

## Indo-Pak relations in Post-COVID-19 Era

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### Abstract

*Pakistan and India have a history of rivalry ever since their creation. Their antagonism even remains immune to COVID-19- a pandemic disease causing a great deal of economic, political, social and cultural damage to the entire world. On both sides, warmongers in the decision-making process have tried to change this natural calamity into an opportunity to incite masses towards hostility. COVID-19 has already haunted both countries economically, politically and culturally. The post-COVID-19 period would present a new outlook to international politics bringing economic and political woes. This paper will comprehensively analyse Indo-Pak relations in the post-COVID-19 period, shading lights on critics of realism theory being considered one of the most dominant theories in international politics.*

**Keywords:** Indo-Pak rivalry, nuclear, interdependence, inter-state, hostility, non-traditional threats, constructivism, poverty, climate change.

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## Introduction

India and Pakistan as successor states of British India emerged on the world's map in August 1947. Both states in the nascent stage espoused different trajectories in their nation-building. India moved towards secularism with Hindu majoritarianism, while Pakistan by overlooking ethno-nationalist diversity opted for an Islamic state. The emergence of India as a secular state and Pakistan as an Islamic state paved the way for Pakistan's securitization of its foreign policy vis-à-vis a "Hindu" enemy. The incompatible ideologies of both belligerent states triggered a war right after their independence over Jammu & Kashmir.<sup>1</sup>

Their conflict was not merely confined to two different ideologies, rather the distribution of colonial institutions and the financial legacy of the British played a catalyst role in the reinforcement of the hostility. The hostility remains to date. The issues remain the same. Even today, the relations between the two countries are marred by issues like territorial conflict (Kashmir and Sir Creek), terrorism, arms race, rivalry in Afghanistan and water resources.<sup>2</sup>

However, the COVID-19 outbreak, the first time that emerged in Wuhan City of China at the end of December 2019, has altered the complexion of geo-politics and geo-economics of the world. States during the pandemic have realized the significance of non-traditional threats like deadly COVID-19. Global and regional powers are likely to ponder over the post-COVID-19 scenario in tackling the unforeseen challenges in the future. Surprisingly, Indo-Pak rivalry even remains immune to pandemic disease. Warmongers in both states at the helm of affairs have been trying to convert natural calamity into an opportunity to galvanize their antagonism. Arguably, for both states, the perpetuation of hostility at the expense of human developments in the post-COVID-19 era proves to be detrimental. COVID-19 ought to be a wake-up call for the statecrafts of both states, prioritizing non-traditional threats over traditional/imaginary threats, by all means, would bear fruitful results.<sup>3</sup> The question remains, how should the relationships between the two hostile neighboring states be shaped in the post-COVID-19 era?

## Non-traditional vs. Traditional Threats

Seeing relationships of India and Pakistan primarily in realist school, that overemphasize traditional threats over non-traditional threats, appears to be dangerous for both states in the post-COVID-19 era. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India is the world's largest arms importer, accounting for approximately 12% of the total global imports for the period 2013-17.<sup>4</sup> Indian military expenditure, on the other hand, has significantly been accelerating. India for the first time has emerged among the top three nations after the US and

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<sup>1</sup>Hussain, Ejaz (2019). 'India-Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities' Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs (6)1: 82-95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347797018823964> (Accessed on June 15, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Dost Muhammad Barrech, Post -COVID-19: Indo-Pak Relations, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/04/18/post-COVID-19-indo-pak-relations/> ( Accessed on June 30, 2020)

<sup>4</sup>India must focus on non-traditional security threats, <https://asiatimes.com/2018/11/india-must-focus-more-on-non-traditional-security-threats/> ( Accessed on July 01,2020)

China, as for military expenditure is concerned. The latest data unveiled by (SIPRI) says that the world's total global military expenditure enhanced to \$1,917 billion in 2019. The data further says that “the five biggest spenders were the US (\$732 billion), China (\$261 billion) India (\$71.1 billion), Russia (\$65.1 billion) and Saudi Arabia (\$61.9 billion) together accounting for 62% of the global military expenditure.”<sup>5</sup>.

Meanwhile, Pakistan by espousing the trajectory of India of not learning from deadly COVID-19 has accelerated 11.9 percent in the defense budget of 2020. During 2009-2019 Pakistan's military expenditure has increasingly been surged by 70 percent. An annual report of (SIPRI) reveals that the country's military expenditure constitutes approximately 4 percent of its Gross Domestic Product GDP.<sup>6</sup> Both archrivals' military expenditure has exponentially been increasing. Indian military expenditure “grew by 259 percent over the 30 years 1990–2019 and by 37 percent over the decade 2010–19”<sup>7</sup> that brings Pakistan into strategic insecurity.

Instead of squandering a whopping amount on imaginary threats, both states will soon realize non-traditional threats posing a bigger threat than a traditional threat. A renowned social constructivist Alexander Wendt rightly explains traditional or imaginary threats by saying that “Anarchy is what states make of it”. To examine Indo-Pak rivalry in the social constructivist school of thought, it can easily be ascertained that their hostility is manmade; to follow social constructivism theory, enmity could easily be converted into friendship.<sup>8</sup>

### **Inter-State vs. Intra-State Conflict**

To be fair, intra-state conflict is more detrimental than the inter-state conflict to both India and Pakistan, enfeebling their national integration and political system. Both states are involved in furtive support to the intra-state conflict to obtain their geostrategic gains.<sup>9</sup> India accuses Pakistan of supporting the Khalistan Movement in Indian Punjab which had emerged in the early 1950s when India adopted the reorganization of its states resulting in threatening the religious identity of Sikhs. While Pakistan blames India for assisting insurgency in Balochistan. Though Pakistan denies any involvement Khalistan Movement in Indian, the late General Hamid Gul, the former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief, while giving an interview to a local channel, confessed that Sikh separatists had to buy arms from their contractors based in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> India now 3rd-biggest military spender in world: Think-tank, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-emerges-among-the-top-three-in-military-expenditure-around-the-globe-behind-the-us-and-china/articleshow/75403529.cms> ( Accessed on July 02,2020)

<sup>6</sup> Pakistan's Military Expenditure Increased by 70 % percent in the Past Decade, <https://propakistani.pk/2020/04/29/pakistans-military-expenditure-increased-by-70-in-the-past-decade/> ( Accessed on July 03, 2020)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Adam R Brown, Wendt: Anarchy is what states make of it, [https://adambrown.info/p/notes/wendt\\_anarchy\\_is\\_what\\_states\\_make\\_of\\_it](https://adambrown.info/p/notes/wendt_anarchy_is_what_states_make_of_it) (Accessed on July 03, 2020)

<sup>9</sup>Dost Muhammad Barrech, Post-COVID-19: Indo-Pak Relations Daily Times, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/04/18/post-COVID-19-indo-pak-relations/> ( Accessed on July 04, 2020)

<sup>10</sup>Zeeba T Hashmi , Pakistan's Involvement in Khalistan Movement, Daily Times ( Accessed on July 04, 2020)

The blame game continues on both sides. Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi categorically says that India has been involved in sabotaging peace not only in Balochistan but also in Afghanistan. He further reiterates that “Modi had also lost popularity on the political front and it was another reason that he wanted to regain the people's attention by launching subversive activities in Pakistan”.<sup>11</sup> Recently, the Majid Brigade of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) carried out an armed assault on Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSE). Prime minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, while addressing the parliament regarding the PSE attack said that there was no doubt that India was behind the attack.<sup>12</sup>

The hostility of two archrivals is not only confined to these two states; rather the entire region has been engulfed by their enduring rivalry. Afghanistan particularly remains a battlefield between India and Pakistan. Both states have constantly been trying to accelerate their influence in Afghanistan. Consequently, their proxy-war also poses a grave threat to post-US Afghanistan.

Michael Kugelman, the Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center in Washington argues that "One of the biggest concerns about a post-US Afghanistan is that regional players will seek to pursue their respective - and often competing - interests and agendas through the use of proxies. Pakistan has already done this in the past with the Taliban,"<sup>13</sup> Kugelman further reiterates that "India's interests stand to suffer in a big way after the withdrawal of US troops. For New Delhi, which doesn't want a militarily strong and politically powerful Taliban, this would be a dangerous state of affairs," Presumably, there is a great deal of likelihood that Afghan peace talks would be unlikely to reach to the desired goal.<sup>14</sup> Supporting intra-state conflict and proxy wars in neighboring states in the post-COVID-19 era would prove a naïve approach.

### **Fight against Poverty and Hunger**

It is a fait accompli that the post-COVID-19 era would bring a different outlook to the regional and global politics. States by all means are in introspection, seeing emerging changes in the post-COVID-19 era. Pakistan and India are developing countries where poverty and hunger are in full swing. Those who are at the helms of affairs are utterly incognizant of growing poverty. 800 million people in India are conceived to be poor. Resultantly, poverty in India has been haunting in different ways through malnutrition, high infant mortality, lack of education, child labour, and child marriage, HIV / AIDS. Two-thirds of people in India have been living in extreme poverty,

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<sup>11</sup>India Involved In Sabotaging Peace In Balochistan, Afghanistan: Qureshi, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/india-involved-in-sabotaging-peace-in-balochi-962151.html>, (Accessed on July 06, 2020)

<sup>12</sup>Pakistan's Imran Khan blames India for stock exchange attack, <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-imran-khan-blames-india-for-stock-exchange-attack/a-53998863>, (Accessed on July 05, 2020)

<sup>13</sup>Syed Fazl-e-Haider, India-Pakistan proxy war a real threat in post-US Afghanistan, The Arab News ( Accessed on July 05, 2020)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

68.8% of Indians earn less than \$2 a day. The aforementioned bleak figures make India one of the poorest countries in the world.<sup>15</sup>

COVID-19 has badly damaged India's economy. International Labor Organization (ILO) maintains that "about 400 million workers from India's informal sector are likely to be pushed deeper into poverty due to COVID-19."<sup>16</sup> Poverty in India would be deadlier than COVID-19. Declining in remittances of India and Pakistan will further surge poverty because millions of workers who have been working abroad and dispatching remittances to their home countries are out of jobs now. "At least 50,000 Indian workers have come back home since early May. Workers from India and Pakistan sent home more than \$100bn last year"<sup>17</sup>.

Pakistan, on the other hand, confronts the same challenge of growing poverty. Poverty has been inflicting a large segment of the society, moving the country towards quagmire. Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha, the country's renowned economist, warns that 18 million people are expected to plunge into abject poverty. Pasha further says, "The national poverty ratio, which was 31.3% in June 2018, would sharply jump to over 40% by June 2020."<sup>18</sup> The negative impact of COVID-19 is yet to be gauged in Pakistan. People living below the poverty line are likely to get doubled reaching 125 million from the prevailing figure of 50 to 60 million.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Nadeem Ul-Haq, Vice-Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PHIDE), a think-tank of Planning Commission, argues that "Pakistan's 50 to 60 million people were already below the poverty line and the figure was expected to touch 125 million due to the COVID-19, while 19 to 20 million were expected to lose their jobs."<sup>20</sup>

Even Pakistani Prime Minister during the pandemic, despite surging cases of COVID-19, categorically said that Pakistan could not go for complete lockdown under its fragile economy and growing poverty. Khan confesses that Pakistan is a poor nation and cannot afford complete lockdown and views that Pakistan at a time faces two challenges: saving lives and shoring up the enfeebled economy. To bear in mind, a country that cannot endure a constant lockdown could bear perpetuating enmity with India?<sup>21</sup>

### **Growing Threats to Global Warming**

<sup>15</sup>Poverty in India: Facts and Figures on the Daily Struggle for Survival, <https://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/news/poverty-in-india-602> ( Accessed on July 06,2020)

<sup>16</sup>Shweta Saini, COVID-19 may double poverty in India, ( Accessed on July 09 2020)

<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth Puranam, South Asia faces a remittances crisis amid COVID-19 pandemic News/India ( Accessed on July 10 , 2020)

<sup>18</sup>Shahbaz Rana, In Pakistan, millions more to fall below poverty line, the Express Tribune. ( Accessed on July 11, 2020)

<sup>19</sup>Mehtab Haider, Economic fallout of COVID-19 in Pakistan: People under poverty line may double to 125 million, the News International ( Accessed on July 12,2020)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Imran Khan Says Pakistan Will Lift Lockdown Gradually as Coronavirus Cases Cross 20,000-mark, <https://www.india.com/news/world/imran-khan-says-pakistan-will-lift-lockdown-gradually-as-coronavirus-cases-cross-20000-mark-4019758/> ( Accessed on July 12, 2020)

Growing obsession of India and Pakistan with traditional and imaginary security threats has remained unchanged, resulting in overshadowing the devastating impacts of climate change. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its report warns India of foreseen threats of climate change. The report discloses that the “impact of a 1.5C increase in global temperatures will disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable populations through food insecurity, higher food prices, income losses, lost livelihood opportunities, adverse health impacts, and population displacements”.<sup>22</sup>

Rising of sea level would pose a threat to Indian inhabitants living adjacent to the coastline, who solely depend on the sea for their bread and butter. Deadly heatwaves that occurred in 2015 killed thousands of people in the Indian city of Calcutta and Pakistani city Karachi. There is a likelihood that the trend would become a norm in the future in these cities.<sup>23</sup>

According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Pakistan has been ranked 5<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country to climate change. The report says Pakistan has lost nearly 9,989 lives, worth \$ 3.8 billion economic losses, and has witnessed scorching weather events from 1999 to 2018. The think-tank concluded that the country’s vulnerability to climate change has constantly been expediting, claiming that the government of Pakistan does not take stringent measures in curbing climate change.<sup>24</sup> The report further maintains that Pakistan is among those countries that are "recurrently affected by catastrophes [and] continuously rank among the most affected countries both in the long-term index and in the index for the respective year".<sup>25</sup>

### **Water and Food Security**

The preoccupation of both countries with traditional security has made them overlook human development and water and food security. Both states, in this regard, are a lucid example, spending huge account on traditional security but are reluctant to resolve water and food security. India, by 2050 is expected to be home to 1.6 billion people enhancing the demand for water and food. The threat of climate change will reduce water availability in the country. India, currently, has merely four percent world’s total usable water resources. Since the 1960s, millions of Indians have inadequate access to clean water, food, and sanitation.

Urbanization, population growth, climate change, debilitating water mismanagement, greater variability in precipitation contribute to speeding up poverty and hunger.<sup>26</sup> India has been using water for the irrigation of crops for the last 5000 years. On account of growing urbanization, rapid population and industrialization India faces severe water shortages.<sup>27</sup> Presently, 600 million

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<sup>22</sup> Why India needs to worry about climate change, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-45949323> ( Accessed on July 12,2020)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Dawn, Pakistan’s 5<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country to climate change, reveals German watch report, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1520402/pakistan-5th-most-vulnerable-country-to-climate-change-reveals-germanwatch-report> ( Accessed on July 13,2020)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

Indians suffer from drought as the country remains the largest user of groundwater in the world. By 2030, 40 percent of Indians would not have access to clean water. Most noticeably, every year 200,000 Indians perish on account of contaminated water.<sup>28</sup>

However, water scarcity in Pakistan is more severe than that of India. Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) has already cautioned policymakers regarding water scarcity in the country, saying that if authorities do not take aggressive measures, Pakistan by 2025 is likely to run dry. The report claims Pakistan in 1990 was a mere water stress line and become a water scarcity line in 2005. PCRWR's report shows a gloomy picture, saying if the same situation prevails there would be a drought-like situation in the country.<sup>29</sup> PCRWR was discontent with research work in the country and accentuated the significance of research to find out avenues in tackling water issues. Irfan Chowdhry, a water expert says that "It is alarming that our capacity to preserve water has shrunk over the years. We haven't built new dams since the 1960s, and the capacity of existing ones to store water is decreasing."<sup>30</sup>

United Nations Development Programme UNDP experts also expressed their reservation over the water crisis in Pakistan articulating Pakistan policymakers are into oblivion to an impending water crisis. Shamsul Mulk, former chairman of the Water and Power Development Authority, while discussing the UNDP report argues, "water policy is simply non-existent in Pakistan. Policymakers act like "absentee landlords" of water, and "because of this absentee landlordism, water has become the property of the landlords and the poor are deprived of their share."<sup>31</sup>

In the post-COVID-19 era, non-traditional threats need to be prioritized. Suffice to say, post-COVID-19 would be an appropriate time for both states to resolve their outstanding issues including water issues. Pakistan has been blaming India for its water crisis saying that India does not comply with the Indus water treaty signed in 1960 brokered by the World Bank in 1960.<sup>32</sup>

### **Strengthening of Democracy**

In prevailing circumstances, democracy in India and Pakistan is under attack. Both states need to understand, enfeebling of democracy in the post-COVID-19 era will further exacerbate the relations. The consolidation of democracy would be a prerequisite for them to resolve their outstanding issues. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has converted Nehru's secular democracy into fascist democracy. Indian democracy under Modi's regime does not reflect Nehru's ones. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Modi has been pursuing a Hindutva ideology

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<sup>28</sup>Dost Muhammad Barrech, Post-COVID-19, Indo-Pak Relations. Modern Diplomacy ( Accessed on July 13,2020)

<sup>29</sup>Why water scarcity is bigger threat to Pakistan's security than militancy, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-water-scarcity-is-a-bigger-threat-to-pakistans-security-than-militancy/a-19293470> ( Accessed on July 13, 2020)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Water Scarcity in Pakistan – A Bigger Threat than Terrorism, <https://www.worldwatersolar.com/water-scarcity-in-pakistan-a-bigger-threat-than-terrorism/> ( Accessed on July 14, 2020)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

overemphasizing Indian culture in terms of Hindu values. Modi's democracy remains the antithesis of Indian secular democracy.<sup>33</sup>

Modi has been following a very destructive trajectory of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who first time in 1923 codified the Hindu Nationalism ideology. Savarkar in his work emphasized the importance of Hinduism articulated that Hindu was someone who had inhabited Hindustan. Resultantly, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) came into being in 1925 to promote Hindu nationalist ideology. M S Golwalkar as chief of RSS in 1940 in his book "We or Our nationhood Defined" accentuated Hindu nationalist ideology and warned religious minorities to adhere to Hindu acculturation and its identity. Implementing RSS ideology by Modi will endanger not only India but also the entire region.<sup>34</sup>

Modi by revoking Kashmir's autonomy invariably changes the demographic composition of the disputed territory. He contemplates to follow Israel's settlement in the West Bank. Annexing of Kashmir on August 5, 2019 simply means to allow Indians in Kashmir for the settlement, changing demography of Kashmir, converting Kashmiris into a minority. An Indian journalist Rana Ayyub argues that "Kashmir is now Westbank."<sup>35</sup> Ganguly, a political science professor at Indiana University at Bloomington argues that demographic changes in Kashmir bringing Hindus to Kashmir will consolidate Modi's party ascendancy over the area.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, Pakistan's democratic track record is exceedingly dismal that needs to be improved in the post-COVID-19 era to cement better ties with India. Civil-military relations in Pakistan have remained fragile since the inception of the country. Though civilian governments rule the country, they certainly need overt and covert support of the army. The army can topple the civilian government in no time if it sees it would damage its interest.<sup>37</sup> Army in Pakistan's politics remains the pivot of politics dictating democratic leaders on how to make decisions. The military is part of troika including the prime minister and president of Pakistan. The troika negotiates repeatedly, while senior officers are called to brief troika regarding hot issues of the country. Democratic leaders are powerless to disagree in troika negotiations. If civilian leaders dare to disagree with the army, they will consequently face the music.<sup>38</sup>

One can imagine the omnipotent power of the military in Pakistan, where so far, no prime minister has completed his and her tenure. Since 1947, 18 prime ministers have been appointed as premiers of the country. Surprisingly, no one has completed his and her tenure.<sup>39</sup> Political pundits in the

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<sup>33</sup>Dost Muhammad Barrech, Indian democracy from secularism to RSS, Pakistan Observer ( Accessed on July 14, 2020)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Claire Parker, Kashmir's new status could bring demographic change, drawing comparisons to the West Bank, the Washington Post, ( Accessed on July 14, 2020)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Husain Haqqani, Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).

<sup>38</sup>Hasan –Askari-Rizvi, Civil- Military Relations in Contemporary Pakistan, vol 40,no, 2 summer, international institute for strategic studies,pg,96

<sup>39</sup> Humza Jilani, No One Has Ever Completed a Term as Pakistan's PM, Foreign Policy, ( Accessed on July 14, 2020)

country conceive the current Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf PTI government as a selected government by the army. PTI's dismal performance amid COVID-19 giving space to the army to tighten its grip in domestic affairs, making it obvious that the army can maneuver internal affairs of the country without imposing martial law.<sup>40</sup>

The European Foundation for the South Asia Studies (EFSAS) in its recent report unveils that the PTI government is one of the lucid examples of how the army has reached to Federal cabinet. The EFSAS maintains that key portfolios such as interior, finance, defense, production, commerce, institutional reforms, and railways are held by individuals who belong to the military.<sup>41</sup> Military intervention is not only omnipresent in institutes rather ex-military personal of the four provinces of Pakistan also belongs to the military. It further reiterates that Pakistan is "arguably the only country in the world in which the jurisdiction of its armed forces is not restricted to guard its people and borders but includes involvement in business ventures".<sup>42</sup>

### **Interdependence of Economy**

Post-COVID-19 era provides a massive opportunity for both archrivals to mend their fences by changing enmity into friendship through enhancing economic ties. The more they are economically intertwined, the lesser there will be the likelihood of war. COVID-19 has already done colossal damage to the world economy. India and Pakistan are not immune to the prevailing economic woes too. Ironically, the economic ties of both states have severely been affected by an enduring rivalry. In this regard, a prolific writer Stephen Cohen in his book "Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum" expresses pessimism over India and Pakistan's economic relations saying that South Asia is one of the least economically integrated regions in the world, the region has only 5 percent interregional trade.<sup>43</sup>

The lesser economic interdependence has perpetuated enmity for 72 years. Cohen argues that in international politics five percent conflicts are unlikely to be resolved and the India and Pakistan conflict is one of them. Alarmingly, both states have not felt the gravity of their hostility as yet.<sup>44</sup> South Asia has immense economic potential but due to the rivalry of India and Pakistan Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has halted economic opportunities. Alice Wells the US diplomat once said that South Asia was one of the economically fastest-growing regions of the world, having nearly half of the young population, contributing massively to economic

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<sup>40</sup>Ayjaz Wani, Military further tightens grip over Imran administration, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/military-further-tightens-grip-over-imran-administration-68329/> ( Accessed on July 15, 2020)

<sup>41</sup>Military spreads tentacles deeper into governance in Pakistan, says European think tank <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/europe/military-spreads-tentacles-deeper-into-governance-in-pakistan-says-european-think-tank20200516045348/> ( Accessed on July 15,2020)

<sup>42</sup> ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Dost Muhammad Barrech, Kartarpur: A Corridor of Opportunities, COUNTER CURRENTS. ORG ( Accssed on July 15, 2020)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

growth. “South Asia remains among the least economically integrated regions in the world and non-tariff barriers to trade are a major cause,” Wells added.<sup>45</sup>

### Way Forward

- Both states are supposed to reassess realpolitik in their foreign policies in the post-COVID-19 era that has caused irreparable damage to their relations.
- Arguably, the hostility of India and Pakistan is socially constructed that can be eliminated easily once each other perceives others as a friend instead of an enemy.
- Support of proxy wars by both states needs to stop.
- In the foreseeable future, non-traditional threats like COVID-19, climate change, food security, water scarcity, disease, drug trafficking will loom large over India and Pakistan. Thus, they ought to keep non-traditional threats in top priority.
- Modi fascist regime, undoubtedly, moves India towards religious fanaticism resulting in diminishing secularism in India, weakening one of the largest democracies of the world. India as a religious bigot state will downplay the possibility of friendship with Pakistan. A secular India guarantees friendship with Pakistan in the post-COVID-19 era.
- Pakistan also needs to strengthen its democracy, incompleteness of tenures of eighteen prime ministers of the country raises many questions over its democracy.
- Realistically speaking, the military of Pakistan has to shun interference in the internal affairs of the country and should abide by the constitution of the country. Interference by the military in internal affairs and the toppling of democratic governments wash away the possibility of friendship with India.
- Economic interdependence needs to be enhanced. The more India and Pakistan are economically intertwined, the lesser the possibility of a war.
- Pakistan cannot match India economically, militarily, politically and geographically. It is in the national interest of Pakistan to bolster its economy, democracy, and political stability to compete with India.
- The opening of the Kartarpur corridor by Pakistan for religious harmony has promoted a positive image of the country across the world. In the post-COVID-19 era more corridors particularly on the Sindh border is supposed to be built for Mohenjo-Daro and shrines of Sindh for the Indian tourists. If the Kartarpur corridor is possible why not both states build an economic corridor connecting India with Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- Energy-hungry India needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs India. Pakistan can give easy access to India to reach the Middle East and Central Asia for natural resources. India must acknowledge the value of Pakistan.

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<sup>45</sup>South Asia remains among least economically integrated regions in the world: US, The Indian Express ( Accessed on July 15, 2020)

- People to people contact needs to be enhanced. Sports activities ought to be resumed. Film industries of both countries need to grow together.

### **Conclusion**

The rivalry between India and Pakistan has remained a buzzword in international politics. Both states are well-known for their unending hostility. Securitization of their foreign policies, squandering a colossal amount on militaries has badly exposed them during the COVID-19. Pandemic has also proved that spending a whopping amount on the military instead of the well-being of people proves to be counterproductive. COVID-19 has created an enormous opportunity for both nuclear states to reevaluate their policies to live peacefully, concentrating on human developments rather than on so-called imaginary threats. COVID-19 makes it crystal clear that prioritization of traditional threats over nontraditional threats is a futile exercise. The pandemic has also exposed their vulnerabilities to non-traditional threats, such unforeseen threats are expected to happen in the foreseeable future too. If both states in the future remain unprepared for non-traditional threats, there would certainly be more devastations, destructive than COVID-19. To sum up, in the post-COVID-19 period, they are required to prioritize non-traditional threats like COVID-19, climate change, food and water security, diseases, drug trafficking over traditional/ imaginary threats that invariably will pave the way for peaceful co-existence.