

Demilitarization of Siachen Glacier and Its Implications on the Defence Budget of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on demilitarization of Siachen Glacier and its implications on the defence budget of Pakistan. The government of India and Pakistan are hiking the defence budget to an extreme and in particular for Siachen that consequently it reveals that the glacier of Siachen retain massive geo- strategic significance for both the states. The data has been collected from primary and secondary sources. Moreover theory of disarmament has been adopted by the researcher in relation to Siachen conflict. An interview was conducted from military personnel to get aware of military's stance with reference to Siachen Glacier. Thus it has been concluded that mutually both the states ought to look for an amicable solution as regard to glacier's demilitarization furthermore generate a balance between defence and other main sectors so they might not face any negligence.

Keywords: *Budget of Pakistan, Siachen Glacier, Demilitarization*

Introduction

Geographical Location of the Glacier

Siachen Glacier said to be as the “world's highest battlefield” is ranked as the second longest non- polar glacier after the Fedchenko Glacier in the Pamir which is 77km long. The 70km long glacier of Siachen is located in the Eastern Karakoram Range and width of it lies in between 2 to 8 km and total area is less than 1,000sq km. It originates near the Indra Koli Pass on the Pakistan-China border and extends itself to Salto Range and runs in the domain of Dzingrulma which is a village and comes in the domain of Indian held Kashmir near Laddakh.

1.2 Historical Background

The question arises of how and why a block of ice became important and a major concern for both India and Pakistan. Siachen Glacier was mistakenly left unmarked and delineated by the cartographers from both sides of India and Pakistan in 1949 Karachi Agreement and also 1971 Shimla Agreement (Sugarman, 1984). April 13, 1984 was the date, year and month when a small force of the Indian army expedition team under the secret coded Operation Meghoo (meaning cold messenger) comprised of the fittest, sharp and focused soldiers conducted their ‘successful operational strategy’ and tact fully and illegally captured the dominant heights of Siachen i.e. Bilafond La pass. The decision to occupy the dominant heights of Siachen was taken back in September 1983 under the headship of Indira Gandhi the former Prime Minister of India and Army Chief at that period of India Arun Vadiya to dominate and overlook China and Pakistan on both sides. Four days later another small force occupied the Sia La pass. Both

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passes, the former at over 18,000ft and latter over 20,000ft are located in the Salto Range and serve as the gate way to the Glacier (Desai & Mukherjee, 2007). No sooner or later Pakistan when got aware of India's selfish motive directed their small force of army but at that time frame the soldiers from the Pakistan side were not aware of the hardship of adverse weather conditions which remains a much greater enemy furthermore were less prepared as compared to India's army which already in 1982 went to areas of Antarctica and got training there so they might able to tackle in "Another Antarctica" which forecasts much similar conditions. Pakistan could not respond to Indian attack immediately and were not prepared as the Indian side was so consequently resulted in the deaths of many of its soldiers (Chaudry, 2012).

Geostrategic Importance of Siachen Glacier for India and Pakistan

Siachen is not only a mass of snow but it holds strategic importance for India and Pakistan besides both the states cannot afford to put this issue at the back burner. Talking about Siachen and its geo strategic importance it could be quoted by an Indian author Joy deep Sir Car in 1985

"One, if India loses Siachen it will lose an enormous chunk of territory. Having suffered several territorial body blows in Jammu and Kashmir, India is evidently not prepared to suffer another. Two if Pakistan controls Siachen, the whole Nubra valley of India which supports as a gateway (to Ladakh) can be jeopardised. Pakistanis being on high ground will overlook all our outposts in Nubra valley. Three, if we cannot hold Nubra valley, we will also lose access to the rest of our Karakoram territory because the valley provides the best access route to our northern outposts like Daulat Beg Oldi" (Syed, 2012).

Concerning strategic importance of the glacier on Pakistan's part so the Pakistan military presence on the glacier is necessary part of its defence strategy and it cannot afford to withdraw from the glacier because it perceives threat from India that control of it (India) over Siachen means threat to Gilgit-Baltistan area. Officials in Islamabad maintain that authentication of Siachen would lead the Indians to take legal charge of it (Gilgit- Baltistan) moreover would compromise Pakistan position not just on Siachen dispute but also on Kashmir issue as a whole. Pakistan fears that India at later stage could claim the entire glacier which consequently could reinforce their control on the Kashmir valley. Moreover Siachen occupation threatens foremost the Karakoram Highway that connects Pakistan and China through a land route. It is due to trust deficit element among both the states which is hindering out of many; the important issue of Siachen but on the other hand India is widely perceived as an aggressor, militarily occupying a no-man's land in violation of the spirit of the Shimla Agreement (Shaheen, 2012). Moreover Siachen melt water is the main source of Nubra River, which flows into the Shyok River inside the Indian Kashmir. Interestingly the Shyok River creeps across the LOC and joins not the Ganges, the Brahmaputra but the Indus River inside Pakistan however continuous military intervention is hampering this great source which quenches thirsts of humans and other animals which provides livelihood to certain farmers over the past years plus the melted water from this glacier is the primary source of fresh and pure water (on the part of Pakistan). The military personnel on the side of Pakistan define its strategic utility that in actual the fight is over to gain foothold on the passes of the Salto Range which provides a gateway to the glacier (Walsh, 2010).

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Defence Budget of Pakistan

The defence budget of Pakistan has exceeded its figures more than anticipated. Surprisingly the other departments which need ample attention the figures when checked of them were not up to the mark; the defence sector could be quoted as one of the sectors on which the government of Pakistan spends lavishly giving the reason that allocation in the figures is to maintain not only “conventional parity” with India but also on counter terrorism efforts and conducting different military operations as Pakistan is an important state in the US lead global war on terrorism. Defence budget for the year 2016-17 presented in the Parliament showed an increase and lead to Rs860.1 billion on the part of defence. The federal government of Pakistan beforehand had embarked Rs775.8 billion on the part of defence but a sudden change came and the figures rose which lead to 11% increase (Ahmed, 2016). After much deliberation it has been decided to increase the “staggering defence budget” and according to details Rs860.1 billion is allocated for defence division. On the other hand if the defence budget of India is taken into consideration Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on February 1, 2017 declared more than 10% increase and lead the defence budget to approximately INR 7.4 trillion in comparison to the previous year’s budget which was INR 2.49 trillion. The highlight of Indian defence budget is that it is 1.62% of the GDP (Arun, 2017). On the other hand out of Pakistan territorial boundaries, the threat is prevalent foremost from Pakistan’s neighbour India and the Official Actors from both the sides are in a state of “tug of war” on many issues of which Siachen is one of them and one of the reason in the incensement in defence budget is this very issue. As it is said that war is the most expensive of all business and the “Wars at Siachen have been going on for 100 hours for the past 33 years.” India and Pakistan 33 year battle for the Siachen Glacier along the disputed border above Kashmir costs more than US\$2 billion (7.4bn) annually. The Indian military base camp is at an altitude of 12,000ft above sea level while Pakistan base camp is at little lower altitudes. Present estimate of “hot war with India” on the part of Pakistan ranges from \$R 3 to \$Rs5 billion. According to a report by Economic Survey of Pakistan, this cold war cost Pakistan in between \$200 million to \$300 million a year which means an equivalent of Rs50 million per day of the year. According to a report by Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) it sighted that Siachen conflict causes \$Rs18 billion on the part of Pakistan. “The daily, monthly and annual figure concerning Pakistan is Rs15 million a day, which makes Rs450 million a month and Rs5.4 billion a year.” Taking in view the logistics, food items, arms and ammunitions and artillery it costs far more; a single chapatti costs around Rs200 by the time it reaches the dominant heights. The figures suggest that Indian casualties of maintaining and spending on their troops are much greater as compared to Pakistan and Indian spending is equal to Pakistan expenditure of around a month. But Pakistan government needs to curtail the defence budget because majority of population is living below poverty line and due to government negligence and focusing on just one sector consequently is hampering the other sectors and due to this the people are living in worst conditions, are deprived of basic needs and owing to financial crunch that is currently faced by the country, some quarters have been demanding cut in the defence expenditure. According to Human Development Index (HDI), Pakistan was 145th among the 187 countries a rank even less than the African countries. “The target of the agendas and the

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political streams should be the elimination of the deprivations and to spend more on development sectors and eradicate starvation and poverty and most importantly it should be the slogan of the upcoming elections and one of the points of the manifestos of different political parties contesting for elections.” It is for Official and unofficial actors to work collaboratively and set national priorities before it get late! In view of economists the upper most limits of defence expenditures is 3percent and it has almost swallowed the country of Pakistan. Unfortunately less than 1percent of the budget is allocated for health, education and economic development of the people and sectors. (Ilyas, Popalzai, & Anis, 2012).

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Armament is defined as the process of increasing the quantity of weapon holdings or replacing existing holdings of weapons with the new ones.

Whereas arms control or reduction is the use of weapons within specified quantity and amount and not exceeding to a very high limit. Arms control consequently restrains competition and tends to lessen the rivalries between the two parties.

Disarmament on the other hand is defined as the complete reduction of weapons which involves general reduction of weapons “which categorize up to zero.”

Armament or the increase in weapons became much common during the Cold War era when USA and USSR, the two military super powers at the time of late 1940s up to 1991 shared mutual distrust and were in a competitive build-up of weapons against each other. When discovered that both the states possess “infinity arms and weapons against each other” the world along with the two super powers got alarmed. Consequently after much deliberation and pressure from general public, both the states referred to arms control because disarmament was unrealistic and even dangerous because complete elimination of weapons does not reduce the likelihood of war and has had been a threat for military strength whereas arms control if not results in elimination of weapons and wars also not results in increase in weapons because weapons are required for security and protection of a nation’s border and an increase in weaponry is sometimes required to preserve a balance of power. Both the super powers followed the pattern of arms control and those arms control treaties served the purpose of limiting weapons stockpiles to a level that preserved deterrence also consequently conserved the economic and social purpose of a state. In relation to Siachen Glacier theory of disarmament is applied because both the states are constantly increasing the defence budget and not putting control on arms race which consequently is disturbing the political environment. Moreover peace theory of disarmament prevents conflict from being resolved by warfare also disarmament is good for the economy whereas armament could possibly lead to a battle like in the case of “100 hours battle” on Siachen in which both the states are constantly alert and vigilant against each other.

1.9 Rationale of the Study

To analyse the geo strategic importance of Siachen Glacier and its implications on the defence budget of Pakistan. Moreover the stances of the official actors of both the states of not putting Siachen at the back burner and increasing defence budget and spending on Siachen and not paying attention to other important sectors which could boost the economy of the country.

1.10 Hypothesis

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Demilitarization of Siachen Glacier would lessen the spending of the government on the defence of Pakistan.

1.11 Research Questions

- What is the strategic importance of Siachen for both India and Pakistan?
- What are the stances of India and Pakistan governments regarding Siachen?
- How much expenditure has been spent of both the countries on the icy caped region?
- Why isn't the military of both India and Pakistan ready to demilitarize the Polar region?

1.14 Statement of Problem

Siachen conflict is out of many one of the issues which has become a bone of contention between the government and military of both the countries India and Pakistan. Both the states access strategic importance of the area according to their own needs but the 33 years battle is affecting the defence budget and indirectly affecting the glacier.

Research Objectives

- To analyse the geo strategic importance of Siachen Glacier.
- To study specifically a huge increase in defence budget of Pakistan and in particular allocated for the Siachen Glacier.
- To study whether positive or negative implications are added by hiking the defence budget of Pakistan and specifically for Siachen.
- To analyse the stances of government and military officials of both the states that why they are not ready to demilitarize the Siachen region.
- To study the reason of increase in weapons or armament and not putting an arms control especially related to Siachen conflict on the part of Official Actors of both the states.
- To highlight the death rate caused during the Siachen conflict and death rate is due to which factor environmental or direct confrontation of both the parties.
- To highlight the troops who are stationed and indirectly affecting the glacier of Siachen.

2. Literature Review

Ahmed and Sahni (1998) are of the view that the conflict in Siachen has resulted in hundreds of casualties not because of confrontation but due to harsh weather, terrain furthermore the economic cost of sustaining the conflict is quite difficult. Both the sides are well aware of the facts, figures and situation around them. No proper solution has been reached so far due to the policies, perceptions and preferences of both the state policy makers. But above all, it depends on the political will of Pakistan and Indian leadership to reach to a durable solution of the Siachen conflict.

Ali (2002) has analysed that mountains are regarded to be the element and symbol of peace, solace and tranquillity. People try to seek peace by reaching this beautiful creation of God. Himalayas could be quoted here as an example which is known to be the "Abode of Gods" but unfortunately people have turned this

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spiritual solace to a deadly, bitter absurd conflict zone. For long years the armed forces of India and Pakistan are fighting on the Saltoro Range, south of the Siachen Glacier and turned it to a highest battle field ever. A Peace Treaty should come on the forefront by both the regions to solve this conflict and should preserve the unique high mountain environment currently being subjected to irreparable devastation.

Prakash (2009) has analysed that the presence of 15,000 troops on the two sides of Siachen is straining the ecosystem seriously. With so many human living on the glacier the accumulation of garbage is in abundance. Much of the garbage is put into crevasses or dumped on rocks and snow. Such human activities have resulted into alternations and modifications in the ecological balance, causing destructive snow avalanches and snow holes which kill number of soldiers every year.

Jindal (2009) has described that apart from many problems confronted by military of both the countries in the domain of Siachen certain medical problems prevail as well like acute mountain sickness, hypothermia, snow blindness, frost bite. Minimum medical facilities exists as such for these soldiers and in return affecting mental mobility of those soldiers which results in severe repercussions

MacDonald (2012) is of the view that if tragedies could end wars India and Pakistan could reach a peaceful agreement on a number of issues in which Siachen is to be regarded as a pivotal issue. Certain arguments and agreements have undergone over the uninhabitable wasteland of snow but no momentum seen. Both sides stay affirmative on their stance of not one inch of land be ceded to the other side. As India enjoys the advantage to be on the higher ground positions it would be sense less to take them head on by the Pakistan military rather it would be better to go around the mountains and cut their supply. Both the states put certain conditions on each other in case of with drawl; India shares an element of distrust from Pakistan what happened in Kargil sowed seeds of mistrust in minds of them and fear to vacate that Pakistan might capture and on the other hand Pakistan which seems more keener to reach an agreement refuse to follow India's conditionality of returning back to Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) fearing India aggression of 1984. Hence no Confidence Building Measure seems to be built among the two s

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The researcher had used Qualitative, Historical, Analytical and Descriptive methods in her research.

3.2 Research methods

The researcher had made use of Content Analysis as her method of research.

3.3 Data Collection

The researcher had focused on Primary Sources of data collection like interviews. Moreover the researcher had taken help from Secondary Sources likes books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, articles and reports etc.

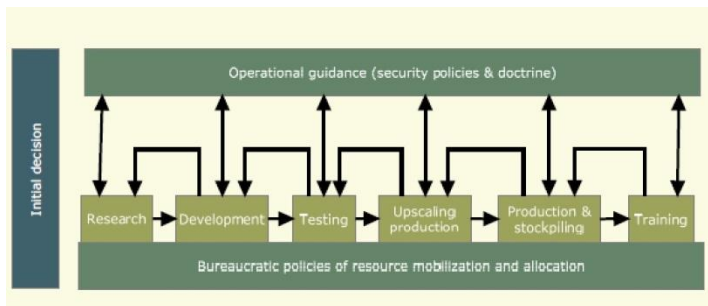
3.4 Theoretical Framework

As armament is defined the "management in the level of weapons" within specified boundaries disarmament is defined as the reduction or removal of

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weapons from the “military doctrine.” Concerning Siachen Glacier, in which the military and political streams of both the states are combined and dealing together to find an amicable solution or for gaining weapons consequently this process is named as “assimilation.” Assimilation is defined as the process in which the political and military imperatives reconcile together for a particular purpose in which weaponry is of pivotal importance and inclusion of political stream means that “thing” becomes an integral part of military doctrine. It is due to the reconciliation of the military and the political imperatives that weaponry especially related to Siachen has become an integral part of the “current mainstream military doctrine.” Armament also is defined as the process of assimilation

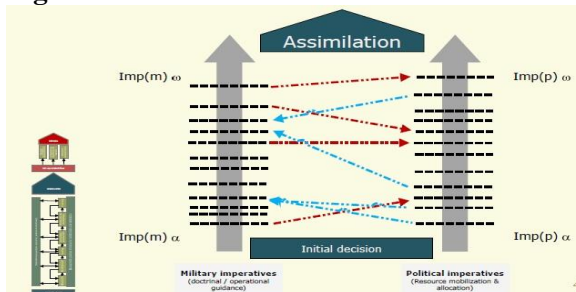
Figure 3.1



Source: <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2012/files/SIPRIYB12Summary.pdf>

The following figure shows the policies made by the government for the allocation and mobilization of weaponries and operational guidance is provided by the military. The bureaucracy is given the charge for the research of certain weapons but military intervention is necessary; its certain departments overlook at the testing, reliability of the weapon. When the weapon become reliable under military security policies and match with the policies of the government; the next process comes of the production and stockpiling of the weapons and finally soldiers are given training regarding the intensity of weapon.

Figure 3.2



Source: http://www.isodarco.it/courses/andalo10/doc/Zanders_Assimilation-Disarmament_course-notes.pdf

The following figures reveal the results when political and military imperatives or decisions amalgamate together, when both the “actors” combine to take a decision

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on a particular type of weaponry. The following arrows in grey shade show the increasing ratios of political and military imperatives. The arrow in red and green shows the flow of decision from one sector to the other sector. Siachen is still a living issue is due to the reconciliation of military and political and military imperatives that weaponry especially related to Siachen has become an integral part of the “current mainstream military doctrine.” If this figure is taken in relation to Siachen fiasco it could be seen that decisions are flown amicably from one sector to the other. The political leaders and military personnel of both the states have had become staunch on their decision of not withdrawing and indulging in an alarming arms race amid each other. If both the states consider disarmament as not a suitable option for the Siachen fiasco then they should go for Strategic Arms control treaty as followed by US- USSR who followed the treaty harmoniously.

Strength of Pakistan and India (troops, weapons, defence budget)

India Pakistan

The strength of Indian active troops is 1,100,000 and the number of soldiers stationed at Siachen goes to an exceeding figure of 7,000.	While Pakistan maintains 550,000, active troops and 4,000 troops are deployed in the Siachen region.
India’s weapon system is much advance and weapons used in Siachen Glacier are of fine quality since India’s mechanized infantry consists of armed infantry fighting vehicles.	Weapons are of fine quality the ones used in Siachen as well but India possessed an upper hand to the overall weapon system and the ones used in Siachen conflict.
Armament is seen increasing especially related to Siachen conflict regarding India.	Concerning Pakistan it too has put an increase in weapons and arms and also concerning the conflict of Siachen.
Defence Budget of India has exceeded to a much higher percentage than anticipated that is INR 7.4 trillion and budget allocated for Siachen i.e. 72 billion a rate much higher than that of Pakistan allocation for Siachen	Defence budget (2016-17) of Pakistan has hiked up to 11% to Rs775. 8 billion and just for Siachen the figures exceed up to Rs18 billion.
India frequently has derailed the peace process and asserted time and again their “useless demands”	Pakistan has most of time engaged in conflict resolution regarding Siachen issue but India has violated the “peaceful resolutions of Pakistan.”

4. Discussion & Analysis

It is expected from militaries and government of both the countries to create an arms control regarding their conflicts on certain issues and out of them on Siachen Glacier. Due to this very reason of armament, the defence budget is hiking of both the countries especially of Pakistan and negligence or little attention is diverted to other sectors, only protection of national security is of vital interest. When asked from Retired Colonel Shuqran Rafique who’s been to Siachen twice he said that military presence on the glacier is a necessary part of Pakistan’s defence strategy because it holds much strategic importance for the government and especially military of Pakistan. When asked about the allocation of defence budget and in particular for Siachen he responded to defence budget as a defence secret otherwise the figures allocated for Siachen is in billions. Regarding the stance of military concerning Siachen he said that Pakistan military wants peace but not at

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the cost of jeopardising its territories. If India deals fair and square being neutral and impartial regarding demilitarization, only then Pakistan can ponder over because as said before the military of Pakistan cannot afford any harm regarding its territories. Pakistan if demilitarizes first can harm her strategically because India already is at advantage by being at dominant positions and can harm Pakistan at the utmost so currently there's no "plan for demilitarization." Ego is not the right word to say on the part of government and military because they are not standing in the way of a much needed demilitarization, talking about military it works under the civil government and protects the country from all harms and in the current time frame Pakistan military has played positive role regarding demilitarization after Gyari sector incident. It is due to trust deficit element which is hindering out of many the important issue of Siachen. Only if trust deficit is removed amongst Indo-Pak could help build Confidence Building Measure (CBM) which could lead to affirmative results. Regarding the increase in weapons (armament) to which the Colonel responded by saying that Pakistan military has have to deal effectively with the enemy but for this it would be requiring weapons because today is not the world of disarmament and it is the requirement of defence strategy for equipped and modern based technological weapons and concerning Siachen and weapon demanded there; extra care and caution is required due to the element of weather. Furthermore he supported the stance that too much ammunition is at disadvantage which is undoubtedly hampering the defence budget and creating load on overall budget. Consequently Pakistan military should overlook at arms control and create a balance in maintaining weapons. The personal views of Retired Colonel was that only and only if India agrees to demilitarize its troops from the conflict zone then Pakistan can think over as well. Conflict transformation or resolution could be a better option regarding Siachen's demilitarization and conflict resolution is defined as the alleviation or eliminating conflict's source. Pakistan has tried hard and forth to lessen Siachen issue but India most of the aroused such baseless demands ultimately derailed the peace process and dream to convert Siachen into a "peace mountain" becomes shattered. A political agreement could be a better option to demilitarize the Siachen conflict zone and no sooner the political engagement is reached, Pakistan and India army could began negotiating the basic framework. It is now on the shoulders of Pakistan and India negotiating teams to converse in detail all factors rooted in troops deployment.

5. Conclusion

It is now high time that the conflict on Siachen should end as soon as possible otherwise if a worst tragedy had occurred in the realms of Pakistan that is Gyari sector next time it could be India. Very little is likely to emerge on Siachen impasse unless a political directive is taken to conclude the talks. The civil society on both sides should debate the issue and bring pressure on their respective government to do their duty by negotiating an honourable withdrawal from the area. Considering the fact that the clock of destruction is ticking for the past 33 years, there is a need of urgency to be injected concerning demilitarization process. The additional expenditure of maintaining thousands of troops is at extreme on the freezing heights of Siachen. Moreover there is a need to curtail the defence budget along with arms and weapons. Protection of people should be of pivotal importance of both the states which is the basis of democracy but the

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situation is opposite in which weapons are granted “immense protection” instead of people. The “unending diplomatic meetings” amongst the envoys of both the states should not be abandoned moreover try to sort for an amicable solution to untie the knot on Siachen.

6. Recommendations

- The primary focus of the government and military of both the countries India and Pakistan is to increase Confidence Building Measure (CBM) amongst each other concerning Siachen Glacier.
- Both the states have voiced their concerns regarding Line of Control (LOC) and also Siachen so it will be better if United Nations Military Observer Group (UNMOG) as a third party given the charge it might handle the “conflict zone” in an effective manner.
- Decades of enmity on the Siachen dispute could only be resolved if “peaceful coexistence” exist between the two states.
- A Siachen Peace Park could be a good initiative if undertaken by India and Pakistan government and military collectively.
- Joint glacial studies if conducted by scientists could be a positive imperative in the context of Indo-Pak relationship.
- Limitations in armament could be an important aspect in enhancing stability and result in the building of element of trust between both the countries.
- Track 2 diplomacy could help lessen the tensions between India and Pakistan and help the two parties to engage in a “healthy negotiation.”
- Both the states should not spend lavishly on the conflict instead invest money in positive works which could boost economies at an enormous level.

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