Low-Latency Datacenters

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Datacenters: Scale and Latency

- **Scale:**
  - 1M+ cores
  - 1-10 PB memory
  - 200 PB disk storage
- **Latency:**
  - < 0.5 µs speed-of-light delay
- **Most work so far has focused on scale:**
  - One app, many resources
  - Map-Reduce, etc.
- **Latency potential unrealized:**
  - High-latency hardware/software
  - Most apps designed to tolerate latency (communication via large blocks)

Latency

- **Round-trip times (100K servers):**
  - Today: 100-500 µs best case
  - Often much worse because of congestion
  - Hardware limit: ~2 µs
- **Storage latency dropping:**
  - Disk → Flash → DRAM
- **Can we create a new platform that makes the hardware limit accessible to applications?**
- **If so, will it enable important new applications?**

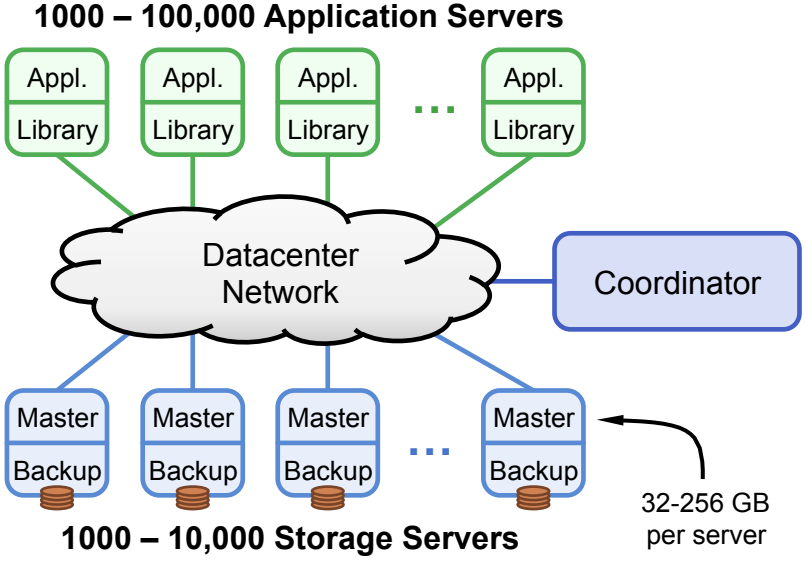
Clean-Slate Low-Latency Datacenter

- New switching architecture (30 ns per switch)
- NIC fused with CPU cores; on-chip routing
- User-level networking, polling instead of interrupts
- New transport protocol
- Storage systems based primarily in DRAM
- New software stack

Low-Latency Storage: RAMCloud

- **New class of datacenter storage:**
  - All data in DRAM at all times (disk/flash for backup only)
  - Large scale: aggregate 1000's of servers
  - Low latency: 5-10µs remote access
- **1000x improvements over disk in**
  - Performance
  - Energy/op

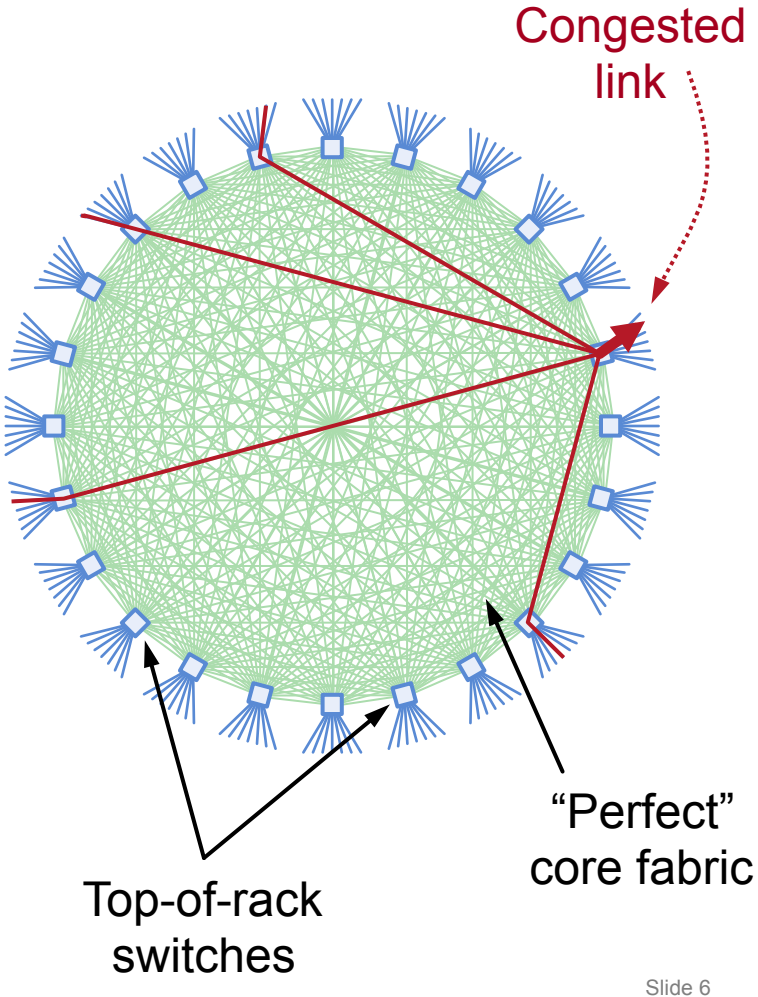
Goal: enable a new class of data-intensive applications



New Transport Protocol

- **TCP protocol optimized for:**
  - Throughput, not latency
  - Long-haul networks (high latency)
  - Congestion throughout
  - Modest # connections/server
- **Future datacenters:**
  - High performance networking fabric:
    - Low latency
    - Multi-path
  - Congestion primarily at edges
    - Little congestion in core
  - Many connections/server (1M?)

Need new transport protocol



New Transport Protocol, cont'd

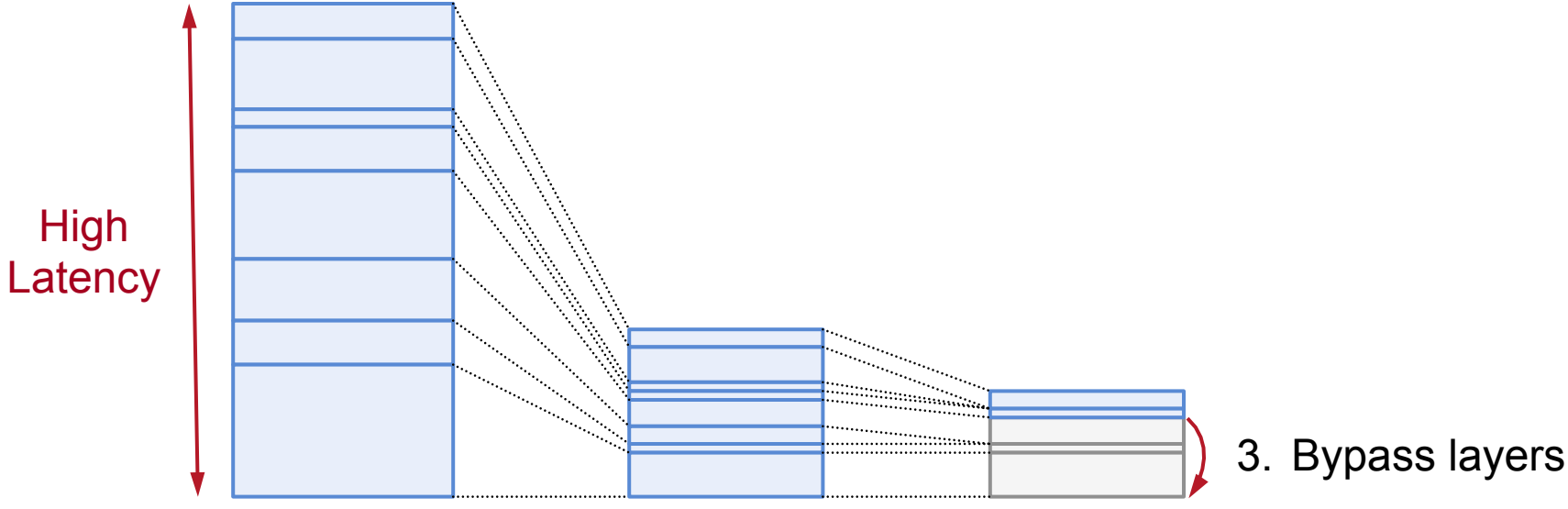
- **Greatest obstacle to low latency:**
  - Congestion at receiver's link
  - Large messages delay small ones
- **Solution: drive congestion control from receiver**
  - Schedule incoming traffic
  - Prioritize small messages
- **Behnam Montazeri will present work in progress**

Low-Latency Software Stacks?

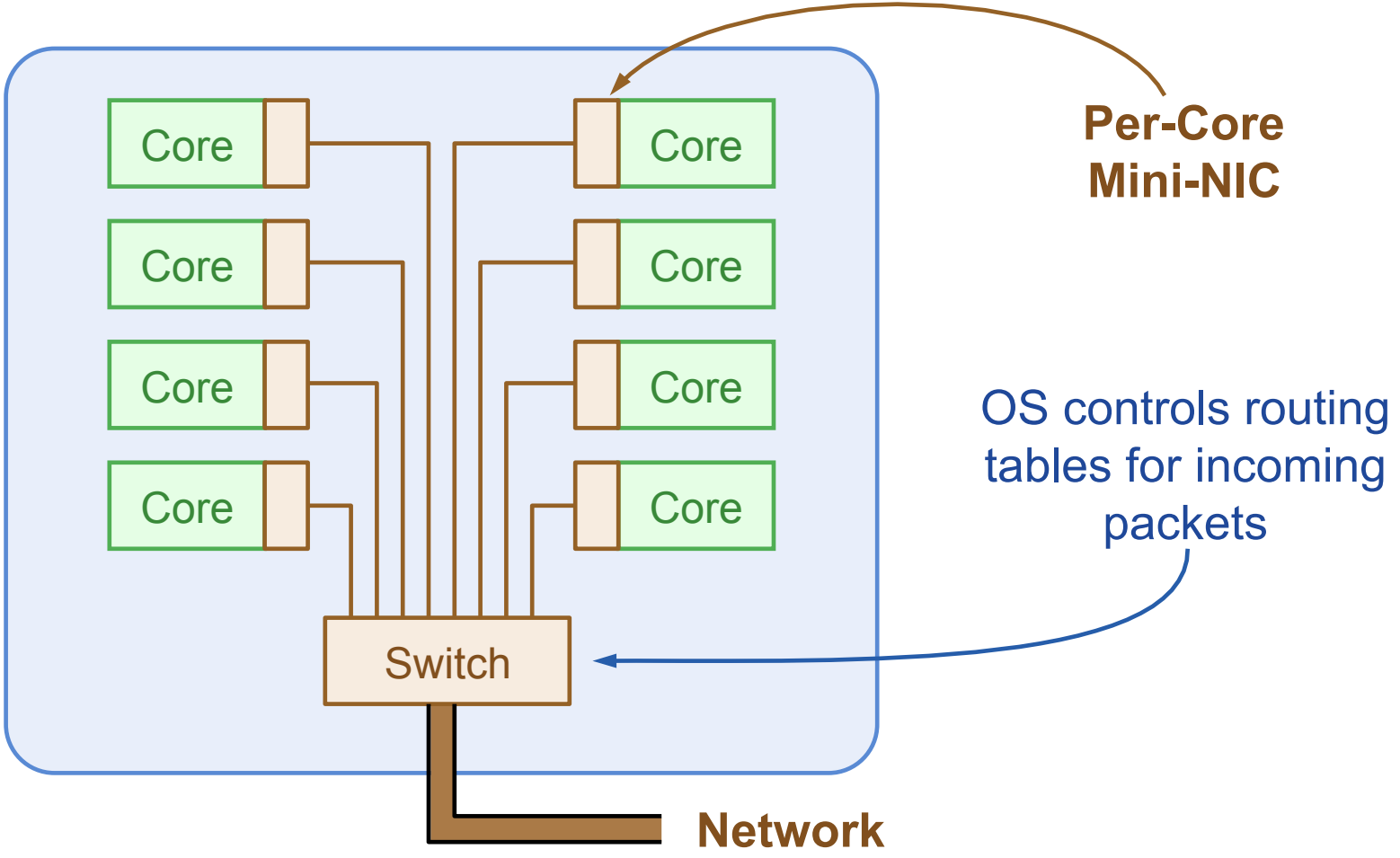
- **Today's stacks: highly layered**
- **Good for structuring software**
  - Each layer solves one problem
- **Bad for performance**
  - Each layer adds latency
- **Example: Thrift RPC system**
  - Handles several problems: marshalling, threading, etc.
  - General-purpose: re-pluggable components
  - Adds 7 µs latency

For low latency, must replace the entire software stack

Reducing Software Stack Latency



Integrate NIC Into CPU Chip?



Low Latency => New Applications?

- **Does 2 µs latency matter?**
- **Use low latency for collecting data?**
  - Small chunks of data
  - Random access
  - Dependencies serialize accesses
  - Need a lot of chunks in a small amount of time:
    - 20K chunks in 50 ms?
- **Use low latency for new computational models?**
  - Independent compute-storage elements
  - Low latency allows high coherency

Discussion Topics

- What are the key elements of a low-latency platform for datacenters?
- What will a new software stack look like?
- What applications could make use of a low-latency datacenter?

Palette