THE SOUTH ASIA MEXICAN STAND-OFF

A good case can be made out that the most arrogant military leaders in the world are the Brahmin generals who run the Indian Army. The hatred and intransigence they have towards Pakistan knows no bounds.

Get them in their favorite easy chair at their gentlemen's club in New Delhi and pour some single-malt scotch into them, and they'll tell you of how someday nuclear war will be inevitable, that, yes, India will lose a few score million -- but what's that to a nation of over a billion souls? -- but Pakistan will be wiped out and then India will divide Pakistan up into four Indian provinces and that will be that.

You listen and you think these guys need to read some Greek tragedies about the fatal perils of Hubris. For the mind-blow truth is that in a nuclear showdown between Pakistan and India, Pakistan holds the high cards.

Recently, Donald Rumsfeld has taken some pains to explain the facts of life to the Brahmin generals in Delhi. "Your rockets which carry your nuclear warheads are *liquid fueled*," he told them via intermediaries, "while the Pakistani rockets are *solid-fueled*. Yours take *hours* to fuel, while the Pakistanis can launch in *minutes*. Long, long before you are ready to launch, the Paks will have wiped out your missile sites and all your centers of power including New Delhi and Bombay."

Have you ever seen a Brahmin soil himself? It's not pretty to watch. That's what happened to the Delhi four-stars when they realized Rumsfeld's awful truth -- that a nuclear exchange will result in India's defeat and Pakistan's victory. But it gets worse.

The Paks, Rummy went on, will, in the event of war, ignite a radioactive moat along the Indo-Pak border. They are not interested in invading India, but in preventing India from invading them. Any Indian soldier crossing the nuclearized border strip will glow in the dark and die. So the Indians can say *adios* to conquering Pakistan with boots on the radioactive ground.

Rummy saved the bad news for the Indian generals. He told the good news to Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee. In essence, he said: There's only one thing worse than a corrupt dictatorship,and that's an *un*corrupt dictatorship. The corrupt ones you can buy off, and that's what we're doing in Pakistan. We're sick and tired of radical, terrorist-sponsoring, Islamists running the Pakistani intelligence and military, so we're buying off enough of them to make as sure as we can that Musharraf will stay in power."

"The bottom line," Rummy explained to Vajpayee, "is that India and Pakistan are militarily in what we call a Mexican Stand-Off. Neither has any reasonable chance of defeating the other. America feels very strongly that peace and free trade between India and Pakistan is the only viable option and that now is the best time for you and Mr. Musharraf to proceeds towards them."

In other words, Make Money Not War. That’s the message, the lesson to be learned from the South Asia Mexican Stand-Off. Let’s hope Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Musharraf can force their Brahmin and Islamist generals to learn the lesson as well.