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Indian Cold Start Doctrine and an Indo-Pak Path to Peace

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Abstract

South Asia is a pivotal region of over 1.5 billion people where the risk of nuclear war may be increasing. After three previous conventional wars, the nuclear armament of both Pakistan and India has served to deter conflict; but also brought about a shift in strategies. In an effort to overcome the current standoff, India has continued to invest billions of dollars to increase its conventional forces, searched for ways in which to capitalize on its conventional military advantage, and circumvent possible Pakistani nuclear response. India's adoption of the so-called Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) or Pro-Active Strategy is designed to exploit India's conventional advantage and preclude possible Pakistani first use. The adoption and possible implementation of CSD portends increased regional tension and possible disastrous consequences. CSD presupposes a wide range of spurious assumptions regarding international, domestic and Pakistani reactions. Similar to the German Schlieffen Plan, Indian strategists have settled on what assumptions they need to make their conventional forces relevant vice what they actually expect to occur. This paper examines the regional context, assesses the factors influencing the adoption of CSD, postulates the possible implications of the strategy on regional security and offers a plausible way forward for regional stability.

Indian Cold Start Doctrine and an Indo-Pak Path to Peace

South Asia is a large landmass comprising eight countries housing almost 1.7 billion people. Geographically, this region is situated adjacent to an important sea line of communication which is vital for a large portion of world trade from the countries located in South East Asia to the rest of Asia, Africa and Europe. The region abuts both China and Central Asia, with both localities obtaining access to the Indian Ocean via Afghanistan, Iran and/or Pakistan.¹ Significant economic growth and development of South Asian countries along with a burgeoning middle class, further add to the importance of this region. Notwithstanding the economic opportunities, the presence of two antagonistic nuclear powers in the region make it a “nuclear flashpoint” where an incident could escalate into a nuclear war.² Clearly, a nuclear conflict in South Asia would have profound consequences for both the region and the world and thus requires the focused attention of the many regional and global stakeholders to limit its possibility.

India’s adoption of Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) poses new threats and challenges to regional stability and security. India adopted CSD consequent to the military stand-off between India and Pakistan during 2001-2002.³ The “doctrine” is designed as a way for India to use their considerable conventional forces in a limited war to punish perceived Pakistani provocations; ostensibly without exceeding Pakistan’s nuclear employment threshold. Very generally, the doctrine specifies a short-notice, cross-border attack conducted across a broad front by multiple divisions to seize and retain shallow/limited objectives within Pakistan. Cold Start Doctrine pre-supposes that the rapidity of the attacks and the proximity of Pakistan’s own populace and forces would preclude a Pakistani nuclear response and that major combat operations would be concluded

before international diplomatic or even India's internal domestic political opposition could intervene to preclude operations.

India's commitment to CSD has become a focal point for military force modernization efforts, force stationing and operational planning. While doctrine and operational planning are designed to be the "ways" in which the strategic "ends" are achieved, over-reliance on doctrine/plans can establish "military routines" that can actually dictate strategic actions that lead to war.⁴ In this regards, the German *Schlieffen Plan* executed during World War I is an apt illustration of a "plan" becoming the "goal" or "end" instead of the "way" to achieve strategic objectives. As India continues to evolve its military strategy in an effort to retain the relevancy of its massive military conventional forces to coerce its adversaries, it is important that all actors understand the consequences of relying on high-risk assumptions, especially where they relate to nuclear war.

This paper provides an overview of the South Asia Region; focuses on Indo-Pak relations; examines India's adoption of CSD and its roll, efficacy and comparison with the *Schlieffen Plan*; and then concludes with a way forward for achieving a durable peace between Pakistan and India.

Regional Overview

South Asia remained important throughout history due to its geo-strategic location. The South Asian landmass has served as a thoroughfare for travelers and trade caravans travelling between Central Asia, Europe and Africa to the rest of Asia. According to the 2016 World Bank Annual Report, South Asia's 7% growth rate is the

fastest growing regional economy in the world.⁵ Additionally, a significant portion of the world's economic activity is directly or indirectly linked with this region.

Due to its geo-strategic location, South Asia has been the focal point of interest and conflict. Of note, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent Global War on Terror occurred or had roots in this region. World powers continue to compete in South Asia for resources, access and influence as evidenced by the Chinese One Belt-One Road and String-of-Pearls Strategies along with the United States (US) own 'Pivot to the Asia-Pacific' Strategy.⁶ Moreover, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, linking western China to the Indian Ocean/Arabian Sea through Pakistan, is another initiative shaping the South Asia economic landscape.

Perhaps the most important development for the stability of the region is the on-going India-Pakistan dialectic and the resultant nuclear armament of both India and Pakistan in 1998. The initial contentious partition of India and Pakistan and the continuing territorial disputes (focused on Kashmir) has led to three wars and enumerable cross-border incidents. The on-going dispute has made their nuclear armament even more perilous.⁷ The risk of escalation is a constant and imminent threat to both regional stability and prosperity. India-Pakistan cross-border incidents, co-allegations and surreptitious operations continue. India points to the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, Mumbai attacks of 2008, and the Pathankot and Uri attacks of 2016. Likewise, Pakistan asserts India's previous involvement in the East Pakistan secession, India's links to the unrest in the country's economic hub of Karachi, India's alleged role in terrorist activities in Pakistan's largest province of Baluchistan, and India's connection with the restive Federally Administered Tribal Areas.⁸ Pakistan is also

concerned with growing Indian influence in Afghanistan and the purported use of Afghan territory by India for fomenting unrest in adjoining areas of Pakistan.⁹ All these issues directly or indirectly influence the risk and threshold for war between the two nuclear neighbors, as a single incident can both reverse any progress towards peace and spiral into an escalating conflict.¹⁰ The nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan have brought about a dramatic change in how security is measured in South Asia. Clearly, the consequences of conflict have grown and the increased risk makes nearly every incident significant.¹¹

Evolution of India-Pakistan Relationship and Events Leading to Adoption of CSD

So how has South Asia arrived at such a dangerous and potentially volatile dialectic? Following the contentious partition of British India into the mostly Hindu state of India and Muslim state of Pakistan, disputes continued to plague the newly formed states that continue to this day. Arguably the most contentious is the dispute over Kashmir that resulted in the 1948 Kashmir War. The dispute remains unresolved with the Cease Fire Line of 1948 dividing the Indian occupied Kashmir from the Pakistan administered territory of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Importantly, violence in Kashmir continues with Kashmiri insurgents opposing the Indian military and with allegations of Pakistani support to the insurgents and alleged Indian abuses of Kashmir civilians.

In September 1965, Pakistan and India once again confronted each other on the Kashmir Issue. This was the second major conflict between the two South Asian neighbors since their independence. The 1965 Indo-Pak War escalated from a number of border skirmishes which took place between April and September 1965. It was a seventeen-day long war which finally ended after signing a mutual agreement by the

two adversaries at Tashkent (Uzbekistan): popularly known as Tashkent Agreement.¹² Characteristically, both the States declared victory at the end of the War.

The subsequent 1971 War is more significant owing to the fact that it led to the secession of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh.¹³ There were palpable political, economic and social differences between the East and West Wings of Pakistan which resulted in wide scale civil unrest in East Pakistan. India took the unrest as an opportunity and started raising and supporting Bengali armed insurgents.¹⁴ Thus, India played a key role in fueling and exploiting the civil war inside Pakistan. On December 3, 1971, this insurgency turned into a full scale war between the two countries when India attacked Pakistan. The war resulted in a large number of casualties and the eventual creation of the independent country of Bangladesh on December 16, 1971.

Experience in fighting Pakistan in the previous wars led India into developing a new doctrinal approach. The so called *Sunderji Doctrine* was based upon the German concept of Blitzkrieg; only it was customized for the Indian Army. Correspondingly, the Indian Army underwent a massive reorganization in the 1980s under their Chief of Army Staff, General Krishnaswamy Sundararajan Sunderji.¹⁵ He organized the Indian Army into seven Defensive and three Strike Corps. The strategy required the defensive Corps to halt the expected Pakistan offensive followed by deep penetrations into Pakistan by the three strike Corps to destroy Pakistan's forces in a high intensity battle.¹⁶

Immediately after 9/11, Pakistan joined the Global War on Terrorism and launched operations against Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations on its western borders. This resulted in major relocation of Pakistani forces from the eastern border with India and Kashmir to the western borders with Afghanistan. However, in the

aftermath of December 13, 2001 terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament, India launched Operation Parakram, which was the largest mobilization of Indian Army since the War in 1971.¹⁷ This operation revealed several weaknesses of *Sunderji Doctrine* as India's mechanized forces took almost three weeks to reach the Indo-Pak borders. It thus gave sufficient time for the Pakistan Army to mobilize and prepare their forces and also allowed the international community a chance to diplomatically intervene to prevent armed conflict. Moreover, with the possible consequence of a Pakistan nuclear response, the threat of a major Indian attack into Pakistan lacked credibility. In most respects, the *Sunderji Doctrine* had failed.

Both Operation Parakram and the Indian Army was widely criticized. The operation resulted in a ten-month standoff between the two neighbors at a cost of almost \$2 billion for India.¹⁸ The former Indian Chief of Army Staff, Shankar Roy Choudhry, called the mass mobilization a "pointless gesture" while journalist Praveen Swami denounced Operation Parakram as "arguably the most ill-conceived maneuver in Indian military history," which "ended as an ignominious retreat after having failed to secure even its minimum objectives."¹⁹

Operation Parakram surfaced several *Sunderji Doctrine* strategic flaws. It created the perceived need for India to re-shape the strategy so as to enable the conduct a limited campaign designed to punish Pakistan for perceived provocations without triggering a Pakistani nuclear response. Also, it surfaced the need for the Indian armed forces to rapidly achieve its military objectives before the international community, or even India's political leadership, could act to preclude or suspend operations.

Objectives of Adopting Cold Start Doctrine

The new strategy was designed to accommodate numerous strategic and operational requirements. The most imminent requirement was to re-establish the relevancy of India's conventional forces following the fruitless Operation Parakram.

The Indian army is a very large force of 1.325 million active soldiers and also possesses 2.14 million additional personnel in the reserve component.²⁰ The Indian defense budget has gradually risen to a massive \$50 billion, which is fourth place worldwide and surpasses Russia.²¹ Faced with questions of relevancy following 'Operation Parakram', the Indian military was compelled to develop a new strategy that would justify both the continued investment in the Indian military and also provide a means to coerce Pakistan while not exceeding Pakistan's nuclear employment threshold.

The Indian Chief of Army Staff unveiled CSD in April 2004, however, no definitive aspects of the concept have been officially announced by the Indian Army. Nevertheless, defining elements of the doctrine have surfaced through a variety of sources.²² Generally, India intends to employ most of its conventional forces in an envisaged short-duration (7 to 10-day) war to achieve limited objectives.²³ CSD postulates a short, swift and intense battle by launching an offensive within 48 hours of notification and employing widely dispersed Division-size Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) attacking across a broad front to seize limited/shallow objectives within Pakistan's territory.²⁴ Positioned behind the IBGs are three strike corps arrayed as a Theater Force Reserve to be launched to either exploit IBG gains or as a contingency force to counter Pakistani responses. The psychological dislocation of defending Pakistani forces is to be achieved through a combination of strategic surprise and the

massive attack across a broad front. Through a strategic analysis of the CSD tenets and related secondary source documents, the following appear to be the aims/objectives of the strategy:

- Provide a viable military option to resolve Pakistani-Indian impasses and punish any perceived Pakistan provocations.²⁵
- Enable India's swift and timely mobilization to counter the comparatively short mobilization advantage of the Pakistan Army.²⁶
- Preempt both the international community's and India's internal political opposition ability to intervene.²⁷
- Preclude Pakistan's nuclear response through the rapidity of the attack, the seizure of only limited objectives, and with the threat of India's ability to inflict additional and unacceptable consequences on Pakistan.²⁸
- Seize objectives that only degrade Pakistan's military and economic capabilities (staying well below Pakistan's nuclear response threshold) but still enable favorable post-conflict concessions for India.²⁹
- Pose a clear and present conventional threat to Pakistan that will deter and limit any future Pakistani provocations or aggressive behavior.³⁰
- Re-establish the relevancy and justify the future investment in India's conventional forces.³¹

CSD - Adoption Measures Taken by India

After the adoption of CSD, India embarked upon a campaign to organize, equip, station forces, and allocate resources to enable its implementation. India is now one of the largest buyers of defense equipment and has increased its efforts to modernize its forces.³² The Indian defense modernization plan, termed the Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan, covers the period up to 2027.³³ Since 2008, India has purchased defense equipment worth \$34 billion and climbed to be the developing world's second largest purchaser of arms behind Saudi Arabia.³⁴

Importantly, the plan includes an aggressive modernization program for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Lieutenant General J.P. Singh (retired), former deputy chief of the army staff, succinctly summarizes the Army's modernization objectives:

The critical capabilities that are being enhanced to meet challenges across the spectrum include battlefield transparency, battlefield management systems, night-fighting capability, enhanced firepower, including terminally guided munitions, integrated maneuver capability to include self-propelled artillery, quick reaction surface-to-air missiles, the latest assault engineer equipment, tactical control systems, integral combat aviation support and network centrality.³⁵

Role of Planning and Doctrine; Unintended Consequences of Adherence to Plans

In an insightful paper about the unintended consequences of war planning, Jack S. Levy examines the role of what he terms 'military organizational routines' as a major contributor in the outbreak of war. Levy proposes that military routines and related dependencies of military doctrine and war plans can actually influence the outbreak of war.³⁶ Levy uses World War I mobilization plans, and particularly Germany's adherence to the *Schlieffen Plan*, as an illustrative example of how rote conformance to plans can disproportionately influence strategic decision-making.³⁷ Levi performs a detailed study of organizational routines, the rigidity of military plans and examines different variables leading to the outbreak and escalation of war.³⁸ He concludes that the inflexible implementation of an existing plan acts as the key intervening variable between the military plan and the decision for war.³⁹ Levy further elaborates that inflexible implementation is liable to increase the likelihood of war when it requires an early mobilization that results in an irreversible action-reaction cycle.⁴⁰

Levi goes on to warn that related inflexible planning requirements can limit a decision-maker's ability to seek alternative options that are inconsistent with the

provisions of the plan and may cause the entire plan to fail.⁴¹ Furthermore, Levy argues that seldom do these organizational routines act alone.⁴² Rather they work “in complex combination with other systemic, organizational, bureaucratic and other physiological variables.”⁴³ Importantly, Levy generalizes his analysis to plans characteristic of CSD arguing that the relationship between routines and the cause of war is not limited to WWI or even those wars requiring immediate decisions on military mobilization and transport, but rather it has “enormous importance for national policy and crisis stability in the contemporary age” and is particularly relevant to their influence “on the command and control of nuclear forces” that “share much in common with the institutional arrangements of 1914.”⁴⁴ He concludes that “one undeniable difference between the World War of 1914 and the contemporary age is that the potential consequences for mankind are far greater today.”⁴⁵ Perhaps there is no greater example of a looming threat to South Asia than India’s adoption of CSD.

Assessment of Cold Start Doctrine

Like the *Schlieffen Plan*, Cold Start Doctrine is also based on several high risk assumptions. Generally, these assumptions presuppose unlikely Pakistani, global, and Indian military and political actions. Some of the key assumptions and related assessments include:

Assumption 1

Pakistan has an ambiguous yet discernable threshold governing its “first use” of nuclear weapons.

Reality

Existing animosity associated with the contentious partition of India and historic enmity fueled by religious-political demagogues on both sides make it extremely difficult for either government to tolerate even a small embarrassment or tactical failure. The heightened passions and domestic rhetoric fomented by the media also contribute to a volatile atmosphere demanding both an immediate response to perceived provocations and widely publicized retribution. Thus, an escalated response often becomes a political imperative rather than an option. In this highly charged and explosive atmosphere, predicting either Nations' nuclear threshold is dangerous. It is highly unlikely that Pakistan could tolerate an operational defeat resulting in the forceful occupation of Pakistan's territory without resorting to "all means available."⁴⁶

Assumption 2

Indian military strategists assume operational success and the ability to control escalation. Victory is assumed from India's postulated unimpeded initiation of hostilities, to the rapid seizure of limited objectives, and the cessation of hostilities with a cease fire agreement that would be favorable to India.

Reality

Pakistan has a capable Army and one that will be resolute in the defense of its own territory. It is just as probable that Indian forces are initially delayed and/or repelled thus widening the conflict in duration, space and scope. India has superiority in conventional forces, however, Pakistan will have the strength of prepared defenses. Pakistan also retains conventional offensive capabilities that could threaten the IBGs and compel India to expand the scope of the conflict.

Assumption 3

India's IBGs attacks will achieve surprise enabling rapid seizure of limited objectives inside Pakistan's borders.

Reality

The close and intimate proximity of India's and Pakistan's opposing border forces make covert action extremely difficult. Pakistan and India share 1,800 miles (2,900 km) of border; however, the border is heavily guarded and illuminated during darkness by around 150,000 flood lights installed on about 50 thousand poles on India's side alone. Additionally, both countries have established a number of new cantonments close to the border to reduce mobilization and movement time. These close-in cantonments are closely monitored making combat preparations and covert movement of major forces unlikely.⁴⁷

Assumption 4

International diplomatic intervention efforts are assumed to be late or muted thus permitting India's limited operations to be completed.

Reality

Global diplomatic responses in a highly complex and dynamic strategic environment are difficult to predict or control. Also, many stakeholders (China, Russia, US, etc.) have sophisticated intelligence capabilities able to discern India's intentions well before the initiation of hostilities. Additionally, many of these stakeholders have significant economic and military investments in the region so even a remote possibility of a regional nuclear war would likely cause powerful stakeholders to aggressively move to prevent or stop operations before they begin.⁴⁸

Driven by the need to correct the deficiencies surfaced by Operation Parakram, India's adoption of CSD has grown to be an 'end' in-and-of-itself rather than a "way" to achieve an "end." Like the *Schlieffen Plan*, the effects of fog, friction and chance in war appear to have at least been marginalized. Also, CSD postulates decentralized offensive operations conducted by small division size IBGs attacking across a broad front. The resulting IBG battles are almost certain to devolve into small unit fights with the corresponding loss of communications and inaccurate reporting. These conditions will further exacerbate command and control, preclude accurate situational awareness and confound decision-making. Within the Indo-Pak nuclear dialectic, the consequences could be severe; and are not without precedence in South-Asia.

In a much less stressful and with even more comparative transparency, misinterpretations have previously brought India and Pakistan to the brink of major conflict. During the 2001 stand-off immediately following the attacks on the Indian Parliament, India amassed over one million forces close to India-Pakistan border. During the crisis, there emerged an undeclared line which, if any Indian Strike Corps crossed, Pakistan would initiate a military response that would trigger the war. The world community in general, and the US in particular, were wary of the fact that even a small miscalculation could lead to war. Consequently, the situation was closely monitored by US satellites. During the course of the deployment, India's 2nd Strike Corps in Rajasthan moved beyond the line and was detected by US satellites. Before Pakistan initiated a response, the US intervened and India was told to pull back the corps. India immediately complied and the Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Kapil Vij, was later sacked by then Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpai.⁴⁹ This inadvertent

mistake, or possible exercise of initiative, by a local military commander could have easily triggered a catastrophic war. The current disposition of forces coupled with India's subsequent adoption of an overtly aggressive CSD strategy portends an even greater danger of miscalculation.

Like the *Schlieffen Plan*, CSD is also politically disadvantageous as it limits opportunities for resolution of disputes "by other means" and restricts opportunities for the international community to resolve the issue diplomatically. It not only excludes but intends to preempt the time for diplomatic efforts. Indian military leaders appear to deliberately circumvent the influence of India's political leadership thus obviating an important internal check-and-balance instrument that could question or forestall a strategic blunder. Descriptively, Kate Forsyth terms war as an "unpredictable beast" and Robert Gates recalls his experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan war as, "If Iraq and Afghanistan have taught us anything in recent history, it is the unpredictability of war and that these things are easier to get into than to get out of, and, frankly, the facile way in which too many people talk about, 'Well, let's just go attack them.'"⁵⁰

Consistent with the Indo-Pak dialectic, Pakistan has also prepared a response to counter India's CSD both at the operational and strategic levels. At the operational level, Pakistan has introduced its "New Concept of War Fighting" which has been validated through a series of war games. Like India, Pakistan's new operational concept has resulted in doctrinal, organizational and force disposition changes. At the strategic level, Pakistan has developed low yield nuclear weapons which is a sub-KT weapon with around a 60 km range.⁵¹ Tactical nuclear weapons comprise an important part of

Pakistan's deterrence capability that helps to dissuade India from exploiting its conventional force advantage.

Notwithstanding the above developments, strategic and operational moves and counter-moves continue on both sides. India appears to be transitioning to yet another doctrine known as Modi-Doval Doctrine. The doctrine is still under development and its true features are not yet discernable at the operational level. However, some sources indicate that the new doctrine has three components:

- (1) diplomatic offensive to isolate Pakistan;
- (2) fomenting anti-Pakistan elements to carry out covert operations to internally destabilize Pakistan; and⁵²
- (3) simultaneously creating a threat along the Line of Control (LOC) and Pak-Afghan border creating a two-front threat to Pakistan's national security.⁵³

Significantly, the new Indian Chief of Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat, recently acknowledged Cold Start Doctrine, and at least indicated its continued relevance for Indian war planning by stating in an interview with *India Today* that "Cold Start doctrine exists for conventional military operations."⁵⁴

In the meantime, tensions continue. In 2016, the number of LOC cross-border firings increased. Pakistan reported a total of 379 cease fire violations by India resulting in the death of 46 Pakistani civilians and 40 Indian soldiers.⁵⁵ With China as a regional competitor and historic adversary, India is concerned with the ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which has brought in over \$55 billion in Chinese investments to Pakistan.⁵⁶ Also Pakistan suspects that one of the unannounced objectives of India's new doctrine is to target and derail this project which could further aggravate regional instability.⁵⁷ The threat to regional stability is clear.

George Perkovich and Toby Dalton in their recent book “Not War, Not Peace?” describe Indian proposed conventional military operations against Pakistan as extremely risky.⁵⁸ None of India’s most likely options, i.e., army centric, air-centric, covert, and nuclear could confidently achieve the desired change in Pakistani behavior with acceptable risks to India.⁵⁹ While describing the uniqueness of the Indo-Pak relationship, they note that:

The complexity and difficulty of the Indo-Pak security relations is unprecedented in the nuclear age. Unlike any other nuclear-armed antagonists, India and Pakistan directly border each other, have unresolved territorial disputes (Kashmir and Sir Creek), and have engaged in armed conflict four times, not to mention multiple other militarized crises. Furthermore, terrorism poses an instigating threat of future conflict, creating a spectrum of potential escalation that runs from sub-conventional operations to conventional war to nuclear exchanges.⁶⁰

Based upon the previous analyses, Indian leadership will likely have to face significant challenges if implementing the tenets of CSD. These include: establishing restrictive political and military objectives and preventing their expansion or mission creep; controlling responses driven and distorted by fog, friction, and fear/emotion; anticipating and managing the miscommunication of hyper-adversarial Indian civil-military interactions; adjusting to the potential careless exercise of initiative by commanders at the operational and tactical levels; and coping with the tyranny of the ‘close proximity’ of the adversaries that limits the time and collapses the ‘decision space’ necessary to avert escalation. Taken together, these challenges portend a severe set of likely unintended consequences of CSD.

Opportunities for Rapprochement

If there is a realization from both sides that peace is the best way forward; peace will come. Unfortunately, despite many common interests and relatively recent historic

origins, the Pakistan-India relationship has continued to fester almost too irrational proportions. Contributing to the discord are religious-political factions within both countries, and even the region, whose relevance and influence depends on the continuation of the conflict. These negative influences must also be overcome. Perhaps the conditions and potential consequences described above, when juxtaposed with emerging opportunities, can spur progress towards peace. Likewise, there may be an emerging but transitory “window-of-opportunity” for India and Pakistan to exploit the current favorable strategic opportunities that would come from rapprochement.

Correspondingly, immense Indian economic potential lies across its western border with Pakistan. Here is where the historic silk route directly leads to the traditional Eurasian markets that India is now denied access due to the tense Indo-Pak relationship and heavily guarded border. China is already exploiting this route through the One-Belt One-Road (OBOR) initiative with the main focus being the westward flow of Chinese goods. The growing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major component of OBOR.⁶¹ This initiative has already gained economic momentum and almost all major powers of the region (including Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) have shown interest in the project and are at various stages of participation. India being in close proximity of the project, and already a major trading competitor with China, should be a logical participant and compete on an equal footing by economically exploiting this historic route through improved relations with Pakistan. Similarly, it is within Pakistan’s interests to move towards rapprochement.

Pakistan has a significant internal security threat with on-going insurgencies and acts of terrorism. Additionally, Pakistan itself is on the cusp of major economic growth if

further investments in energy, infrastructure, OBOR/CPEC expansion and transportation initiatives can be made. Once rapprochement with India is obtained, Pakistan could re-direct a significant portion of its security forces towards counter-terrorism and stability operations focusing on Afghan border areas and Baluchistan. Open borders with India could also stimulate huge economic activity and further capitalize on Pakistan's geographic centrality.⁶²

Path to Peace

Lao Tzu once said that "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."⁶³ Likewise, the journey toward Indo-Pak rapprochement will also begin with a single step...ideally with unconditional talks. Possibly the most important step is with the recognition of the 'opportunity costs' associated with continuing the dispute. So much possible benefit is sacrificed by so many with the continuation of the conflict. But to make genuine progress requires both parties to, at least temporarily, set aside past transgressions, be willing to make difficult concessions, and focus on common interests that promise future opportunities. Both countries must also embody a sense of urgency garnered from the clear and present danger of continuing border incidents and the real likelihood of uncontrollable escalation leading to a regional conflagration. Progress towards peace will require expert international facilitation, inspired and resolute Indian and Pakistani political leadership, increased direct communication between the nations, the settling of long-standing disputes, and improved Indo-Pak economic integration.

Accepting India's opposition to *mediation*, the India-Pakistan dispute resolution process should begin with international *facilitation* and mutual concessions. Within South Asia there is historic precedence. In the recent past, intervention by international

actors have helped contain Indo-Pak armed clashes. The Tashkent agreement was signed after 1965 War with the help of USSR and major conflicts were averted with the help of the US in 1987, 1999 and 2001.

The US and China in particular have vested interests in resolving the Indo-Pak dispute. The US is increasingly dependent on India as a key trading partner, as part of the US Pivot to the Asia-Pacific security strategy, and as a South Asian counter-balance to China. Similarly, the US depends on Pakistan as a key regional ally in stemming Violent Extremist Organizations with roots in South Asia. A major conflict between India and Pakistan could possibly derail two decades of US efforts and investments.⁶⁴ Other members of the international community (China, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Central Asian Republics, etc.) have significant economic interests in the region that depend, in large part, on the stability of the Indo-Pak dialectic. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, an eminent scholar and a Pakistani-origin American who also served in US State Department supports this view: "To engage in a peace process involving India and Pakistan, the US must break with its practice of concentrating on South Asian issues only in periods of high tension such as those caused by regional wars, Soviet occupation, or the threat of nuclear-related crisis."⁶⁵ Unless major powers, especially the US, take a more active role in resolving Indo-Pak disputes, progress on Indo-Pak rapprochement will be unlikely. While international facilitation is necessary, it is not sufficient. The inspired and resolute participation of both Indian and Pakistani political leaders is also required.

Importantly, India's new political leadership can play a vital role in the restoration of the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue to achieve sustainable peace between the two countries. The right wing government under Prime Minister Modi is the first Prime

Minister since Rajiv Gandhi (1984-1989) to possess a majority in the Parliament's lower house. Correspondingly, he has the requisite political and moral authority to rein in hawkish Indian bureaucratic influences, foster improved relations, and create a more harmonious environment. As the Prime Minister, Modi can help mollify the inflammatory press, address public and military concerns and make deliberate progress towards peace. C. Raja Mohan, Director of Carnegie India has recommended a number of measures for the Indian Prime Minister. These include putting politics (potential political progress on national security and economic issues) and not rote bureaucratic conservatism as the foundation to guide the peace process; resist media and Congressional pressure to breakoff dialog after every new incident; and open alternative channels of communication including communications with the Pakistan Army.⁶⁶ Mohan further advocates broadening the base for the peace process by drawing opposition parties into the process; encouraging the National Congress members to travel across the border; inviting the chief ministers of neighboring Indian-Pakistani provinces to initiate contact; and for India and Pakistan to liberalize the visa regime.⁶⁷

Economic dependency has been a major tool in dispute resolution in the history of nations. For instance, after centuries of conflicts, Europe is bonded by economic interdependency. Similarly, the US and China, despite being major antagonists, are joined by over \$591 billion in mutual trade.⁶⁸ Likewise China, which still claims approximately 90,000 square km of disputed Indian Territory, has over \$65 billion in mutual trade with India.⁶⁹ Currently, India and Pakistan rely on tariff and non-tariff barriers to safeguard the economic interests of their domestic producers and capitalize on market consumers. Future Indo-Pak agreements could dynamically adjust tariffs and

non-tariff barriers to exploit each nation's production strengths, shore up sector weaknesses and improve the economies of both countries. The development of trade enablers and visa liberalization could also help foster mutual trade, social engagements and increase interdependency between the two nations.

Over time, and as progress towards building mutual trust, confidence and interdependency continues, the two countries can address some of the more contentious issues. First, progress towards reconciliation should reach a stage where alleged or actual involvement in either country's security has been stopped or the allegations investigated and dispelled. Next, both parties should develop an overall strategy for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute together with establishing a realistic time frame for its implementation. The agreement could include provisions to periodically review and revise the agreement as progress towards resolution continues or is disrupted.

Conclusion

Stephen P. Cohen has aptly described the Indo-Pak dialectic. He states, "India and Pakistan are like two gladiators locked together, each wielding a weapon that cannot be used at close quarters. While engaged, they cannot deliver a death blow, but they cannot disengage either!"⁷⁰ India and Pakistan have remained engaged in conflict throughout their brief history; may it be overt or covert. George Perkovich and Toby Dalton have described this relationship in Clausewitzian jargon: "In Indo-Pak relations, which have involved plenty of warfare, politics may be the continuation of warfare by other means."⁷¹

This continuation of warfare has periodically evolved from conventional to unconventional means and vice versa. Like many other previous doctrines and concepts, India's CSD or Proactive Strategy seeks to prevail over the opposition e.g., Pakistan. To do so, India must employ its conventional forces in ways that remain below Pakistan's nuclear response threshold. Paradoxically, the same Indian initiatives designed to circumvent Pakistan's nuclear deterrence capabilities may actually increase the likelihood of their employment. Cold Start Doctrine, like the *Schlieffen Plan*, is based on highly speculative assumptions which, in turn, could lead to disastrous unintended consequences. As a result of the strategy, both India and Pakistan have stationed their forces in relatively close proximity, developed detailed alert, mobilization and employment plans to immediately respond to anticipated provocations, and must rely on the semi-independent initiative of subordinate commanders that risks intermittent communications and uncontrolled escalation.

Moreover, India's growing conventional force advantage nearly requires Pakistan to rely on unconventional weapons to avert strategic defeat. Thus, the current disposition of forces and corresponding doctrine and plans, threatens the very survival of both countries and the overall stability of South Asia. The situation is like the proverbial powder keg, rigged with a short fuse and subject to being lit at any time by a continuous shower of sparks generated by ongoing border incidents; with any incident potentially spiraling out of control and igniting a massive explosion.

Ironically, the situation has devolved to such a volatile state that it may actually motivate both the political and military leaders on both sides to pursue peace. India and Pakistan have compelling coincident interests to move towards rapprochement

including the alternative use of their armed forces and the pursuit of beneficial economic interdependencies. The imminent threat, when combined with an emerging 'window of opportunity' to exploit economic and political prospects, may provide the impetus for change and a 'path-to-peace'.

Progress will depend upon a host of factors including the development of a reconciliation strategy that includes: a resumption of Indo-Pak Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue; active facilitation by international community influential actors; inspired political leadership on both sides; and a willingness to address contentious territorial disputes. Importantly, Indo-Pak issues are not insurmountable, but the journey will have to begin with the recognition by both sides of the cost/dangers of continued conflict and the potential significant benefits of exploiting readily available economic opportunities.

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