its fiefdom, mistook Western approval for diplomacy. Their personalities differ, their vocabularies diverge, yet beneath their words lies a shared unease – with an India that now speaks to itself and the rest of the world with confidence, free of doubts and complexities.

Last year, Trump's remark-dismissing India as a "dead economy" – was not merely an undiplomatic misstep. It betrayed an outdated worldview that measures nations by compliance rather than capability. His advisers sharpened the attack. Peter Navarro's charge that India was acting as a "laundromat for the Kremlin", the insinuation that "Brahmins in India were

profiteering from Russian oil purchases", and Howard Lutnick also took a jibe, "India will say sorry in two months", weren't casual observations; they reflected colonial prejudices.

Yet what raises eyebrows is not criticism from abroad. Democracies absorb that. What is troubling is the eagerness with which Rahul Gandhi chose to echo the same dismissive line-calling India a "dead economy" and endorsing Trump's assertion as "facts". On Trump's false claim of brokering an India-Pakistan ceasefire af-

ter the gruesome Pahalgam terror attack, Rahul mocked the PM as "Narendra-Sur- render", despite India's official denial of third-party mediation.

This pattern is not episodic; it is cultural. Rahul Gandhi's politics has increasingly gravitated towards spectacle over substance. Parliament has often been reduced to a theatre of optics. The recent attempt to quote from General M.M. Naravane's unpublished memoir material, neither in the public domain nor cleared by the Ministry of Defence, was blocked under established House rules. Instead of respecting procedure, the episode became a pretext for disruption.

The symbolism of Rahul's politics is familiar. The 2018 "hug" of the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha – followed by a wink to party colleagues – remains emblematic. Civility is welcome; contrived theatrics erode institutional gravitas. The recent episode of publicly grabbing a Union minister's hand to stage a joint media moment follows the same script. Serious politics have been reduced to a theatrical performance.

More troubling than style, however, is substance. During his Sep. 2024 US visit, Rahul Gandhi suggested that Sikhs in India faced existential threats to their religious freedoms. The statement was promptly weaponised by Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, who hailed it as validation of his secessionist campaign. Words spoken abroad, especially by a senior Indian leader, do not remain domestic soundbites; they travel into hostile propaganda ecosystems.

This performative impulse was visible again in the confrontation on Parliament's steps when Rahul Gandhi publicly addressed Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu – a former Congressman – as a "traitor", theatrically extending a handshake while taunting him to "come back". Bittu's sharp retort, calling Rahul a "desh ke dushman", turned the exchange into a viral

spectacle.

This rhetorical trajectory stretches back years. Rahul's pattern of impulsive interventions is long-standing. On September 27, 2013, he publicly trashed his own government's ordinance: "It's complete nonsense. It should be torn up and thrown away."

On February 5, 2020, he said unemployed youth would beat the Prime Minister with sticks. On October 6, 2016, he accused Modi of hiding behind soldiers' blood after surgical strikes. At Ramlila Maidan, March 31, 2024, he warned, "If the BJP wins... the whole country will be on fire."

Rahul Gandhi's caste-centric pitch has been overt and repeated. In May 2024, he told youth that a caste census would reveal "where India's wealth lies" and trigger a "new politics". Later in the Lok Sabha, he said, "Those who call themselves Hindu only talk about violence..." reviving polarising tropes like "saffron terror". He even questioned a journalist's caste – and that of the channel owner – reducing public discourse to identity labels.

His 2016 visits to JNU and support for Kanhaiya Kumar – arrested on sedition charges – were accompanied by remarks: "The most anti-national people are the people who are suppressing the voice of this institution." Each remark, taken individually, may be dismissed as rhetorical excess. Taken together, they reflect a consistent attempt to delegitimise national institutions to score political points.

The deeper issue is ideological. For decades, the Congress system drew intellectual sustenance from a toxic blend of Communism and colonial narratives that treated Indian identity as something to be diluted, not celebrated, and sovereignty as something to be balanced, not asserted. That era is over.

The electorate has, three times since 2014, endorsed leadership that speaks the language of civilisational confidence, welfare delivery, and strategic clarity.

India today is not seeking permission to grow. It is building infrastructure at unprecedented scale, digitising welfare delivery, modernising defence, asserting its voice in multilateral forums, and reviving cultural self-awareness long suppressed under alien narratives. One need not agree with every policy to recognise the structural shift underway.

Those unable to process this transformation fall back on two responses: external moralising or internal delegitimisation. Trump's comments belong to the former; Rahul Gandhi's interventions increasingly to the latter. Both reflect difficulty in accepting that India's choices need not mirror Western expectations, the old Nehruvian template, or dynastic validation.

The contrast in political culture is instructive. Recall June 2022. When the Enforcement Directorate summoned Rahul Gandhi for questioning in the National Herald case, what ought to have been treated as a routine legal process was converted into a spectacle of political victimhood. Senior Congress leaders, accompanied by hundreds of party workers, poured onto the streets in an orchestrated protest. The message was unmistakable: institutions are legitimate only when they conform to the expectations of a political dynasty.

This episode invites comparison with March 27, 2010, when the Supreme Court-mandated Special Investigation Team interrogated the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, in connection with the 2002 riots. There were no street demonstrations, no mobilisation of crowds, and no claims of institutional vendetta.

Modi appeared before investigators as a citizen subject to the rule of law. After hours of questioning and a prolonged judicial process, the SIT granted him a clean chit in 2012 – a conclusion that withstood repeated legal challenges until the Supreme Court finally affirmed closure on June 24, 2022.

## THE VANISHING 'WE' IN TODAY'S MODERN WORKPLACE

## Rachna Lakhpati

Team spirit." "Unity." "Together we rise." We grew up hearing these words in school assemblies and playgrounds. We were taught that victories are sweeter when shared and that strength multiplies when people stand together. Then we stepped into the workplace – and somewhere along the way, the meaning shifted.

Today, collaboration often feels like quiet competition. Every individual is guarding their visibility. Every success is framed as a personal achievement. The idea of "we" is slowly dissolving into "me." And caught in the middle of this shift is the millennial generation.

We were raised in a world that valued hierarchy, loyalty, and patience. We were told to stay committed, earn credibility slowly, and grow within organisations. But we now work in an ecosystem that rewards speed, disruption, and rapid adaptability. On one side stand seasoned leaders who



built their careers through endurance. On the other, Gen Z professionals – confident, digitally native, and unafraid to question structures. Neither side is wrong. Yet, the friction is undeniable.

Increasingly, professionals in their late 30s and early 40s find themselves quietly displaced. Younger hires are faster with new tools, more flexible with change, and often more cost-efficient. Expe-

rience is being measured against agility. Depth against digital fluency. The real question is not why companies hire younger talent. That is strategic. The question is why we are replacing instead of integrating.

When experience is dismissed as outdated and enthusiasm is seen as impulsive, team spirit erodes. Knowledge becomes guarded. Mentorship feels threatening. And

Stability and momentum are not opposites; they are complements.

Yet many organisations unknowingly create silos. Millennials often carry the burden of accountability without authority – expected to mentor, execute, adapt, and prove their relevance simultaneously.

They become the bridge that no one notices until it be-

gins to crack.

So how do we rebuild team spirit? First, move from replacement thinking to integration thinking. Structured mentorship – including reverse mentoring – allows wisdom and innovation to co-exist. Second, redefine recognition. Reward collaborative milestones, not just individual heroics. Culture follows what leadership celebrates. Third, build psychological safety. True unity cannot grow in environments driven by silent competition or fear. It grows where dialogue is open and credit is shared.

Team spirit is not a slogan printed on office walls. It is visible in everyday behaviour – in shared victories, in constructive disagreements, and in leaders who value contribution over age. The millennial generation does not seek sympathy. It seeks inclusion. Because if the bridge collapses, the two shores may stand strong – but they will never truly connect.

## Pak Indus playbook at UN, India's moment to respond

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