Right-Wing Populism in India: Effects on India Pakistan Relations

Muhammad Saad Aslam[1]

Article Information		Abstract

The rise of right-wing populism in India has transformed politics and foreign relations since 2014. By seeing right-wing populism as a social construct, we can better figure out how it affects the relationship between India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed neighbors who have a history of animosity and tensions. Using social constructivism, we argue that the rise of right-wing populism in India has transformed India's national identity. This has brought change in India's foreign policy priorities and made tensions with Pakistan worse. This study takes a qualitative approach by looking at political speeches, news stories, and policy documents to show how right-wing populism has intensified nationalist sentiments. As result, India's relationship with Pakistan has become more confrontational and less cooperative. The study also discusses the far-reaching effects of right-wing populism in India, including greater polarization and divisiveness, a politics of hate towards Muslims, an increase in nationalist sentiments, and the erosion of social and democratic norms. The article contends that the ascent of populism in India has had severe effects on human rights, academia, cultural identity, and the media. It is crucial to develop strategies to enhance regional stability and security. To improve understanding and cooperation between India and Pakistan, policymakers and other interested parties can take several approaches, such as promoting dialogue and engagement, engaging in multi-track diplomacy, enabling people-to-people contacts, highlighting common social norms, and inspiring a constructive and cooperative foreign policy. Also, the international community must actively play role in promoting regional stability and collaboration.

1   Introduction

The emergence of right-wing populism in India has been exacerbated by the proliferation of social media and improved access to information and communication technologies since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power. This has made it easy for anti-immigrant and anti-minority feelings to spread quickly among general mass (Sharma, 2022). The cultural, political, and economic factors that shaped right-wing populism in India at the

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[1] Assistant Registrar Baba Guru Nanak University, Nankana Sahib. Email: ar.acad@bgnu.edu.pk

beginning of the 20th century also affected its story. Right-wing populism is growing in India because people do not like the way things are now and want to promote a more nationalistic and conservative vision for the country's future (McDonnell & Cabrera, 2019). Right-wing populism in India is still a big part of the country's politics and culture. Thus, scholars, policymakers and the general public worry a lot about it. Right-wing populism has been defined as a political ideology that emphasizes the importance of nationalism, tradition, and the nation-state, and often includes anti-immigrant and anti-minority sentiments (Moffitt, & Tormey, 2014). In the Indian context, right-wing populism has been characterized by the rise of nationalist and anti-Pakistan sentiments, which have been fueled by the actions of right-wing populist leaders and political parties (Destradi & Plagemann, 2022).

India used to be a secular and inclusive state, but now right-wing nationalist ideas are becoming more popular. This has serious consequences for India's politics at home and its relationships with other countries. Given how tense things have been between India and Pakistan in the past, the effects of right-wing populism on relations between the two countries are especially important. In India, right-wing populism is marked by a strong sense of nationalism, feelings against immigrants, and a rejection of liberal values and norms. Hindu nationalism, which seeks to advance Hindu cultural and religious values and assert the dominance of Hindu society, is largely responsible for it. This way of thinking is often connected to anti-Pakistan, anti-Muslim, and anti-minority feelings (Falki, 2022). This phenomenon in India is largely a result of the growing disillusionment among the Indian public with the country's political and economic establishments and the widespread perception that the country's political and economic systems have failed to deliver on the promises of development and prosperity (Wojczewski, 2020).

This situation has led to serious implications for bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. Both the countries have a long and complicated history, marked by periods of conflict and tension. The relationship between India and Pakistan is further complicated by issues such as territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, and the ongoing conflict in Kashmir. The growing populism in India has fueled aggressive rhetoric against Pakistan. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Indian government has taken several steps to show that India is stronger than Pakistan. This has included the revocation of the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the launch of military strikes against Pakistan. Numerous increased incidents of violence against minority communities particularly Muslims in India have taken place (Chakravartty & Roy, 2015). Pakistan has also been critical of India's treatment of its minority communities.

India and Pakistan's relationship is affected by right-wing populism in more than just the political and security realms. There are also significant economic and cultural implications. These include increased restrictions on trade and cultural exchange between the two countries. This results into deteriorating the economies of both countries, as well as hampering the development of regional cooperation and integration (Zaidi, Aslam & Ghaffar, 2017). Right-wing nationalist ideas are becoming more popular in India. The effects of right-wing populism on India-Pakistan relations are felt across a range of domains, including politics, security, economics, and culture. It is therefore important for scholars, policymakers, and the international community to better understand the dynamics of right-wing populism in India and its impacts on the relationship between India and Pakistan (Tandon, 2022).

The current literature on India-Pakistan relations has largely neglected the influence of right-wing populism, despite its growing sway in India in recent years. This research gap provides

an opportunity for further exploration of the impact of right-wing populism on India-Pakistan relations, and its potential to influence public opinion, government policy, and regional stability. So, the analysis of the literature shows how imperative it is to investigate how right-wing populism affects India-Pakistan relations since it has the potential to change how the two countries think, feel, and act toward each other. Therefore, the present study aims at examining this phenomenon thoroughly to learn more about the dynamics of this complicated and intricate bilateral relationship.

Therefore, the social constructivist approach has been chosen to investigate the phenomenon of right-wing populism in India and its consequences on bilateral ties of India and Pakistan. Social constructivist perspective resorts to the role of ideas, norms, and culture in shaping international relations and views the relationship between India and Pakistan as a social construct, rather than a given reality. The social constructivist analysis of right-wing populism and India-Pakistan relations would examine how right-wing populism has influenced the cultural, ideological, and historical contexts that shape the relationship between the two countries (Wendt, 1999). It would consider the impact of right-wing populist narratives and discourses on public opinion, government policy, and regional dynamics, and analyze how these narratives and discourses have formed the perceptions and attitudes of the two countries towards each other.

Given the persistent conflict and instability in the region, it is important to scrutinize how the rise of right-wing populism in India may further exacerbate tensions between the two countries and undermine regional cooperation and stability. The present study can help policymakers devise prudent and pragmatic strategies to deal with the populist politics in India and provide deep insight of how this complicated and important bilateral relationship works. This study used qualitative analysis using a range of secondary sources including, academic sources, media reports, official communications, speeches and press releases. By adopting a social constructivist lens, this study aims to shed light on the impact of right-wing populism on India-Pakistan relations and its repercussions for the relationship between the two countries.

2 Right Wing Populism in India

Right-wing populism in India dates back to the early 20th century, when the nation was attempting to forge a new national identity after being under the British rule. At this time, India had a strong sense of nationalism, and the need to assert India's independence and sovereignty had an effect on the country's political and cultural institutions. The Hindu nationalist movements like RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, started in India in the 1920s and 1930s, were the early manifestations of right-wing populism. Hindu nationalism was based on the idea that Hindu culture and religion were better than other cultures and religions, and it tried to spread Hindu values and traditions throughout India. The movement was characterized by a rejection of Western political and cultural values and was closely associated with anti-Muslim sentiment (Jaffrelot, 1999).

In the years after India got its independence, when the country was trying to build itself and get its economy going, the Hindu nationalist movement grew. A growing sense of disillusionment with the nation's political and economic establishments, as well as a sense of cultural and religious identity, further fueled the movement. With the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the end of the 20th century, right-wing populism in India became more politically organized and mobilized. The BJP is a Hindu nationalist political party that was

formed in 1980 to promote Hindu values and traditions in Indian society. The party rose to power in the late 1990s and early 2000s and has been in government on several occasions since then. Under the BJP, right-wing populism in India has taken on a more aggressive and confrontational front, with a focus on promoting Hindu cultural and ideological values and asserting the dominance of Hindu society (Flåten, 2016). The BJP has been criticized for its anti-Muslim and anti-minority sentiments and its stance on issues such as immigration and religious freedom.

3   Social Construction of Right-Wing Populism in India

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its parent organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) are gaining a lot of political power and influence (McDonnell & Cabrera, 2019; Sharma, 2007). The BJP and RSS back a Hindu nationalist agenda, which aims at promoting the exclusion and marginalization of minority groups, especially Muslims, in India (Ray & Sethy, 2022). India's democracy, secularism, and social cohesion are all at risk because of the rise of right-wing populism (McDonnell & Cabrera, 2019).

In this paper, social constructivism is used as a way to look at right-wing populism in India (Wendt, 1992). Social constructivism is a way of thinking about how people, language, and social conditions all play a part in making a political reality. This view says that the political world is not a given; instead made by the way people and groups interact in a certain social setting. Right-wing populism in India is a complex social phenomenon which constitutes various cultural, political, and economic elements (McSweeney, 1999). In this case, right-wing populism is a political ideology that combines elements of nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiments, and anti-minority sentiments with the goal of promoting the cultural and political dominance of a certain group. In India, this group is known as Hindu, and its political beliefs are often called Hindu nationalism or Hindutva (Varshney, Ayyangar & Swaminathan, 2021).

India's history of colonialism and the fight for independence is a major factor in how right-wing populism has been built into Indian society. India's political and cultural institutions have changed a lot because of how the British ran the country when it was a colony. It has also contributed to a strong sense of nationalism and a desire to assert India's independence and sovereignty (Jalal, 2014). This nationalism has often been shown through a focus on Hindu cultural and religious values supporting the growth of Hindu nationalist movements and organizations (Shahzad, Falki, & Bill, 2021).

Another important factor is India's inequitable economic growth. This gives rise to societal imbalance and economic and political inequality within the country. People are becoming less happy with the political and economic systems as the technological revolution is thriving in the country. This has helped right-wing populist movements to thrive due to the fact that they have taken advantage of people's disappointment and tried to steer it in a more nationalistic and conservative direction. The existing jumpy relations between India and Pakistan are a product of longstanding grievances and changing dynamics in Indian policy (Jaffer, 2018). On the other hand, the Congress' rule capitalized on secular identity unlike the BJP tenure which largely focused on Hindutva identity and close association with Sangh Parivar i.e., RSS (Azam, 2022).

Also, the boom of social media and easier access to information and communication technologies has made it easier for right-wing populism to escalate in India (Chakravartty & Roy, 2015). These technologies have made it easy for anti-immigrant and anti-minority

feelings to spread quickly and engaged people to be interested in populist discourse and politics. In this scenario, leaders and groups of right-wing populism have been able to use social media to reach and organize large groups of people and disseminate their political ideas and messages (Govil & Baishya, 2018).

India's cultural and religious identity is also a big part of how right-wing populism is built up in society. India is a country with many different kinds of people and a complicated mix of religions and cultures. Hinduism, which is India's most popular religion, has a huge impact on the country's cultural and political institutions and has often been used to show that Hindu culture and values are the most important in India. Hindu nationalism has grown in India because people want to show that Hinduism is the best religion and culture and spread Hindu values and traditions in Indian society (Van der Veer, 1994).

Lastly, the political situation in India also plays a key role in intensifying right-wing populism. The country has a long history of political instability and divisions, and its political system has always been vulnerable. Right-wing populist movements are expanding because people are dissatisfied with the political establishment and demand change. In this situation, right-wing populist leaders have been able to use people's anger to spread their political ideas and messages to a large group of people who are interested in politics (Kinnvall, 2019).

When it comes to the political reality of right-wing populism in India, the media, political discourse, and social conditions have all played a major role. The media has been very important in spreading the message of right-wing populism and building a story around it (Kaviraj, 1986; Kaviraj, 2010). Political talk has also been an important factor, since right-wing populist leaders and parties use language and symbols and traditional media that resonate with their supporters and help to solidify their political identity and populist regime (Krämer, 2017).

Right-wing populism is getting worse in India due to globalization and the economic liberalization policies of the 1990s, among other things. The policies of economic liberalization made inequality worse, and a large part of the population felt left behind and left out. It has been argued that popular resentment is observed toward neoliberal policies grounded on the rights of minorities, poor and the migrants. It has also led to the creation of communities vulnerable to the racist slogans of the populist leaders (Putzel, 2020).

Right-wing populism has grown because people feel frustrated and left out and want to reclaim their sense of power and identity (Kumral, 2022). In India, right-wing populism has also had a big effect on the country's social and political life. The BJP and RSS's push for a Hindu nationalist agenda has made communal tensions worse. Minority groups, especially Muslims, are being discriminated against and left out (Jaffrelot, 2021). Concerns have been raised about the erosion of India's secular democracy, which is based on the idea that all citizens should be treated the same, no matter what their religion or culture is. This is because minority groups are being left out. The rise of right-wing populism has had effects on India's social and political life, as well as on its relationships with other countries. The Hindu nationalist agenda of the BJP and its focus on India's cultural superiority have made relations with other countries, especially Pakistan, worse. The party's strict stance on security and border issues has made the relationship between the two countries more hostile and tense (Jaffrelot, 2004).

Consequently, the rise of right-wing populism in India is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. A variety of political, economic and social factors influence it (Norris, 2020). Through the lens of social constructivism, it is possible to understand how the media, political discourse, and societal conditions have played a crucial role in constructing the political reality of right-wing populism in India. The rise of right-wing populism in India has had significant impacts on the country's social and political landscape, and it is important to critically examine the social construction of right-wing populism in India and its implications for the country's future (Wojczewski, 2020). It is also important to recognize that the rise of right-wing populism in India is not unique but part of a wider global trend. The growing popularity of right-wing populist movements in countries such as the United States, Europe, and Brazil highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the social and political factors that contribute to the rise of right-wing populism (Haynes, 2020).

So, if India wants to deal with the problems that right-wing populism brings, it needs to do a critical and nuanced analysis of the phenomenon. This requires an understanding of the historical, economic, and social factors that led to the rise of right-wing populism as well as an examination of how right-wing populism affects society and politics. By looking at how right-wing populism has been built up in India, we can learn more about the phenomenon and come up with ways to deal with its negative effects on society and democracy. The majoritarian communal politics crystallized around issues i.e., cow protection, rewriting of textbooks to align the literature with Hindutva ideology, forceful conversions among Muslims and Christians. Under the premiership of Modi, hate speech and communal violence against marginal segments have been proliferated (Flåten, 2016). Furthermore, the revocation of the special constitutional status in Kashmir would completely change the makeup of Muslim-majority population in Kashmir and manifests India's internal colonialism (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2021). The future of right-wing populism in India is still unclear and will depend a lot on how society, the economy, and the government change. But it is clear that the rise of right-wing populism in India is a major threat to the political stability and social harmony of the country. Thereby, its impacts will be felt for many years to come (Nielsen & Nilsen, 2021). To address this challenge, it will be indispensable to engage in a more honest, direct and candid discussion about the root causes of right-wing populism and explore ways to fortify greater social and political harmony and stability in India.

One of the key drivers of right-wing populism in India has been the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist political party that has been in power since 2014. Under Modi's regime, India has adopted belligerent posture towards Pakistan (Fakhar & Javed, 2021). This is especially true in the wake of terrorist attacks that have been blamed on militant groups based in Pakistan. For example, many people thought that the 2019 Balakot airstrikes, in which the Indian Air Force bombed a suspected militant training camp in Pakistan, were a response to a terrorist attack in India. Many people thought this attack was an attempt by the BJP government to divert attention from problems at home and rally its political base (Yusuf, 2019).

In India, the story of right-wing populism has also been told through anti-Muslim feelings and the implementation of policies that are unfair to Muslims. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which the Indian government passed in December 2019, is one such policy. The CAA gives non-Muslim immigrants from nearby countries a way to become citizens. However, it has been heavily criticized for being unfair to Muslims and for being part of a larger Hindu nationalist agenda. Consequently, it has adversely impacted the already frail India-Pakistan relations, as Pakistan has condemned the bigoted nature of the Act and found

it to be in violation of international human rights norms (Nagarwal, 2022; Safdar & Mushtaq, 2019).

4   Impacts of Right-wing Populism

The impacts of right-wing populism on India-Pakistan relations can also be seen in the way that the two countries have interacted in international forums such as the United Nations. Under the BJP government, India has taken a more confrontational stance toward Pakistan in these forums, using anti-Pakistan rhetoric to rally its political base and assert its position as a regional power. This has made it harder for India and Pakistan to work together on regional and global issues and has caused India-Pakistan relations to get worse.

The impacts of right-wing populism in India have been far-reaching and profound. Some of the most significant impacts include:

4.1   Polarization and Divisiveness

The growing right-wing populism in India has contributed to increased polarization and divisiveness in the country. This has amplified hostile and toxic political discourse and making it difficult for people of different backgrounds and perspectives to engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation. India's political parties have always used ethnic strife in their speeches, further spreading violence and intolerance between communities. Hindu nationalists have always made life hard for India's minorities, human rights groups, and civil society. Under the leadership of the BJP, the Hindutva ideology has gained a lot of power. In this atmosphere, Hindu low-caste communities face several obstacles For instance, acts like killing cows are usually blamed on Muslims and Dalits (Thapar, 2000).

4.2   Politics of Hatred towards Marginalized Segments

After Modi became the premiere, the BJP pushed bigotry and discriminatory treatment towards minorities especially Muslims (Hafeez, 2015). Identity politics led by Hindutva are employed in order to suppress the identity of Muslims. Muslims have been killed and treated badly because they had ruled Hindus in the past which also had ruined the Hindu culture. Moreover, the right-wing leaders in India have always viewed the Muslims with abhorrence due to the reason that Muslims led to split India into two countries (Jalal, 2014). Moreover, the rhetoric against Muslims and Pakistan was a big part of the 2019 elections. It helped Narendra Modi get more votes and made it clear what the BJP wanted to do. Minority communities in India's political arena have been marginalized after the BJP's 2014 triumph. Since India's inception, the Muslim community has lacked adequate legislative representation. During the 2019 elections, none of the BJP's members of parliament were Muslim (Maiorano, 2019).

4.3   Right-wing Politics

Right-wing populism has largely impacted the Indian politics. Several parties are courting Hindu nationalist votes after the BJP's triumph. India's political parties increasingly prioritize election wins. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi visited Hindu temples to win over Hindus, while minorities like Muslims are disregarded in India. It has been reported that all political parties fear endorsing individual liberty and opposing the BJP and Hindu Nationalists'

noxious agenda. Hindu voters struggled in the 2020 Delhi legislative assembly elections (Repucci, 2020). For instance, Arvind Kejriwal's moderate Hindu nationalist Aam Admi Party got most seats. The BJP attacked all its opponents with Hindutva rhetoric. Populist politics prevented the Indian National Congress and other major parties from opposing the BJP's anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan policies. Although opposing Pakistan, the INC has upheld secular and democratic ideas at home. The INC's leadership problem and Congress's lack of minority benefits made Muslims wary of the party. During the 2019 general elections, it supported anti-Pakistan policies to gain political support (Saleem, 2021).

4.4   Upsurge in Nationalist Sentiments

The rise of right-wing populism in India has been characterized by the growth of nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiments, fueled by the actions of right-wing populist leaders and political parties. Modi's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are anti-Muslims and aim to deprive Muslims of their fundamental rights in India by making them second-class citizens or non-citizens. Thus the repeal of Article 370 and the introduction of Citizenship Amendment Act manifest the nationalist sentiments (Nagarwal, 2022). Thus it is anticipated that nationalism driven by the Hindutva ideology is likely to nurture in India under the BJP administration. Religious chauvinism towards minorities is increasing in India under the current regime (Safdar & Mushtaq, 2019).

4.5   Degrading Social and Democratic Norms
The phenomenon of right-wing populism has also had damaging impacts on human rights and democratic culture in India. This includes restrictions on freedom of expression and association and assaults on civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Instead of secularism, plurality, and representative democracy, the BJP upholds Hindutva to rule India. Anti-Muslim actions, especially those targeting Muslims, may make it difficult for the state to maintain national harmony and democracy. India will increasingly split due to the BJP's regressive policies and right-wing populism, which have already raised tensions in the subcontinent (Siddiqui, 2016). Furthermore, the rise of right-wing populism in India has had negative impacts on education and cultural heritage in the country. This involves massive efforts to promote Hindu nationalist ideology in schools and universities. Furthermore, it also includes politically-backed attacks on religious minorities. Not only this, but it has also adversely impacted the media and information landscape in the country. The wave of right-wing populism is ruining the culture and true spirit of free media in India. Censorship and restrictions on media are exercised. Furthermore, increased efforts are made to promote Hindu nationalist propaganda and disinformation. For instance, since the Pulwama attack, the journalism has returned to jingoism. The jingoistic narrative predominantly took over the public discourse in India which further led to heighten tensions across the border. News anchors kept on beating about the war drums under the garb of nationalistic rhetoric (Prabhu, 2017).

4.6   Relations with Pakistan

The BJP's Hindu nationalist stance in India has strong connection in forming estranged relationships with neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. This has hindered efforts to improve economic and political cooperation in the region. This has rendered it difficult for both states to address common challenges and threats in the region. Therefore, the rise of

right-wing populism in India has had a significant impact on India-Pakistan relations, contributing to a more hostile and confrontational relationship between the two countries. The aggressive foreign policy stance of the BJP government, combined with anti-Muslim sentiment and discriminatory policies, has created a challenging environment for regional stability and cooperation. It is important for policymakers and stakeholders to monitor the development of this trend and work towards promoting greater understanding and cooperation between India and Pakistan. The Prime Minister Modi has signed trade agreements with the Muslim countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries (Hall, 2016). This reflects the pragmatic approach of the populist government to strengthen its ties in all directions. However, in the case of Pakistan ideational factors come into play. Normalization of ties with Pakistan does not align with the politics of Hindutva.

4.7   Escalating Tensions in the Region

Hindutva ideology and right-wing populist policies are a big problem for Pakistan, Muslims, and the stability of the region as a whole. The forceful Hindu nationalist turn has enflamed tensions within India, which has further soured the relationship with Pakistan. Modi's rigid approach towards Pakistan irks the India-Pakistan relations. This can be seen in the form of intensified border clashes, virulent anti-Muslim rhetoric, and a growing sense of distrust between the two nations. Even a minor miscalculation on the part of India can endanger the peace and stability of the South Asia. However, the bilateral tensions can be resolved by having dialogue and sincere will to work together (Khan & Cheema, 2017). The repercussions of Pakistan's right-wing Hindutva-dominated neighbors could be catastrophic for Pakistan and the region, especially given that both countries are nuclear powers.

4.8   Challenges to Existing Institutions

Populism in India also challenges existing norms and institutions that have long been a part of the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. This can result in the weakening of existing frameworks for cooperation, such as regional organizations and the rise of new and more hostile norms. It is unfortunate that the regional institute like SAARC has been so far ineffective in realization of its objectives and promises. For instance, the deadliest cyclone in Bangladesh was not effectively managed by the SAARC Food Security Reserve. Its progress has been stalled due to the impending regional conflicts. The reasons for hindered progress of SAARC in South Asia are several; nonetheless, India-Pakistan enmity and confrontational politics of right-wing politicians in India are crucial to make this institution ineffective. Regional cooperation and economic connectivity are still far-fetched dreams in the South Asian region (Rafiq, 2018).

4.9   Centralized and Individualized Decision-making

Under Modi, foreign policy drafting has also been transformed. In essence, Modi's centralization of policymaking, which has been widely recognized as a defining aspect of his stint as Gujarat's chief minister, continues to be one of his most notable traits and stands in stark contrast to his predecessors (Kaltwasser, Taggart, Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is bypassed by Modi's National Security Advisor (NSA). Although Vajpayee, a former Prime Minister, founded the NSA and helped consolidate power in the PM's office, Jaswant Singh, his Minister of External Affairs, remained

important. The MEA has had to deal with learning about the Prime Minister's foreign trips after the fact since Modi took office. Significant trips are often made without consulting the MEA and declared through alternative channels, and Modi has made it a habit to personally welcome visiting dignitaries, which is time-consuming but reflects his unique leadership style (Haidar, 2016). However, India shows how personalization can strengthen populist government control. Nehruvian ideas have shaped international relations since 1947 (Hall, 2016). They have been changed due to Modi's populist foreign policy narrative, which is more about rhetoric than policy (Wojczewski, 2018). Clearly, the disintegration of the MEA, a respected body with historically powerful individuals determining foreign policy, supports the idea of centralized and individualized policymaking.

4.10 Alternative Communication Channels

The Modi administration's use of social media and distaste for, if not outright censoring, traditional media like newspapers and TV may be its most intriguing aspects. Modi has been unusually keen to exploit modern technologies, from his Twitter account to his 3D holographic election pictures. This has transformed his leadership image, making him appear more modern and tech-savvy than his predecessors and his opponents (Pal & Media, 2015). Modi's government has taken a hostile stance towards media and has been taking steps to curb the freedom of press. After calling journalists "news merchants," a cabinet member coined "presstitutes" (Swain, 2017). His campaign used 3D holographic visuals and digital networking instead of traditional media. Modi hasn't given a news conference since becoming India's prime minister, instead ranting on radio about his latest projects. Modi often discusses Pakistan on social media and at rallies, defying diplomatic norms. It was crucial to his image as a populist leader who engages with the public rather than making policies behind closed doors.

4.11 Undermining Regional Cooperation and Stability

The right-wing politics in India may have detrimental implications for regional integration and peaceful coexistence in South Asia. It is owing to the fact that populist politicians adhere to radical and aggressive policies and postures. Therefore, the populist leaders in India have been flexing their muscles by showing conventional force and an aggressive posture towards Pakistan. The surge of right-wing populism in India and its impacts on India-Pakistan relations have the potential to undermine regional cooperation and stability. This can be seen in the form of decreasing cross-border trade, declining cultural exchange, and a meager willingness to engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes and promote stability in the region (Plagemann, & Destradi, 2019).

4.12 Economic and Political Instability

The burgeoning right-wing populism in India has adversely impacted the economic and political stability of the country. Consequently, it hampered the investment and economic growth of the country. This has also led to an unpredictable and precarious political environment. On the economic front no major breakthrough has been made. Frequent suspension of trade has been observed during the past decades due to cross-border tensions. For instance, the trade between India and Pakistan was estimated to be meagre USD 2.6 billion in 2015-16 (Ijaz, 2016). It has been suggested that the trade ties between India and

Pakistan have ben turbulent owing to political and security contentions. However, the potential for trade between the two countries is greater than what is presently traded. The reasons for low trade volume between the two countries is due to bureaucratic, managerial and transportation problems (Zaidi, Aslam & Ghaffar, 2017).

4.13 Impact on Public Opinion

Right-wing populism may also influence public opinion in India, as right-wing populist narratives and discourses may shape the attitudes and perceptions of the Indian public towards Pakistan. There has been a growing sentiment among the Indian public that Pakistan is a major security threat and India must take a more aggressive stance towards its neighbor. The media and political figures have fueled this sentiment by using anti-Pakistan rhetoric to energize their support base (Jaffrelot, 2015).This shift in public opinion has made it more difficult for the two countries to engage in meaningful dialogue. The lack of trust between the two sides and the limited channels of communication between them has made the situation even worse. This has created a vicious cycle of hostility and mistrust that has been difficult to break.

5   Improving Pakistan-India Relations

In light of these events, it is important for policymakers and other interested parties to work toward making India and Pakistan understand each other better and work together more. This could involve several different approaches, including:

5.1   Encouraging Dialogue and Engagement between the Two Sides

It involves providing greater support for official and unofficial channels of communication as well as promoting greater interaction between India and Pakistan at the cultural, academic, and societal levels. It involves supporting civil society initiatives that aim to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the two countries, as well as, initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict between them (Bornstein et al., 2015).

5.2   Engagement in Multi-track Diplomacy

Sustainable peace can be achieved by engaging in multi-track diplomacy. Multi-track diplomacy highlights the role that civil society can play in addressing the prolonged conflicts between the two countries. Multiple stakeholders must put forth their efforts and take part to create lasting security since each actor has special knowledge and abilities to offer. Lawmakers, top generals, ambassadors, experts in conflict management, academics, corporate executives, women's rights groups, writers, and social activists are just a few examples of these actors (Sewak, 2005). Multiple stakeholders can play an important role in promoting healthy relations and underscoring the necessity of cooperation, collaboration, and interaction between the two states. Multi-track diplomacy is created as an alternative approach to resolving conflict in response to the constraints of Track-I diplomacy and the rationalist approach (Böhmelt, 2010; Tere, 2014).

5.3   People-to-people Contacts

People-to-people exchange refers to interactions between citizens of two nations at multiple levels with no involvement from or direction from the government. These relationships could be made by professional organizations like bar councils, business chambers and unions, industrialist associations, academic institutions, performers, musicians, film celebrities, athletes, etc. These social interactions influence the formation of opinions and the fostering of relationships. Even the unrestricted interchange of literature, periodicals, newspapers, and television shows would fall under this category. The constructivist's perspective reinforces that states perceive and comprehend one another based on socially constructed ideas and conceptions, and only free interactions among people can help change these perceptions. Before the situation worsens to the point where even communication between people on either side of the border is difficult, people-to-people contacts are a channel that has to be explored. However, people to people contacts on both sides are constrained due to the demanding visa/enry policies (Padder, 2012). Religious tourism could be an effective channel of engagement between the citizens of the two states. Kartarpur Corridor was such an initiative by Pakistan to increase people-to-people engagement (Yousaf, 2021).

5.4   Highlighting Common Social Norms

The academic textbooks used in elementary and secondary schools play a significant role in shaping social norms and identity. Governments in both India and Pakistan influence the curricula and production of history textbooks for both elementary school and higher education. The updated curriculum introduced by the BJP government is based on Hindu nationalism and aimed at transmitting Hindutva views (Flåten, L. T. (2016); Guichard, 2010). We may better comprehend the socially constructed character of the relations between the two states if we can explain these new norms and how they are ingrained in academic activities. Muslims in the Indian curriculum and cinema are represented as fundamentalists (Roy, 2018). Thus, to stabilize the situation, positive social norms need to be inculcated in the minds of young generations in both countries.

5.5   Encouraging a Constructive and Cooperative Foreign Policy

This could involve encouraging the Indian government to take a more constructive and cooperative stance towards Pakistan and engage in a meaningful dialogue with its neighbor. It also requires encouraging the international community to play a more active role in promoting regional stability and cooperation. Not only this, but earnest efforts are also much needed to address the political, social, and security challenges that both countries face. However, the international community remains silent on the issues related to India and Pakistan such as the gross violation of human rights in Kashmir by India. Global powers can play constructive role in the troubled region of South Asia if they want to (Bhandari, 2006).

6   Conclusion

In conclusion, the rise of right-wing populism in India has had a big effect on India-Pakistan relations. It has made the relationship between the two countries more hostile and tense. Even though the situation is difficult, there is a chance to work toward better understanding and cooperation between India and Pakistan and to deal with the problems that have led to the conflict between the two countries. By working together, policymakers and other interested

parties can help promote stability and security in the region and help South Asia become more peaceful and cooperative. So, to deal with the effects of right-wing populism on India-Pakistan relations in an effective way, it is important to understand the bigger picture in which these events are happening. The rise of right-wing populism in India is part of a global trend, with similar developments taking place in many other countries around the world. It is said that this trend is often marked by a rejection of globalization, a focus on nationalism and "identity politics," and a lack of trust in traditional political and economic institutions (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

In the Indian context, the rise of right-wing populism is also linked to broader economic and social changes taking place in the country. India is going through a time of fast economic growth and modernization, but these changes have also led to more inequality, more poverty, and a drop in the quality of life for many people. This has made many parts of the Indian population unhappy and frustrated, which right-wing populist politicians have used to their advantage (Jaffrelot, 2021). Right-wing populism in India is also connected to the country's history, culture, and political situation. India has a long and complex history of conflict and cooperation with Pakistan, and this history has shaped the way that people on both sides view each other and the relationship between the two countries. So, the rise of right-wing populism in India has been shaped by the country's history, culture, and the specific political and economic changes that are happening there. To deal with this effect effectively, it's important to take a broad, multi-disciplinary approach that takes into account the bigger picture in which these changes are happening. This could involve supporting research and analysis, promoting greater civil society engagement, and supporting efforts to promote regional stability and cooperation.

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