

What war will bring

Cost of Conflict Between India and Pakistan

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THIS recently released 104-page report tells the story of the cost of conflict between India and Pakistan in words and graphs. Released by the Strategic Foresight Group based in Mumbai, India, the study is a collaborative work of Indian, Pakistani and German academics, journalists and former practitioners.

A reader, of course, must be forewarned about treating the publication more as a coffee-table book rather than a serious academic endeavour. Its core value lies in providing some interesting data and consolidating it in one volume. The figures on comparative defence spending, military forces and strategic forces of both countries and the data on crime, terror, militancy, and the military's influence in Pakistan and other issues would come in handy for any researcher. These have been treated as indicators to show the high financial and opportunity cost of conflict between the two neighboring states. However, there are huge assumptions that have been made that are questionable and the study does suffer from a lack of coherent analysis.

The study has indicated four kinds of costs for both countries: (a) military costs, (b) social and political costs, (c) economic costs and (d) diplomatic costs. In some sections, especially the ones dealing with economic and diplomatic costs, the focus has also been on highlighting some of the benefits that might accrue through cooperation rather

The second part, which is even more problematic, lists the increase in militancy, jihadi outfits, madressahs, greater internal insecurity in India and increased influence of the military in Pakistan as some of the social and political costs. The third section that is not very large basically draws attention towards some indirect costs such as the trade

the objective of this portion. The next section talks about the cost of conflict for Jammu and Kashmir. This section, in fact, contains the best data set. One can find information about the loss of life and property in J&K, number of internally displaced people, number of people with psychiatric diseases, cases of attempted suicides, environ-



Graphic by Abro taken from movie 'Roz-i-Qaza'

than confrontation. Besides providing some basic data on comparative military strengths, the first section puts the increase in violence, crime, illegal weapons and drug trafficking as some of the military costs. Although the writers have not made the linkage, the assumption one can draw is that they are trying to refer to the greater internal insecurity that has grown. This section also contains data on victims of wars and amounts spent on military mobilization during 2002.

and economic activities that both India and Pakistan seem to have deprived themselves of due to their bilateral conflict. There is information on energy and trade security and the benefits that would accrue if there was cooperation. The next section is even more fuzzy because other than a limited discussion on how regional cooperation was stalled due to conflict, there is some discussion on India and Pakistan's contacts with the US or India's relations with Israel. One is not clear about

mental and political costs and the further fragmentation of the society. One can also find the figures for loss of tourism in the territory.

The next segment is built on an imaginary escalation ladder where conflict would escalate from low-intensity conflict to breakdown of relations and conventional warfare to a nuclear war. This section is basically futuristic and voices concerns rather than present any hard core evidence. The final segment contains a general data set of the

two countries' strategic arsenal and presents a hypothetical case study of what kind of losses the two countries might incur in case of a nuclear conflict.

One quite understands the basic intent of the report writers that was mainly to raise the concern of policymakers and civil societies of both countries towards the high costs of conflict. The general direction of the argument, thus, is that the two neighbours would benefit far more if they cooperated and made peace with each other. However, some of the assumptions made in the report are not only questionable but they also render the overall analysis less useful for any future research.

For instance, one wonders from where the writers have drawn the conclusion that the success of the MMA in Pakistan is indicative of the growing power of religious parties in the country or that the MMA is likely to gain greater political space. Again, the assertion that militant outfits like Lashkari-Toiba or Jaish-i-Mohammad threaten a takeover of the Pakistani state are statements that might please foreign donors of research but it is an incorrect assumption.

Similarly, the section on strategic assets lists a whole range of aircraft that could be converted to carry nuclear weapons. This does not necessarily mean that all these aircraft are capable of carrying nuclear devices. The report is a good example of putting bits of information together, some of which has not even been substantiated, such as the data on the ISI's expenditure on militancy.

A report on calculating the cost of conflict between India and Pakistan was indeed a complex project that should have been undertaken in a more substantive manner than has been done in this study. Nevertheless, it draws public attention to a vital aspect of South Asian politics. ■

Plan of Attack

By Bob Woodward
Simon & Schuster
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Disarming Iraq

By Hans Blix
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Reviewed by Zeynab Ali

AS tragedy unravels in Iraq, the perfidious claims made by the Bush administration and its apologists of fighting a 'just war' come undone. While President Bush believes that he is 'carrying out a mission that has been sanctioned by the divine', as he recently indicated in a White House press conference, there is significant evidence from noteworthy sources which reveals otherwise.

Plan of Attack, the controversial new book by Bob Woodward, the assistant managing editor of the *Washington Post*, is a captivating narrative that illustrates the role of forceful personalities, nebulous intelligence, rigid Pentagon timetables and self-righteous notions like exporting democracy in shaping the Bush administration's aggressive policies that created the momentum for war. Exposing the fact that Iraq was always uppermost on the White House agenda,