

**Argumentation in Imran Khan's United Nation General Assembly Addresses on
Islamophobia: A Toulmin Model Analysis**

Atif Ur Rahman

MS English Linguistics Scholar, Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad Campus, Pakistan

Najeeb Ullah

MS English Linguistics Scholar, Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad Campus, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: * Atif Ur Rahman atifdrosh@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Argumentation plays a pivotal role in public discourse, particularly within democratic societies where citizens and their representatives engage with sociopolitical issues. Leaders across the world have attempted to represent the sentiments of Muslims regarding Islamophobia through discourse; however, these efforts have often been critiqued for lacking clarity or failing to prevent the misrepresentation of Muslim communities. In contrast, the two addresses delivered by former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, at the United Nations General Assembly have drawn international attention for their explicit articulation of concerns related to Islamophobia. A number of researches are available on the addresses of former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, on Islamophobia but limited research is available on the argumentation in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly addresses on Islamophobia. Thereby, applying qualitative methodology using Toulmin's Model of Argumentation under the broader umbrella of Argumentation theory by Stephen Edelston Toulmin, this study aims to analyze the argumentation in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly addresses on Islamophobia. The findings shows that Imran Khan supports his claims on Islamophobia by presenting factual evidence, including references to incidents of discrimination and violence, and by appealing to universal principles of justice and religious tolerance. His argumentation also draws upon historical context and moral reasoning to emphasize the urgency of addressing Islamophobia at the global level. Overall, the study concludes that argumentation plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse on religious intolerance, offering insights into how political leaders employ reasoning strategies to influence global policy debates and promote intercultural understanding.

Keywords: *Argumentation, UNGA, Toulmin's Model, Speech*

INTRODUCTION

Political leaders addressing international forums often employ diverse strategies to communicate pressing global concerns. These speeches serve as vital platforms for articulating national perspectives, seeking international support, and influencing collective policy directions. Within such contexts, argumentation becomes a central tool, enabling leaders to justify their positions, counter opposing narratives, and advocate for social change. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the United Nations General Assembly against Islamophobia exemplifies this dynamic, as he constructs arguments that link religious intolerance to broader threats of extremism and global instability. His discourse highlights how persuasive reasoning can mobilize international attention, foster intercultural understanding, and shape the global conversation on religious harmony and peace.

Statement of the Problem

Leaders across the world have attempted to represent the sentiments of Muslims regarding Islamophobia through discourse; however, these efforts have often been critiqued for lacking clarity or failing to prevent the misrepresentation of Muslim communities. In contrast, the two addresses delivered by former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, at the United Nations General Assembly have drawn international attention for their explicit articulation of concerns related to Islamophobia.. Despite this, limited research is available on the argumentation in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly Speeches on Islamophobia. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the argumentation in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly Addresses on Islamophobia.

Research Gap

Although the Toulmin Model of Argumentation has been widely applied at the international level across diverse domains such as education, law, and intercultural communication, its use within the Pakistani academic context remains limited. Studies on Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly speeches have primarily employed frameworks such as Critical Discourse Analysis, speech act theory, and stylistic analysis, focusing on ideology, identity, and rhetorical devices. However, little attention has been given to the systematic analysis of argumentation structures in these speeches using Toulmin's model. This gap highlights the need for a study that applies Toulmin's framework to Khan's discourse on Islamophobia, thereby contributing both to national and to the broader field of argumentation studies.

Research Aim

The current study aims to analyze the argumentation in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly Speeches on Islamophobia by using Toulmin's Model of Argumentation.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the key arguments presented in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly Speeches on Islamophobia.
- To examine how arguments are constructed and supported using logical strategies and reasoning in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly Speeches on Islamophobia.
- To investigate the extent to which these arguments are effective in addressing public concerns and influencing policymakers.

Research Questions

1. What are the key arguments presented in Imran Khan's United Nations General Assembly addresses on Islamophobia?
2. How are these arguments constructed and supported through logical strategies and reasoning?
3. To what extent are these arguments effective in addressing public concerns and influencing policymakers?

Significance

The findings of this study can contribute at multiple levels. At the academic level, they enhance the understanding of political argumentation by applying Toulmin's Model of Argumentation to international speeches, offering a structured framework for analyzing reasoning in global discourse. At the social level, the study sheds light on how public leaders frame issues of religious intolerance, fostering greater awareness, dialogue, and intercultural understanding among communities. At the policy level, the findings provide insights into how concerns are voiced in international forums, guiding policymakers toward the development of more inclusive and responsive policies.

Limitation of the Study

This study is limited by its focus on Imran Khan's UNGA speeches, which may not reflect broader political discourse on Islamophobia. The speeches, crafted for diplomatic audiences, prioritize rhetorical appeal over spontaneous debate. Additionally, the absence of quantitative data restricts assessment of their real-world impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's globalized context, speeches at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) serve as strategic tools for shaping international narratives and asserting national interests. Leaders use these platforms to construct arguments that resonate across diverse political and cultural contexts (Ekström & Patrona, 2011). The persuasiveness of such discourse depends on clarity, coherence, and argumentative structure.

Toulmin's Model of Argumentation (1958) offers a practical framework for analyzing real-world reasoning through six components: claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal. Its adaptability has made it valuable across disciplines, including political communication (van Eemeren et al., 2014; Walton, 2006). This review draws on three strands of scholarship: studies on Toulmin's model, political argumentation, and Islamophobia in international discourse. A notable gap exists in applying Toulmin's model to analyze Imran Khan's UNGA speeches, particularly his arguments on Islamophobia—an area this study seeks to address. It concludes by identifying a gap in the literature concerning the use of Toulmin's model to analyze Imran Khan's UNGA speeches on Islamophobia.

The study of argumentation has long aimed to bridge the gap between formal logic and the practical reasoning employed in everyday and institutional discourse. Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* (1958) marked a pivotal shift by introducing a model that reflects how arguments function in real-life contexts. His framework—comprising claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal—offers a flexible structure that accommodates uncertainty, context, and audience expectations. Unlike rigid syllogistic logic, Toulmin's model is particularly suited to analyzing persuasive discourse in political, legal, and educational settings.

As, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) emphasized the role of audience and shared values in argumentation, highlighting its rhetorical dimension. Walton (2006) extended Toulmin's model to dialogical reasoning, stressing context and fallacy detection. Van Eemeren et al. (2014) integrated it with pragma-dialectics, offering a comprehensive framework. Likewise, Govier (2010) and Hitchcock (2005) refined its pedagogical utility, especially in critical thinking. In education, Weinstein (2006) and Erduran et al. (2004) used the model to assess reasoning and guide students. Similarly, Qin and Karabacak (2010) and Stapleton and Wu (2015) found L2 learners often lacked warrants and rebuttals, while Cahyono (2016) showed the model's value in organizing persuasive writing. Moreover, Verheij (2005) applied it to legal reasoning, and Rapanta et al. (2013) affirmed its cross-disciplinary relevance.

Toulmin's model has proven valuable in political discourse analysis, particularly for examining how leaders construct legitimacy and frame ideological narratives (Tans, 2011; Becker, 2016). In Western contexts, it has been combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the intersection of argumentation and ideology (Andini & Rohmani, 2017; Kamil, 2024). Moreover, Ekström and Patrona (2011) and Fairclough (2013) further emphasize how political speech functions as strategic argumentation shaped by power relations. However, in Pakistan, studies on Imran Khan's UNGA speeches have largely relied on CDA and rhetorical-populist frameworks (Nawaz, 2020; Kashif et al., 2023; Bashir et al., 2022), without applying Toulmin's model—highlighting a significant analytical gap this study addresses.

Moreover, Islamophobia has become a pervasive discursive construct in Western and international political rhetoric, often legitimizing exclusionary policies and securitization. As, Edward Said (1997) theorized how Orientalist narratives frame Islam as the antithesis of Western rationality, laying the foundation for contemporary anti-Muslim discourse. Van Dijk (2006) and Richardson (2004) demonstrated how political elites and media reproduce Islamophobic ideologies through lexical choices and thematic framing. Cesari (2011) emphasized that Islamophobia is not merely cultural bias but a politically mobilized discourse embedded in state practices, especially immigration and counterterrorism. Wodak (2015) noted that right-wing populist rhetoric exploits fears of Islam to construct exclusionary national narratives.

Toulmin's model of argumentation has been widely applied in fields such as education (Erduran et al., 2004), law (Verheij, 2005), and political analysis (Becker, 2016), offering a structured approach to evaluating argument coherence. However, it remains underutilized in studies of Global South political discourse, particularly on Islamophobia. Existing analyses of Imran Khan's UNGA speeches often rely on Critical Discourse Analysis (Nawaz, 2020) or ideological critique (Kashif et al., 2023), which highlight thematic content but overlook logical structure. This study addresses that gap by applying Toulmin's model to Khan's speeches, contributing to both argumentation theory and discourse analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design using Toulmin's model to analyze Imran Khan's UNGA speeches on Islamophobia. It focuses on identifying the logical structure of his arguments within their international political context.

Data Collection

The data collection process involves gathering two addresses delivered by former Prime Minister Imran Khan at the 74th (2019) and 75th (2020) sessions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The speeches were retrieved from the United Nations AudioVisual Library and UN Web TV, platforms that archive official UN proceedings and make them publicly accessible. These addresses serve as the primary source of data for this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Argumentation Theory, which provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing how reasoning is constructed, communicated, and evaluated in public discourse. Argumentation theory, as developed by scholars such as Toulmin (1958), Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), and Walton (2006), emphasizes that argumentation is not merely a formal logical process but a situated, audience-sensitive activity aimed at persuasion and justification. It explores how speakers construct claims, support them with evidence, and respond to counter-arguments in real-world contexts.

Analytical Framework

A modern rhetorician, Stephen Toulmin (1984), established a model for understanding the type of argument you read and heard every day, in newspapers and on television, at work, in classrooms, and in conversation. Toulmin's methodology focuses on finding the fundamental components of an argument. Toulmin proposes a layout containing six interrelated components to analyze arguments; Claim, Data, Warrant, Backing, Rebuttal, and Qualifier (Toulmin, 2003.). The first three elements, "Claim", "Data", "Warrant", belong to the essential components of the practical argument. While the second triad, "Backing", "Rebuttal", and "Qualifier", are the complement and might not be equipped in particular circumstances. Thus the simplified version of Toulmin's model is written in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1: Toulmin's Model of Argumentation

Elements	Definition and criteria
Claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assertion in response to a topic or problem • In sorts of opinion, attitude, or controversial statement that needs further evidence or needs to be defended. • Usually it is a kind of complete declarative statements. • It is the essence of every argument. • It is in the form of fact conclusion (factual claim), judgment (value claim), or an advice, solution of a certain problem (policy claim).
Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is in the form of a fact that can be observed objectively, an observation result, a conclusion, information, narrative, literal and figurative comparisons, and statistical data. • It functions as claim supporters so that it can be accepted. • It has linguistic indicators: for, because, due to the fact that, that..., since
Warrant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a general principle, principle of a particular field (formula, theory, and manual), nature law, constitution or formal resolution. • It is the connector between the claim and the data (ground).
Backing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is the result of study, observation, interview, historical facts, or experts' opinion. 2. It supports and completes data. 3. It strengthens warrant.
Qualifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It shows certainty or possibility. • Such words or phrases include possible, probably, certainly, presumably, as far as the evidence goes, necessarily, usually, and of course.
Rebuttal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can be conditions which strengthen or weaken a claim. • There are linguistic indicators such as: unless, if...so...

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study employs Toulmin's model of argumentation as its analytical framework to examine the structure of reasoning in selected speeches delivered by former Prime Minister Imran Khan at the United Nations General Assembly. The model's six components—claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal—are used to systematically identify and categorize the argumentative elements within each speech. The analysis focuses specifically on segments addressing Islamophobia, aiming to uncover how arguments are constructed to frame the issue, support claims, and respond to anticipated counterpositions. This approach allows for a structured, neutral evaluation of the logical coherence and rhetorical organization of the speeches, without engaging in ideological interpretation or political judgment.

Imran Khan's Address to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Imran Khan delivered his speech at the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2019. This address emphasises on global issues such as Islamophobia, climate change, money laundering, and the Kashmir conflict. Through the transcription of his speech, we will focus on issue of Islamophobia and analyze the instances by toulmin's model of argumentation.

Argument 1: Marginalization and Radicalization

Claim

“We have faced Islamophobia while travelling abroad; and in European countries it is marginalising Muslim communities. And marginalisation creates room for and leads to radicalisation.”

This explicit claim directly identifies a central argumentative theme: the causal link between marginalization and radicalization. It reflects consequential reasoning, where social exclusion is framed as a precursor to extremism. The claim’s effectiveness lies in its attempt to shift the discourse from blaming Islam to addressing structural causes of radicalization.

Data (Grounds)

“Muslim women wearing Hijab has become a problem. It is seen as a weapon. A woman can take off her clothes in some countries but she can not put more on?”

This example illustrates how visible expressions of Muslim identity are problematized, offering concrete evidence of discrimination. It shows Khan’s use of illustrative data to substantiate his claim. This data appeals to both logic and emotion, enhancing the argument’s persuasiveness by highlighting double standards in liberal democracies.

Warrant

“And marginalisation creates room for and leads to radicalisation.”

This statement functions as both a claim and a **warrant**, linking the data (discrimination) to the outcome (radicalization). It reveals the underlying logic: that exclusion fosters alienation, which can escalate into extremism. This sociological reasoning may resonate with audiences familiar with deradicalization discourse, enhancing the argument’s institutional relevance.

Backing

“Don’t you think that 180 Million Muslims will be radicalised in India as they see 8 million Kashmiris locked up?”

Though not a formal citation, this rhetorical question implies a **broader sociopolitical pattern**: that systemic injustice fuels radical responses. It reinforces the warrant with contextual backing, and it adds urgency and scale to the argument, though its rhetorical form may limit academic precision.

Qualifier

“Marginalisation creates room for and leads to radicalisation.”

The phrase “creates room for” introduces probabilistic language, functioning as a qualifier. It avoids deterministic claims, demonstrating logical restraint. This nuance enhances the argument’s credibility among critical audiences.

Rebuttal

“There are radical fringes in every society, but the basis of ALL religion is compassion and justice.”

This rebuttal anticipates and addresses potential counterarguments, such as the claim that Islam is uniquely prone to extremism. It shows Khan’s use of balanced reasoning and counter-positioning. This rhetorical move may reduce resistance among skeptical audiences and reinforce the argument’s fairness and universality.

Argument 2: Islamophobia as a Post-9/11 Construct

Claim

“Islamophobia has grown since 9/11 and it is alarming.”

This claim identifies a central thesis in Khan’s speech: that Islamophobia is not an isolated phenomenon but a post-9/11 global trend. It directly articulates a key argument. The use of the term “alarming” signals urgency, while the temporal marker “since 9/11” situates the argument historically. This framing reflects a causal reasoning strategy, linking a global event to a sociopolitical outcome. In terms of effectiveness, the claim resonates with Muslim audiences and international observers familiar with post-9/11 discourse, potentially prompting reflection among policymakers.

Data (Grounds)

“Because certain western leaders equated Islam with terrorism.”

This data provides the factual basis for the claim by identifying a discursive shift in political rhetoric. It illustrates how Khan uses attributional logic—assigning responsibility to political discourse for shaping public attitudes. This strategy is persuasive in public forums, as it appeals to the audience’s awareness of media narratives. This data may be effective in raising awareness but could face resistance from policymakers in the West, depending on their political alignment.

Warrant

(Implied) When influential leaders associate a religion with violence, it shapes public perception and policy.

The warrant connects the data to the claim through a principle of discursive influence: political language has real-world consequences. It reveals the logical mechanism behind the argument—how elite discourse filters into societal attitudes. This warrant is potentially impactful, especially in international forums like the UN, where discourse ethics and representation are central concerns.

Backing

“Muslim women wearing Hijab has become a problem. It is seen as a weapon.”

This backing provides concrete social examples that reinforce the warrant. It grounds abstract reasoning in lived experiences, a common rhetorical strategy in political argumentation. These examples may evoke empathy and highlight the tangible effects of Islamophobia, making the argument more relatable to both public audiences and human rights-oriented policymakers.

Qualifier

“The trend is widespread and persistent, though not universal”.

The qualifier introduces analytical caution, acknowledging that Islamophobia is not a uniform phenomenon. This enhances the argument’s credibility and neutrality and demonstrates logical precision. The qualifier may increase receptivity among diverse audiences by avoiding overgeneralization and respecting contextual variation.

Imran Khan’s Address to the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Argument: Islamophobia as a Global Concern

Claim

“These trends have also accentuated ‘Islamophobia’.”

This statement constitutes the central claim of the argument. It identifies Islamophobia as a key thematic concern in the speech. The phrase “these trends” refers to earlier-mentioned global developments such as nationalism, racial and religious hatred, and violence against minorities. The claim is constructed through causal reasoning, suggesting that these broader sociopolitical dynamics have intensified anti-Muslim sentiment. Its effectiveness lies in its capacity to frame Islamophobia not as an isolated grievance but as a symptom of global instability, thereby appealing to international stakeholders concerned with peace, human rights, and social cohesion.

Data (Grounds)

“Muslims continue to be targeted with impunity in many countries. Our shrines are being destroyed; our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) insulted; the Holy Quran burnt — and all this in the name of freedom of speech.”

This utterance provides concrete illustrations of Islamophobia’s manifestations, thereby substantiating the claim. It grounds the argument in observable and emotionally resonant events, ranging from attacks on religious sites to symbolic acts of desecration. The reference to “impunity” further implies a lack of institutional accountability, which strengthens the argument’s moral urgency. This data is likely to resonate with Muslim-majority audiences and human rights advocates, though it may provoke contestation in liberal societies where such acts are often framed within the discourse of free expression.

Warrant

(Implied) When religious communities are repeatedly disrespected and targeted without legal or moral accountability, it fosters division, resentment, and global instability.

Although not explicitly articulated, this warrant is logically necessary to connect the data to the claim. It reveals the underlying principle that sustained hostility toward a religious group has broader societal consequences. The warrant aligns with international norms concerning religious tolerance and minority rights. It may be persuasive in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, where the prevention of hate-based violence and the promotion of intercultural understanding are institutional priorities.

Backing

“Incidents in Europe, including republication of blasphemous sketches by Charlie Hebdo, are recent examples.”

This utterance offers a specific and high-profile case that reinforces the data. It demonstrates that the problem is not abstract but grounded in recent, widely publicized events. The reference to Europe situates the issue within a global context, thereby enhancing the argument’s relevance to international audiences. While the example may be controversial, it serves to highlight the perceived double standards in the application of free speech norms, potentially prompting reflection among policymakers and civil society actors.

Qualifier

(Implied) Islamophobia is a widespread and intensifying problem, though not necessarily universal.

The speech does not employ explicit modal qualifiers such as “some” or “many,” but the phrase “in many countries” within the data implies a qualified generalization. This introduces analytical nuance and

avoiding overstatement. Such a restraint may enhance the argument's credibility and make it more acceptable to diverse audiences, including those who acknowledge the existence of Islamophobia but may resist claims of its universality.

Rebuttal

"This Assembly should declare an 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia' and build a resilient coalition to fight this scourge — scourge that splits humanity."

This utterance functions as a forward-looking rebuttal to potential inaction or denial. Rather than merely identifying the problem, the speaker proposes a concrete institutional response. It demonstrates a shift from critique to constructive engagement. The proposal may appeal to international bodies and human rights organizations seeking actionable mechanisms to address religious discrimination. It also reinforces the speaker's ethos as a statesman advocating for global solidarity and legal recognition of Islamophobia as a transnational issue.

FINDINGS

The analysis of Imran Khan's 2019 and 2020 UNGA addresses reveals a deliberate and evolving argumentative strategy aimed at reframing Islamophobia as a global structural injustice. In the 2019 speech, Khan constructs three distinct arguments: linking marginalization to radicalization, critiquing the post-9/11 securitization of Islam, and challenging Western double standards on freedom of expression. Each argument is supported by specific data, analogies, and implied warrants, demonstrating a segmented Toulminian structure. The 2020 address, by contrast, consolidates these themes into a unified argument that presents Islamophobia as a transnational phenomenon exacerbated by rising nationalism and racial hatred. This shift from fragmentation to integration reflects a strategic recalibration, aligning the discourse with institutional norms and policy-oriented appeals.

In terms of argumentative construction, both speeches employ Toulmin's model with varying complexity. The 2019 address relies on analogical reasoning and emotional appeals, while also incorporating qualifiers and rebuttals to enhance credibility. The 2020 speech, though more concise, gains persuasive strength through its moral urgency and the proposal of a UN-recognized International Day to Combat Islamophobia. This move from critique to constructive engagement increases its institutional resonance. Overall, the findings affirm that Khan's discourse is not only thematically consistent but also structurally adaptive, using Toulminian elements to engage diverse audiences and advocate for global recognition of Islamophobia as a systemic issue.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how former Prime Minister Imran Khan's addresses at the United Nations General Assembly construct a counter-discourse to Islamophobia through the lens of Toulmin's model of argumentation. By systematically analyzing the claims, data, warrants, and rebuttals embedded in his 74th and 75th UNGA speeches, the research reveals how Khan strategically reframes dominant narratives that associate Islam with extremism, instead foregrounding themes of marginalization, historical misrepresentation, and global injustice. The findings demonstrate that his discourse not only challenges Western securitization logics but also appeals to universal principles of justice, equality, and religious sensitivity. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the rhetorical and argumentative significance of political speech in international forums as a means of resisting stigmatizing ideologies and advocating for more inclusive global narratives.

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