Patriot games at Attari-Wagah

What is the issue?

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The retreat ceremony at the Attari-Wagah border today is more of a display of mutual hostility than peace.

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What is the retreat ceremony?

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- Attari-Wagah is a recognized international border in Punjab that lies very close to Amritsar in India & Lahore in Pakistan.
- It is part of the 'Grant Trunk road' stretch that runs from Kolkata to Peshawar.
- The evening flags ceremony at the Wagah border is a daily military practice that the security forces of India and Pakistan have jointly followed since 1959.
- The practice began as a goodwill gesture to symbolise co-operating & co-ordination between the nations.
- Over the years, the display of respective nationalisms attained prominence and gestures have become far more aggressive, dramatic and hateful.
- Post 1999, after Kargil, both sides have constructed pavilions that facilitated accommodating a large audience.
- The spectators too usually join in the rhetoric through sloganeering and other modes of jingoistic patriotic display.

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How has the commerce influenced patriotism?

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- Over the years, business at border ceremony flourished flashing their tri-coloured advertisements and selling patriotic memorabilia.
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- Frequent presence of celebrities and Bollywood music has added a completely new dimension to the craze.
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- The telecast of the event in close angles has added fuel to more intense symbolism.
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Why should we give up aggression?

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- It’s time to wind down the choreographed hostility at the India-Pakistan border as these posturing displays a deep ill will for the other.
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- At present time, it looks less like a celebration and more about insulting the other.
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- Although in 2010, both nations agreed to reduce aggressive gestures but things haven’t changed on ground.
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Source: The Hindu

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