CHAPTER - 4

KARGIL CONFLICT: PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC BLUNDER IN KARGIL

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Pakistan's Strategic Blunder in Kargil:

India's territorial integrity has not been threatened as seriously since the 1971 war as it has been threatened by Pakistan's ill-conceived intrusions across the Line of Control (LOC) into Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in the summer months of 1999, to physically occupy territory on the Indian side. By sending heavily armed soldiers in civilian clothes to intrude across the LOC, Pakistan has added a new dimension to its ten year old proxy war against India. Pakistan's provocative action has compelled India to launch a firm but measured and restrained military operation to clear the Intruders.

Operation 'Vijay', finely calibrated to limit military action to the Indian side of the LOC, includes air strikes from fighter-ground attack (FGA) aircraft and attack helicopters. Even as the Army and the Indian Air Force employ their synergised combat potential to eliminate the intruders and re-gain the territory occupied by them, the government is keeping all channels of communication open and is willing to negotiate at the diplomatic and political levels with Pakistan to ensure that the intrusions in Kargil are vacated and Pakistan's military adventurism is not allowed to escalate into a larger conflict. The primary objective is to bring the present military operations against Pakistani forces to a successful conclusion as early as possible without enlarging the scope of the ongoing conflict.

What is the underlying cause behind this strategic blunder? Clearly, the Pakistani military establishment was becoming increasingly frustrated with India's success in containing the militancy in J&K to within manageable limits and saw in the Kashmiri people's open expression of their preference for returning to normal life, the evaporation of all their hopes and desires to bleed India through a strategy of 'a thousand cuts'. Prime Minister Nawaz
Sharif's government appeared to be inclined to accept India's hand of friendship, in keeping with the mood of popular opinion within Pakistan, and was committed to opening up trade, liberalising the visa regime and encouraging people-to-people cultural and sports contacts. Though it did not feature in black and white in the Lahore Declaration, the acceptance of the concept of the LOC as a permanent border between India and Pakistan was gaining currency due to the strong public opinion in this regard in both the countries.

Pakistan's military establishment was apparently unable to come to terms with the fact that 10 years of its concerted efforts in de-stabilising India through its proxy war in J&K were finally likely to amount to nothing due to the peace overtures between the two countries. Moves towards the acceptance of the LOC as a permanent border were seen as a disgraceful compromise. Peace with India would have also led to a diminishing role for the Army in Pakistan's affairs and such a prospect must have caused immense concern to the military leadership. It was in such a scenario that, in an act of desperation, the Pakistan Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate appear to have decided to launch an organised intrusion into un-held remote areas of the Kargil sector to once again ignite the spark of militancy and gain moral ascendency over the Indian security forces.

While the overall strategic aim of Pakistan in engineering these intrusions under the facade of Kashmiri militancy is obviously to provide a fresh impetus to the flagging jehad and again attempt to focus international attention on the Kashmir issue, the military aims need to be considered more closely. In the Mashkoh Valley, Kaksar and Drass sectors the aim appears to have been to establish a 'firm base' from which traffic on the Srinagar-Leh highway could be disrupted at several places by trained mercenaries within one day's return march from the firm base. The disruption of supplies to the Ladakh region along the Srinagar-Leh lifeline is a primary motive. Another military aim is to open up a new route for infiltration into the Kashmir Valley
and the Doda region south of the Pir Panjal range over the Amarnath Mountains. In the Batalik and Turtuk Valley area, which adjoins the Siachen glacial belt, Pakistan attempted to establish a lodgement with a view to eventually advancing along the Shyok Valley to sever India's lifeline to the Siachen Brigade. The apprehension of trained mercenaries has revealed that a larger aim was also to spread Islamic fundamentalism in Ladakh. As an aim plus, the Pakistan Army had also planned to physically occupy a chunk of real estate on the Indian side of the LOC in Kargil district to use as a bargaining counter subsequently, particularly in respect of negotiations for a mutual withdrawal from Siachen Glacier.

The Pakistanis had also counted on once again internationalising the Kashmir issue through their intervention in Kargil. Unfortunately for them, their plan backfired. The international community reacted adversely to their trans-LOC adventurism and called for an immediate pullback of their forces. During their G-8 summit at Cologne in the third week of June 1999, the world leaders stopped just short of calling Pakistan an aggressor and re-iterated that India and Pakistan should both respect the LOC and must resolve their problems bilaterally through dialogue. The G-8 statement amounted to a strong indictment of Pakistan's transgression of the LOC. What came as an even greater shock to Pakistan was that China, a long-time ally, chose to adopt a strictly neutral position on the Kargil intrusions and steadfastly refused to back Pakistan despite personal visits to Beijing by the Pakistan prime minister, foreign minister and the chief of the army staff.

Benazir Bhutto's recent admission that her Kashmir policy was wrong and that there is no alternative to peace with India, shows that there is a vertical split in the political opinion within Pakistan on the Kargil intrusions. Even the Pakistani media has castigated the government for its ill-advised moves in Kargil. Clearly, those who masterminded the Kargil intrusions failed to recognise that in the emerging world order, it does not serve the interests of any of the major powers to turn a blind eye to military excursions
Nawaz Sharif welcoming Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Wagah border on February 20, 1999 prior to signing the Lahore Declaration. Sharif was overthrown as Prime Minister by Army Chief General Parvez Musharraf on October 12, 1999 in less than three months after the end of the Kargil conflict.
across existing boundaries or lines of control. Once the major world powers expressed their support for India by tacit implication even if not in a forthright manner Pakistan again miscalculated by resorting to open nuclear blackmail. India's 'admirable restraint' in restricting its military operations to its own side of the LOC in the face of grave provocation, has also helped to marginalise Pakistan's diplomatic efforts.

The intrusions in Kargil district have resulted in a qualitative upgradation of the proxy war of the last ten years and are reflective of the desperation of the Pakistan Army and the ISI. India's response has once again been politically mature and militarily appropriate. The launching of air strikes is in keeping with the military requirement of achieving synergy in the employment of all available firepower resources to weaken and destroy the foreign mercenaries and regular Pakistani soldiers engrossing into the Indian side of the LOC in blatant disregard of the Simla Agreement of 1972 and in cynical violation of the spirit of the Lahore Declaration of 1999. In due course, the Indian Army will physically clear the intruders and the status quo ante will be restored. However, the larger issues raised by this wanton act just short of actual aggression, need to be analysed and their long-term impact on the future of Indo-Pak relations needs to be assessed.

Either Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was informed of the impending action in Kargil district before he met Prime Minister Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif approved of it, or it was a purely Pakistan Army-ISI operation and the civilian masters were kept in the dark. If Nawaz Sharif had approved of the operation in Kargil, he was obviously only paying lip service to better Indo-Pak relations during his summit meeting with the Indian Prime Minister. It then emerges that he is obviously a duplicitous person and cannot be trusted in future. A similar shadow must fall on the credibility of Pakistan's foreign policy establishment. If the Pakistan Army and the ISI planned and carried out the elaborate trans-LOC intrusions without the prior approval of their
Prime Minister, it is apparent that the civilian leadership does not count for much and that the Army dictates Pakistan's foreign policy towards India.

Either way, it is now clear that the Army continues to call the shots in Pakistan and negotiating with the elected leadership of that country is likely to be perceived to be futile and perhaps even counter-productive. On the issues of Pakistan's policy towards India, resolution of the Kashmir issue on its terms and on all aspects of Pakistan's nuclear and missile development programme, the Pakistan Army appears to have its own non-negotiable agenda and does not appear to be inclined to be guided by the wishes of its civilian masters. While India wishes to live in peace and harmony with its western neighbour, Pakistan Army's intrusions in Kargil have clearly established that India's desire is still a long way off from being reciprocated. The intrusions in Kargil district of J&K are being correctly perceived by the Indian establishment as a Pakistan Army gambit to checkmate the Lahore Declaration.

Pakistan's military misadventure has gone horribly wrong and Pakistan has painted itself into a comer. The world has refused to accept Pakistani propaganda that 'Kashmiri militants' have infiltrated across the LOC. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz disingenuous claim that the LOC was never clearly demarcated, has been strongly refuted by India and ignored by the international community. The Indian military and diplomatic response has stumped Pakistan. India has categorically stated that there can be no political negotiations with Pakistan till the intrusions in Kargil district are completely eliminated. The world is gradually coming around to accepting this justifiable Indian view.

At the same time, India has very wisely desisted from 'opening up another front' along the LOC to hasten the eviction of the intruders, as some defence analysts and the media have been advocating. Raising the ante at this stage can only be counter-productive in the long run as it will invariably lead to a larger conventional conflict which may spin out of control to nuclear
exchanges, given the irrationality of the Pakistani military leadership that controls nuclear weapons. India will also lose the goodwill it has earned as an aggrieved party on account of Pakistan's ill-considered trans-LOC operations and the Indian economy, that is only now slowly coming out of a long recession, will receive another jolt from which it may not recover for quite some time. Crossing the LOC without clear political and military objectives will also play into Pakistan's hands as the Pakistan Army would like us to do exactly that. However, India must continue to keep its options open to launch operations across the LOC if the international community fails to prevail upon Pakistan to withdraw its forces back into its own territory and there is no other military alternative for India to ensure early eviction of the intruders.

Pakistan has exhibited a relentlessly confrontationist attitude towards India. Successive governments in Islamabad have sought with varying degrees of intensity to destabilise India, wreck its unity and challenge its integrity since the creation of Pakistan. Even after the situation in Kargil comes under control, India will need to be on guard against more such sinister operations being launched by the vengeful and devious military leadership of Pakistan with a hate-India mindset and the mentality of a primitive warlord. It would be futile to hope that international pressure or economic compulsions will persuade the Pakistanis to withdraw their troops from Kargil or from embarking on such trans-LOC excursions in future. The government must send a clear message to the Pakistani leadership that there is a limit to India's patience and tolerance and India may be forced to consider harder options if there is no let-up in the relentless proxy war being waged from across its western border by the Pakistan Army and the ISI.

It will be a long time before public opinion within India once again backs a government effort to negotiate a final solution to the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. Any further talk of accepting the LOC as a permanent border between India and Pakistan will have to be shelved for at least five years, if not more, as the present anti-Pakistan mood of the Indian public will not
change easily. The inhuman torture and the brutal mutilation of the bodies of Indian soldiers have horrified the people of India. No Indian government is likely to commit political hara-kiri by advocating the acceptance of the LOC as a permanent border under the present circumstances. The Pakistan Army's actions in Kargil district have completely derailed the Lahore process. Its resumption at an early date is unlikely.

The most important lesson to emerge from the ongoing Kargil '99 imbroglio is that a country cannot afford to let down its guard on matters as important as national security. The progressive decline in the defence budget since the process of economic liberalisation began about eight years ago, even as the threats from across the borders increased manifold, has drastically affected the armed forces ability to modernise and to prepare for the type of war they are now being called upon to fight. The inescapable requirements of national security cannot be compromised no matter what the cost. In international politics, the policy of mutual friendship and co-operation with one's neighbours has to be balanced with vigilance. A neighbour's capacity to damage one's security interests should never be disregarded.

Kargil and the Kashmir issue are merely symptoms of the much more dangerous malady that afflicts the normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan. Unless Pakistan gains the political maturity necessary to come to terms with the irrevocable facts of the history of its creation and stops aspiring to achieve militarily and politically unachievable goals, it is difficult to see any silver lining on the dark clouds hovering over the Indian sub-continent. Hard-line elements in India have for long been advocating that India should do to Pakistan what that country has done to India through its proxy war in Kashmir and its significant support to insurgent outfits in the northeastern states and in other parts of India. Pakistan has provided such elements just the handle they needed.
Implications of Kargil War:

The India-Pakistan war in the Kargil sector on the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir lasted from 6 May to roughly the end of July 1999. It was the fifth large-scale conflict between the two countries. There seems to have been a subconscious reluctance on the part of both India and Pakistan to acknowledge the extensive nature of these conflicts, their territorial motivations and the violence inherent in them. Euphemisms are used. The military confrontations are described as "skirmishes", "intrusions", "warlike situations", or "limited military operations", whereas in fact, Indian and Pakistani armed forces were engaged in full-scale military operations against each other in 1947-48, twice in 1965 in Kutch and in Jammu and Kashmir (a war that expanded across the international frontiers between India and Pakistan), in 1971 during the East Pakistan crisis, and most recently in Kargil.

A significant and recurrent characteristic of these military confrontations has been that each time Pakistan initiated the confrontation covertly, whether it was in Kashmir, in Kutch or in former East Pakistan. When resistance to its moves was threatened with failure, Pakistan deployed its regular troops, which in turn invited full-scale military responses from India. Out of the four conflicts, it is only during the 1965 and 1971 conflicts that India formally declared that a state of war existed between India and Pakistan. Otherwise, there has been reluctance to accept the fact that all the major conflicts between India and Pakistan, were in fact regular wars in which the armed forces of the two countries engaged in operations against each other. The military conflict between India and Pakistan in Kargil in 1999 was not a skirmish, a border incident, or a marginal intrusion; it was a war launched by Pakistan with definite and clear strategic, territorial and political motives, with premeditated planning and detailed preparation.

There is a political and emotional background to the Pakistani military initiative in Kargil, which has not been taken note of by public opinion on both sides of the border. Pakistan's Kargil effort was in some ways a
culmination of various options exercised to acquire Jammu and Kashmir. It was also rooted in Pakistani calculations based on the experience of the failure of other efforts in Kashmir, particularly during the period 1989 to 1999. The arguments Pakistan put forward to realise its territorial claim were that Jammu and Kashmir becoming part of Pakistan was an unfinished task of Partition; since Partition was based on the two-nation theory and since Jammu and Kashmir was a Muslim-majority state (and contiguous with West Pakistan), it should be part of Pakistan. The second argument was that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have a right to self-determination. They were promised a plebiscite in order to exercise this right, from which India is reneging. Then there was the argument that the Government of India was violating human rights in Jammu and Kashmir. It was, therefore, the obligation of Pakistan as an Islamic country and an obligation of the international community to liberate Jammu and Kashmir from the Indian yoke.

When all these arguments failed to arouse the people of Jammu and Kashmir into a mass movement against India, and when the international community also failed to be convinced by these Pakistani arguments, Pakistan resorted to the final adventuristic reasoning that since both India and Pakistan have declared nuclear weapon capacities since 1998, if India is not asked by the international community to give up Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan, the world must face the prospect of nuclear war between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, the fallout of which would be dangerous not only for the Asian region, but for global stability and security.

This last argument did influence the international community. The consequence was pressure generated both on India and Pakistan from 1990 onwards to keep the bilateral dialogue going and to agree upon and implement as many confidence-building measures as possible to avoid the prospect of military confrontation. It is as a result of this pressure, as well as the Indian desire to avoid a military confrontation, that a number of
discussions were held between the prime ministers of India and Pakistan and between the senior officials of the governments of India and Pakistan, including military officials, between 1989 and 1994. This exercise led to limited success, which found expression in the confidence-building measures agreed to between 1990 and 1993. These included the establishment of direct telephone hotlines between prime ministers, foreign secretaries and the directors-general, military operations. Agreement was reached on both sides to avoid holding military exercises at close proximity to the international frontier, and to give advance notice about land, air and naval exercises to each other. There was even an agreement on the treatment of diplomatic representatives. The implementation of these measures, however, clearly indicated that Pakistan conceived them to be limited tactical public relations exercises. Simultaneously, active support to subversive elements in Jammu and Kashmir and in other parts of India not only continued but has also increased. The commitment to make Jammu and Kashmir a part of Pakistan remained and remains an unalterable objective of the Pakistani power structure.

It is in this context that Pakistan launched "Operation Badr", the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir through the Kargil sector. It would be pertinent to mention the broad Pakistani political assessments and calculations on the basis of which Pakistan launched this campaign. The Pakistani assessment was that the credibility of Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah in Jammu and Kashmir was low. Pakistan believed that the Indian Army and security forces were involved in so many disparate activities that they would not be able to resist a coordinated large-scale military onslaught in an unexpected manner, in an unexpected area. The Vajpayee Government had lost a Motion of No-Confidence in the Lok Sabha in March 1999. Apart from being a coalition government, the Government of India was a "caretaker" Government, which would be busy in conducting general elections in the country. The anticipation was that the Vajpayee Government would not have sufficient credibility to take firm decisions against foreign aggression due to
the volatile and uncertain political situation within India. Most important, the Pakistani assessment was that the Indian Army would not be able to resist and push back Pakistani forces once the latter entrenched themselves at strategic heights on the Himalayan ranges in the vital Kargil sector. This assessment was based on repeated reports in the Indian media about our army being short of officers and equipment and its morale being low throughout the 1990s. There was also the confidence that if Indian military resistance became unmanageable, Pakistan could resort to using nuclear weapons which would bring in international intervention, and at the same time temper Indian inclinations to expand the war and threaten Pakistan's general security as had happened in 1965 and 1971.

There was also the feeling in the Pakistani military high command that the Indian Army must be suffering from low morale because of its long-term deployment in counter-insurgency activities in Jammu and Kashmir and in other parts of India. In fact, the report of the Kargil Review Committee chaired by K. Subrahmanyam, quotes Lt. General Javed Nasir, former head of the ISI, as writing an assessment early in 1999, stating that "The Indian Army is incapable of undertaking any conventional operations at present, so how can one talk of their enlarging a conventional conflict."

Before proceeding to more specific political and strategic objectives of the Pakistani aggression in Kargil and before detailing the chronology of events, it is necessary to take note of the professional background and attitude of the key military figure who launched this aggression, General Pervez Musharraf, chief of army staff of Pakistan since 1998, who later, in October 1999, overthrew the democratically elected Nawaz Sharif Government and nominated himself as the chief executive of Pakistan. First, we must try to understand the policies he was inclined to follow in relation to India. Musharraf's public pronouncements provide some clear indications. As far as India is concerned, he was known to maintain a posture of political and military confrontation. He firmly believed that a sustained campaign of
subversion and military intrusion would result in Pakistan achieving its objective of annexing Kashmir to Pakistan. His background and persona were factors affecting his initiating the Kargil misadventure. General Musharraf belongs to a Uttar Pradesh Muslim family. His grandparents and parents were residents of Delhi in the period immediately before Partition. Born in 1943, his family migrated to Pakistan when he was four. He grew up in Karachi and then in Gujranwala, ultimately being commissioned in the artillery branch of the Pakistani Army in 1964. He had a comparatively routine career till Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq took notice of him because of his reputation as a devout Muslim officer and his links with a number of Islam-passand politicians of Pakistan. Like Zia, General Musharraf has strong links with the Jamat-e-Islami of Pakistan. The first significant assignment given by Zia to Musharraf was to be in charge of training mercenaries recruited from various Muslim countries for fighting against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, in the concerned Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence. There are reports that during this period he had contacts with Osama bin Laden, who was originally brought to Afghanistan by the US Central Intelligence Agency itself for constructing bunkers and tunnels for Afghan Mujahideen in different theatres of the conflict in Afghanistan. As part of his responsibility of training mercenaries, General Musharraf was also involved in financing their operations with the assistance of narcotic smugglers operating in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. An interesting sidelight to this phase of his career is that while intelligence establishments of the US and Pakistan valued his services, the Narcotics Control Establishment of the US Government was not enamoured of the general. This is given as one of the reasons why General Musharraf is a singularity in the Pakistani officers cadre in that he has never gone for any higher military training to US military institutions. He has done training only in the United Kingdom.

The year 1987 was a watershed in General Musharraf's career. He was made the brigade commander of the newly raised Special Services Group in the Siachen area, created to push back Indian forces from Siachen. He was
responsible for a major attack on the Indian military post at Bilafond La, in the Siachen sector in September 1987. His forces were decisively defeated by Indian troops. He was given a special assignment in the summer of 1989 to suppress a revolt by the Shias in the Gilgit region against the Sunni-dominated LOCal administration. General Musharraf supplemented his troops with Pathan tribesmen from the NWFP and Afghanistan for this operation in which hundreds of Shias were massacred and displaced. Pakistani newspaper and magazines like Dawn and Herald reported that Musharraf's troops invaded the Gilgit district along the Karakoram highway, destroyed crops and houses and killed a large number of the rural population. He followed this up with changing the demography of the Gilgit region by bringing in Punjabis and Pathans and settling them in Gilgit and Baltistan, in order to reduce the majority of Kashmiri Shias, who were the original inhabitants of the area. Musharraf has spent years with the Special Services Group in two separate assignments and claims to be the most knowledgeable expert on mountain warfare in the Pakistani armed forces. He values his identity as a commando more than as a gunner. The culmination of his field assignments was when he was appointed force commander, Northern Areas, which made him in charge of all military and subversive operations against Jammu and Kashmir. This assignment also brought him in close touch with senior officials of the ISI and extremist Islamic groups dealing with Afghanistan and subversion in Jammu and Kashmir. It was from the late 1980s and the mid-1990s that Pervez Musharraf established close links with groups like the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Toiba and Tablighi Jamaat. There are reports that Musharraf also has links with Osama bin Laden's international Islamic Front for Jihad against the US and Israel. Interestingly, Musharraf was also reported to be directly involved with an unsuccessful military coup against Benazir Bhutto in the autumn of 1995. The attempt was allegedly led by Major General Zaheer-ul-Islam Abbasi, who succeeded Musharraf as force commander, Northern Areas.
The Pakistani media has reported that had the coup succeeded General Musharraf would have been the candidate for head of state. Both Abbasi and General Aziz (who was General Musharraf’s chief of staff in 1999) were reported to be part of this coup. Throughout the 1990s, Musharraf and his senior associates were involved in the supply of finance and arms to various secessionist groups and mercenaries intruding into Jammu and Kashmir.

Coming to more recent developments, Pervez Musharraf was not enthusiastic about the Lahore meeting between Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee. Even while the meeting was taking place, Musharraf had finalised plans for attacking India along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir in the Kargil sector. He was the principal architect of the fourth major military conflict between India and Pakistan. Musharraf felt that he would succeed in his Kargil adventure because in his assessment conditions in India were politically uncertain, and the morale of the Indian armed forces was low owing to the poor leadership of Defence Minister George Fernandes and the soft leadership of Vajpayee. In fact a former chief of the ISI, Lt. General Assad Durrani, went to the extent of assessing during the initial stages of the Kargil conflict that Fernandes was perhaps the best Indian defence minister that Pakistan could hope for.

According to a study done by the Indian Institute for Topical Studies, Pervez Musharraf’s approach towards India and the Kashmir question can be summarised as follows. The assessment is based on the pronouncements and interviews of Musharraf:

- The BJP is a party of "paper tigers", known more for verbosity than for action.
- Pakistan’s nuclear and missile capability has ensured that India would not retaliate against Pakistan for occupying the ridges in the Kargil area.
- The fear of the possible use of nuclear weapons would bring in Western intervention, thereby internationalising the Kashmir issue.
• Pakistan should agree to a ceasefire only if it were allowed to remain in occupation of the Indian territory. There should be no question of the restoration of the status quo ante.

The interviews and speeches of General Musharraf since October 1998 show his thinking to be as follows:

• The acquisition of Kashmir by Pakistan can wait. What is more important is to keep the Indian Army bleeding in Kashmir just as the Afghan mujahideen kept Soviet troops bleeding in Afghanistan.

• Even if the Kashmir issue is resolved, there cannot be normal relations between India and Pakistan because Pakistan, by frustrating India's ambition of emerging as a major Asian power on par with China and Japan, would continue to be the thorn in India's flesh. And so as long as it does so, Pakistan would continue to enjoy the backing of China and Japan.

This is Musharraf's professional background and it demonstrates the mindset of an assertive, theologically committed military figure. India's then high commissioner in Pakistan, Satish Chandra (now secretary of the National Security Council and chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee), commenting on Musharraf's personality when he took over as chief of army staff of Pakistan in October 1998, indicated that Musharraf was hawkish, ambitious, and had long-standing links with several Islamic fundamentalist groups.

The question of why Pakistan decided to resort to massive territorial aggression against India in the Kargil sector, merits geopolitical, operational and psychological answers. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan had not succeeded in making any dent on the Indian political and territorial position in Jammu and Kashmir, despite the various political arguments and manoeuvrings it had engaged in since 1989. Pakistanis, therefore, felt something very drastic had to be done on the ground to disrupt the whole political and military hold of India in Jammu and Kashmir. All Pakistani military operations against India in Jammu and Kashmir had been launched on a southwest-northeast
axis, through Jammu, from areas on the southwestern flank of Jammu and Kashmir. These had been successfully resisted by the Indian armed forces more than once during the past 50 years. So Pakistanis felt that the attempt to strategically dominate the Kashmir valley should be launched from a different LOCation, west of the Indian-held areas up to the Line of Control. This approach was entertained by the Pakistani military command from the late 1970s onwards. The first attempt to get a foothold vis-a-vis the Kashmir valley was undertaken in the early 1980s in the Siachen glacier area because Pakistanis felt the demarcation of the Line of Control there could be ambiguously interpreted to justify their intrusion. It is relevant to recall that the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir has clearly been demarcated up to a grid reference point on the map, NJ 9842. It was agreed that it shall lie northwards from this grid reference towards the glaciers. Pakistan desired to take advantage of these cartographic formulations. Indian intelligence came to know about the Pakistani plans and Indian troops in pre-emptive operations moved forward and established posts at various points in the Siachen glacier region in 1984. Pakistani attempts to dislodge Indian troops from their positions in Siachen have repeatedly failed. Pakistan believed that a large-scale military operation across the LOC would draw away Indian troops from the Valley for border defence purposes, a situation that could then be utilised to heighten levels of terrorism within Jammu and Kashmir. The immediate assessment on the basis of which Pakistan launched the Kargil operations have been summed up in the Subrahmanyam Report:

(a) Pakistan's nuclear capability would forestall any major Indian move particularly across the international border. It was Pakistan's assessment that nuclear deterrence had worked in its favour from the mid-80s. Not an invalid assessment, objectively speaking.

(b) The international community would prevent the expansion of a conflict by intervening through bilateral mechanisms or through the UN. If Pakistan consolidated its gains across the LOC, the international
community would accept the new situation, bettering Pakistan's negotiating position.

(c) China would be supportive of Pakistan's military operations.

(d) A weak and unstable government in India would be incapable of a firm response and would not expand the conflict into Pakistan across the international frontier.

(e) The Indian Army itself may not be able to respond effectively because of its counter-insurgency commitments in Jammu and Kashmir.

(f) Due to an inadequacy of resources east of Zoji La, India would not be able to react efficiently against intrusions before the Zoji La Pass opens for traffic by the end of May or early June.

(g) The Indian Army does not have troops sufficiently trained in high-altitude warfare, and would not be able to deploy adequate forces to counter a pre-emptive surprise Pakistani move. The Pakistani military intrusion if successful would disrupt the return of normalcy in the Valley.

The incursions across the Line of Control in the Kargil sector had been part of Pakistan's strategic options and war games since the mid-1980s. Senior journalist and adviser to Field Marshal Ayub Khan, Altaf Gohar, has confirmed that a plan to intrude in the Kargil sector by means of a major operation existed in the Pakistan Army Headquarters from 1987 onwards. But it was not operationalised by the successive governments of Pakistan till 1999. General Zia, during the last year and a half of his tenure, then Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif both pulled back from the Kargil plan, primarily because the chiefs of army staff, General Mirza Aslam Beg and General Jehangir Karamat, were not in favour of such a large-scale military operation to which an Indian response could have been unpredictable. General Pervez Musharraf however had a different mindset. He was deeply involved in various military operations in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Northern Areas. He was
frustrated about the debacle at Siachen for nearly a decade and a half. It was a region in which he had been militarily active. The comparatively uncertain political situation in India and the assessments about the state of preparedness and morale of the Indian forces made him feel that he could safely launch the Kargil operation in the preparation of which he had remained involved off and on from 1993 onwards as director general, military operations. Pervez Musharraf visited the Northern Areas of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on 20 and 21 October 1998 accompanied by L.t. General Mehmood Ahmed, general officer commanding the 10th Corps of the Pakistani Army. The plan to launch an attack on Kargil was finalised during this visit and was given final shape in October and December 1998.

Prime Minister Sharif was briefed about the Kargil plan at the general headquarters of the Pakistani Army in Rawalpindi in January 1999; a month before he met Prime Minister Vajpayee at Lahore on 22 February 1999. Incursions by Pakistani armed forces commenced from the end of 1998, first for reconnaissance purposes and then to prepare the ground for a large-scale invasion across the Line of Control.

The process of incursions by regular Pakistani troops occurred during the period December 1998 to March 1999. By the last week of April and first week of May, Pakistani troops had crossed the Line of Control all along the Kargil region. They were positioned in the Batalik sector, in the Dras sector and Mushkoh sector, in the Kaksar sector, at Turtok and Chorbat La. The first clear perception that Pakistan was engaged in a large-scale invasion across the Line of Control occurred between the 2 and 5 May when forward units of the Indian Army got information about increased Pakistani presence from their LOCAL informants. The war (which commenced in May and came to an end in late July-early August) was fought along a 200 kilometre front on the Line of Control, stretching from Mushkoh valley to the Saltoro Ridge on the western flank of the Siachen Glacier. Pakistan had not only crossed the Line of Control to a width of nearly 200 kilometres but had also moved into territory to a
depth of 10 to 12 kilometres. The main battle was fought in excruciatingly
difficult terrain, in extremely cold conditions, and at heights of between
10,000 to 18,000 feet.

The overall confrontationist phenomenon instigated by Pakistan
resulted in regular war fighting (without it being openly declared) between
Pakistani troops of the Northern Areas under force commander, Northern
Areas Pakistan, and 10 Corps of the Pakistani Army, and nearly two and a
half divisions of the Indian Army belonging to our Northern Command.
While the Pakistani forces used light and heavy infantry weapons as well as
heavy artillery and surface-to-air missiles, the Indian armed forces, apart from
using similar weapons systems also operated with support from the Indian
Air Force, involving both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. The Indian Air
Force lost two aircrafts and a helicopter in the initial phase of the operations
but remained part of the collective coordinated military effort despite the
losses. The Indian Navy went into a pre-emptive effective posture against
Pakistan by deploying warships in the Arabian Sea, bottling up the Pakistani
Navy and Pakistani shipping at Karachi, under what was called "Operation
Talwar". Pakistan had labelled its invasion "Operation Badr". The Indian
response of the army, air force and navy, was labelled "Operation Vijay",
"Operation Safed Sagar" and "Operation Talwar". Another dimension of the
Kargil conflict the Indian people should collectively acknowledge is that it
was a costly war marked by high sacrifices and tragedy: 481 officers and other
ranks of the Indian Army were killed and 1,159 were wounded. The largest
number of casualties was among young officers who led their men from the
front in the battle. The Kargil Review Committee Report gave the verdict that
despite harsh battle conditions and heavy casualties, the morale of the Indian
forces was extremely high. Young officers valiantly led soldiers who were
deeply committed to the country.
The Geo-strategic Significance of Kargil:

What was the motivation of Pakistan's military adventurism in Kargil? What was the extent of direct governmental participation in the aggression in the Kargil sector and the Line of Control? What are the lessons that India should learn from the Kargil experience? Should Pakistan be trusted to return to the negotiating table? Should the dialogue be continued? Given the apparent intention of Pakistan to continue its proxy war against India, to destabilize India, how should India deal with this threat? How should India assess the international reaction to the Kargil crisis? What are the lines on which Indo-Pakistan relations are likely to develop?

Before one proceeds to examine these points, it would be pertinent to describe the geo-strategic and demographic characteristics of Kargil and the factual and legal basis of the Line of Control that divides Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India.

Geographically, Kargil is a region of undoubted significance for the security of the Valley, Ladakh and our military positions on the Siachen Glacier. The area lying southwest from Ladakh straddles the approaches towards Siachen, towards Ladakh and to the Kashmir valley. The area lies within Indian territory east of the Line of Control and Siachen and the Sal tortured Heights that are beyond the northernmost points up to which the Line of Control has been formally demarcated and delineated. (Grid refers to Point N3-9842.) It should be remembered that Kargil is not a part of the Valley. It was originally a part of Ladakh, but was made a separate district because the majority of the people living in this district were Shia Muslims. If Pakistan could capture the Kargil area (stretching across 140 kilometres of mountain ranges) it could interdict the highway from the Valley to Ladakh and cut off India's approach to both Ladakh and Siachen. The Kargil sector of the Line of Control (covering the Mushkoh valley, Dras, Kaksar, Chhainikund, Shingo Batalik and Chorbat La), because of the terrain, was not manned in detail and around the year. There were gaps between brigades providing security to the
Siachen region and brigades responsible for security at Kargil and Gurez. It was also felt that the composition of the Buddhist-Shia population of the area would be a natural preventive against any extensive Pakistani military intrusion. Regular Pakistani forces came across the Line of Control all along the 140-kilometre stretch, penetrating into Indian territory to a depth of 10 to 12 kilometres between March and May 1999. When challenged by India, Pakistan argued that it had not crossed into Indian territory, that the Line of Control in this sector was not clearly demarcated or delineated. It would be sufficient to keep the following facts in mind. The line of Control is rooted in the ceasefire lines drawn up after the 1948 and 1965 wars with Pakistan. The present Line of Control was drawn up on the basis of the stipulations of the Simla Agreement of July 1972. The Line was drawn on the basis of mutual consent between the senior army commanders of India and Pakistan. The delineation of the Line has been shown on nine maps with detailed grid references in the appropriate scale. These have been countersigned by the military representatives of Pakistan. A matter of deliberate significance is that this Line was not a cease-fire line, but a Line of Control, not a Line of "Actual" Control, which might have implied the Line being a temporary arrangement. This was definitely not the intention. The agreement was on a permanent Line.

This Line of Control was respected by both sides for 27 years from 1972 to 1999. What then were the Pakistani motivations in violating it? The macro-level political motivations were manifold. First, the restoration of an elected government in Jammu and Kashmir and the gradual return of political stability and economic normality resulted in Jammu and Kashmir fading away as an area of crisis for the international community. Compounding this situation was an incremental success achieved by Indian security forces in countering and neutralising terrorist activities. The efforts of Pakistan in 1989 to destabilise and separate Jammu and Kashmir from India came to naught. Some efforts had to be made to refocus international attention on the Kashmir issue within the framework of Pakistani objectives.
Second, strategic planners of Pakistan believed the international community was becoming supportive of a settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir issue on the basis of some kind of Line of Control. So it was decided to change the delineation of the Line of Control to a more advantageous position in favour of Pakistan. Shifting the Line of Control eastwards would enable Pakistan to continue its efforts to capture Jammu and Kashmir from a stronger position. Third, if this shift of the Line of Control could be consolidated in the Kargil sector, it would also have weakened India's strategic capacity to safeguard Ladakh and the Valley. The expectation was that the Chinese would not have minded Pakistan acquiring a more advantageous geo-strategic position on the southern and southeastern flanks of the Karakoram highway.

If this military conflict could be taken to the threshold of a tangible nuclear confrontation, the international community would intervene to pressurise India to compromise on Kashmir in a manner desired by Pakistan. To sum up, Pakistan's overall plans and detailed military objectives were assessed as follows by the Government of India:

1. The plan was to have been kept top secret, which would involve the least number of people and avoid any activity opposite Kargil, which might indicate Pakistani intentions.

2. Only an "in principle" concurrence without specifics was to be obtained from the Pakistani prime minister.

3. A cover plan must exist to obfuscate the aggression and defuse any escalation in an early time-frame.

4. The operation should help in internationalising the Kashmir issue, on which global attention had been flagging for some time.

With these terms of reference in mind, the Pakistani Army evolved a plan which was kept confined to the Pakistani chief of army staff (COAS), chief of general staff (CGS), director-general, military operations (DGMO),
GOC 10 Corps and GOC Force Commander, Northern Areas (FCNA) who was made overall in charge of operations in the Kargil sector. Even the corps commanders were not kept in the picture. This has been completely substantiated by the taped telephonic conversation between the Pakistani COAS and CGS.

**Pakistan's Aims:**

Pakistan's military aim in carrying out the intrusions was based on the following considerations:

(a) The intrusions would exploit large gaps, which exist in the defences in the sector on both the Indian and Pakistani sides of the Line of Control. The terrain is extremely rugged with very few tracks leading from the main roads towards the LOC. During winters the area gets heavy snowfall making movement almost impossible.

(b) The Zoji La Pass normally opens by end May/beginning June, so moving reinforcements by surface transport from Srinagar is not possible till then. Pakistan calculated that even if the intrusions were discovered in early May, as they were, the Indian Army reaction would be slow and limited, thereby allowing Pakistan to consolidate the intrusions more effectively. In the event, Zoji La was opened for troop induction in early May itself.

(c) The intrusions, if effective, would enable Pakistani troops to secure a number of domineering heights from where the Srinagar-Leh road could be interdicted.

(d) The intrusions would also draw in and tie down Indian reserves.

(e) The intrusions would give Pakistan control over substantial terrain across the LOC and enable it to negotiate from a position of strength.

(f) The intrusions would alter the status of the LOC.
Surprise and Deception:

Apart from keeping the plan top secret, Pakistan decided on the following measures of surprise and deception:

(a) No fresh troops would be inducted into the Force Command, Northern Areas for the proposed operation. Any large-scale troop movement (two or three battalions) would have drawn India's attention.

(b) The artillery inducted into the Force Command, Northern Areas, during the heavy exchange of fire in July-September 1998, was not de-induced. Since firing continued thereafter, though on a lower scale, this was not considered extraordinary.

(c) No reserve formations or units were moved into the FCNA till after the execution of the plan.

(d) The administrative bases for the intrusions were to be catered for from existing defences.

(e) Logistic lines of communication were to be along ridge lines and mullahs, well away from the tracks and positions of Indian troops.

Outline Plan:

The plan, which was simple, was brought into effect by creating four independent groups from four infantry battalions and two companies of the Special Service Group (SSG), which were already LOCated in the FCNA. These were:

1. 4 Northern Light Infantry (NLI) Battalion, the FCNA reserve LOCated in Gilgit.

2. 6 Northern Light Infantry (NLI) Battalion (ex 62 Infantry Brigade) LOCated at Skardu.

3. 5 Northern Light Infantry (NLI) Battalion (ex 82 Infantry Brigade) LOCated at Minimarg.
3 Northern Light Infantry (NLI) (ex 323 Infantry Brigade) LOCated at Dansam.

SSG -

The two companies of the SSG were to be allotted in smaller teams varying from 32 to 94 numbers among the four battalions.

Additional Resources -

The groups were also allotted shoulder-fired Air Defence AD missiles of the Stinger variety. This coupled with 12.7mm AD machine guns integral to the NLI Battalions, gave them a modicum of air defence capability.

Use of Militants -

Some militants from the Lashkar-e-Toiba, Harkat-ul-Ansar and Afgan war veterans were also grouped with each battalion to give it the facade of a jehad. After the intrusion, 800 or more militants were brought to the Skardu area for further reinforcements.

Artillery Support -

Pakistani artillery numbering 20 batteries was to provide fire support to the intruding groups from the Pakistani side of the LOC. This ensured that each intrusion had the support of three to four batteries. Observation post officers from the Pakistani Army were also grouped along with line and radio communications.

Execution of Plan:

The plan having been finalised, it was put into action towards the end of April. The main groups were broken into a number of smaller subgroups of 30 to 40 each for carrying out multiple intrusions along the ridge lines and to occupy the heights. The intrusions were in four main subsectors as under:

<table>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dras</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mushkoh Nullah</td>
<td>200-300</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Mr. Brajesh Mishra (second from left), the National Security Advisor, failed in his maiden assignment and admitted "We did not expect this kind of intrusion in Kargil."
Joint directions: The Indian General and the Air Chief meet some Indian soldiers in Mogulpara (J&K region) and discuss their experiences first hand.
Take post! A 105 mm Light Field Gun regiment in action in the Dras sector. One 75/24 Indian Mountain Gun, utilised in the direct firing role, can be seen in the foreground.
IAF MI-17 helicopter firing rockets during the second day of Kargil operations on May 27, 1999. After this helicopter was shot down by Pakistani stinger missile a day later, the Army did not have any suitable helicopter gunship to support them.
A sangar constructed next to a natural cave. Pakistan's NLI troops often took shelter in caves to escape artillery shelling.
Operation Vijay: General V P Malik, Air Chief Marshal A Y Tipnis, and other senior Army commanders wave the sign of victory as the war draws to a close. Tiber Hill is visible in the background.
Logistics -

Logistic support was carried out by soldiers from within each battalion and the militants, with the route for supply along ridge lines and mullahs.

Reserves -

After the plan had been implemented, Pakistan moved approximately a brigade of troops into the FCNA to recreate reserves.

Obfuscation Attempts:

There has been a systematic and consistent effort by the Pakistani Government to obfuscate the issue. As directed by the Pakistani COAS, the foreign minister of Pakistan, Sartaj Aziz, spoke without consistency or substance. The shifting stand of Pakistan since then has been on the following lines:

(a) The LOC is delineated but not demarcated. This is the most brazen attempt at obfuscation. The line while not marked on the ground is clearly identified by both the armies and has remained so for the last 27 years.

(b) The Pakistani Army has been in occupation of these heights for a long time.

(c) The intrusion of the LOC is not by the Pakistani Army but by militants over which Pakistan has no control.

(d) The Pakistani Army is fighting in the Dras and Kargil sectors.

Much speculative analysis and obfuscatory prognosis has occurred about the Pakistani invasion of the Kargil sector. Questions are also being asked, motivated or otherwise, on whether there is any real evidence about direct Pakistani involvement in the conflict. It is time that we took note of the objective and incontrovertible realities about what Pakistan has been up to and, more importantly, have a clear perception of Pakistani ambitions on which India should predicate our future policies.
The armed forces of the Government of India though taken by surprise functioned in a coordinated manner till the aggression was repulsed and the Pakistani forces pushed back across the Line of Control. The Indian forces had cleared the Pakistani invaders from all their major positions along the Line of Control by the first week of July and the decision taken was to mop up any remaining Pakistani positions whatever the cost. This was when the president of the United States provided a face-saving device to Prime Minister Sharif by suggesting that Pakistani forces withdraw into their own territory away from the Line of Control. The suggestion was reluctantly accepted by Sharif and by General Musharraf on 4 July, when an agreement to this effect was affirmed in the joint declaration issued at the end of Sharif’s discussions with Clinton in Washington on 4 July.

The Subrahmanyam Report:

Before one proceeds to discuss the political ramifications of the Kargil war, as they emerged, it would be pertinent to undertake a general assessment of the Kargil Review Committee Report prepared under the chairmanship of K. Subrahmanyam, one of India’s most knowledgeable experts on strategic affairs. The committee consisted of K. Subrahmanyam as convener, the other members being Lt. General K.K. Hazari, former vice chief of army staff, and B.G. Verghese, an eminent journalist, scholar and professor at the Centre for Policy Research. Satish Chandra, secretary of the National Security Council Secretariat, was ex-member of this review committee. The terms of reference of the committee were the following:

1. To review the events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in the Kargil district of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir.

2. To recommend such measures as are considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions.

The main report placed runs to 228 pages. In addition, it has 14 volumes of annexures, texts of testimonies given to the committee and extracts of reports and so on. The first point to be noted is that the committee
completed its work in a remarkably short time-about four-and-a-half months. The next is that this is the first time that the Government has appointed a committee to review the causes and background of a major security crisis consisting of outsiders, instead of resorting to a purely in-house military inquiry. Third, this is the first time that the report of such a committee has been made public through Parliament. Previous internal reviews of military conflicts and crisis undertaken by the Government of India about the 1962 and 1965 wars were internal and have not been made public. Fourth, the report has not just confined itself to the immediate causation of the 50-day war but contains a comprehensive and wide-ranging analysis of the conflict-prone predicament of India and Pakistan in terms of the history, in terms of Pakistani motivations and India’s reactions, in terms of the undercurrents of policies and mindsets, and in terms of the ramifications of how the Kashmir issue has been dealt with by India and Pakistan. It is also the first time perhaps that multidimensional recommendations have been made to fine-tune our intelligence, security and defence establishments.

One will deal with the criticism levelled at the Kargil Report, but before that it would be worthwhile summing up the answers to the question: could Kargil have been avoided? The Committee’s sequential findings and recommendations (Chapters 12, 13 and 14 of the Report) address this subject. The conclusions briefly are: "Had the Indian Army sought to plug all conceivable loopholes, to frustrate every eventuality... and attempted to safeguard every inch of (unpopulated) territory, it would have meant the Siachenisation of Kargil along a wider front with correspondingly higher human and material costs. This would have been neither militarily nor politically cost-effective and such a posture would have enabled Pakistan to bleed India."

Indications are that the Kargil plan was originally formulated in the 1980s, but it was activated only after General Musharraf took over the command of the Pakistani army. Nawaz Sharif was fully aware of the Kargil
implementation plan. While the Lahore summit between Vajpayee and Sharif did not lower the guard of the Indian decision-makers, there was a failure of intelligence inputs in terms of timely assessments which in turn resulted in our being surprised and our response delayed. The report says that while both RAW and the IB had communicated information about increased Pakistani activities in the Kargil sector, these reports were not channelled to all relevant authorities. It is also interesting to note the conclusions in the report that no specific indicators of a likely major attack in the Kargil sector, such as significant improvements in logistics and communications or a substantial forces build-up or forward deployment of forces, were reported by any of the agencies. The report goes on to say: "The critical failure of Intelligence was related to the absence of any information on the induction and de-induction of battalions and the lack of accurate data on the identity of battalions in the area of Kargil during 1998 and then onwards." The Kargil intrusion, according to the report, was essentially a limited Pakistani military exercise designed to internationalise the Kashmir issue which was tending to recede from the radar screen of the world community. The report refers to only one military officer, Brigadier Surinder Singh, as having failed in making correct assessments and not having initiated relevant anticipatory action.

Recommendations for remedial action in the report are wide ranging with suggestions for restructuring institutions, the improvement of procedures, reorganising arrangements for the flow of intelligence and so on. The volumes containing the annexures not only have texts of testimonies given and extracts of reports, etc., but also a wealth of information and data based on an extensive reading of books and documents dealing with security issues. The report itself contains footnotes with bibliographical references, emphasising the in-depth study with which the members of the committee desired to underpin their findings and recommendations. The historical context of the Kargil conflict has also been shown by the committee by detailing events leading to the previous conflicts with Pakistan.
Having touched upon the report's positive qualities, it is necessary to look at some of the inadequacies. These are not the result of oversight but of deliberate reticence. While there is a detailed description of the nature and content of the communications exchange from forward areas to Army Headquarters and back, there is no focused critical evaluation of the inadequacies or negligence that characterised the functioning of the army preceding the Kargil conflict. The report has focused mainly on the reasons for the complacency in the Northern Command in the pre-Kargil period, rather than on the critical shortcomings in observations, analyses and assessments at different levels in the command structure. There are some critical references of the divisional command level. But the report has been coy about critically evaluating the responses of the corps command and the Northern Army Command. There seems to have been no mechanism to ensure effective and real-time flow of information and assessments, from lower army echelons to Army Headquarters and the office of the chief of the army staff. There are only marginal references to the role that the Directorate General of Military Intelligence could have played. One understands that the internal assessment report prepared by the Armed Forces Headquarters itself was more forthright and critically introspective. This is the report prepared by General Reddy, which for obvious reasons would not be publicised. The rationale for not criticising the army might be that of not affecting the morale of the armed forces, which fought so bravely and sacrificed so much to regain Kargil. However, one wishes that the same amount of attention were given to the role of the armed forces as was given to the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and RAW.

This critical comment apart, one must unhesitatingly acknowledge that the report is a painstaking, methodical, scholarly and detailed analysis of a major military crisis. It is an important and substantial contribution in educating our Parliament and public opinion about several aspects of our national security concerns. The Government placing it before Parliament was a welcome initiative in introducing transparency on this sensitive subject, and
one hopes that making the Kargil Review Committee Report available to the public will lead to reports on the previous conflicts with China and Pakistan, for example the Henderson Brooks Report of 1962 also being declassified. Involving the citizen in a national security debate is the strongest foundation for national defence.

Having ventured this general evaluation, one has to re-emphasise that there were a series of intelligence inputs with sufficient specificity between June 1998 and February 1999 about a qualitatively incremental intrusive posture on the part of Pakistan on the Line of Control in the Kargil sector. The IB reported increased activities on the-borders and a continuing endeavour to infiltrate a large number of foreign mercenaries in the aftermath of the May 1998 nuclear tests. It also reported an increased movement of Pakistani armed forces in the Chorg, Haldi, Saddle, Reshma, Masjid, Ohallan and Langer sectors along the Line of Control, and on the construction of a helipad at Khod on the banks of the Indus river. The Northern Command itself had reported on the continuous dumping of ammunition and rations, the movement of additional troops and the presence of an increased number of militants in civilian dress in the Skardu, Varcha and Matrol sectors, awaiting induction into Jammu and Kashmir. In December 1998, the Northern Command had given an assessment that there had been a three-fold increase in troop movements from November 1998 onwards, and a two-fold increase in vehicular and normal transport movement. In fact, normal transport movement itself was assessed to be about nine times what it had been earlier in 1998. Parallel to this, RAW and the IB conveyed the assessment (between September 1998 and November 1998) that the 7th Field Regiment of the 8th Medium Artillery Regiment of the Pakistani forces had been deployed in operational areas opposite the Line of Control in the Kargil sector. There was also the RAW assessment that the Pakistani Army had engaged contractors to ferry 100,000 kilograms of ammunition to posts in the Gultari, Hasan and Javed sectors. RAW had reported additional units of the Northern Light Infantry of Pakistan moving into the Gultari area in September 1998.
The Intelligence Bureau had conveyed the assessment to the Government of India that a limited swift offensive by Pakistan could not be ruled out. It also gave the information that Pakistan was training members of the Taliban, including training in the Balti and Ladakhi languages, and that these cadres were likely to be infiltrated through Kargil from April 1999 onwards. That specific information was available to the Government from different sources is clear. What became equally obvious at the beginning of the Kargil conflict was that these different strands of inputs were not collated and that an integrated assessment was not made.

**Diplomatic Management:**

The initial official stance of the Government of Pakistan was that Pakistan was not involved in the invasion - that the crossing of the Line of Control was organised by indigenous mujahideen groups who took advantage of a comparative lack of attention of the Indian Army in the Kargil sector. It was said that India as usual was refusing to acknowledge the large-scale alienation of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir and their military prowess in challenging the Indian security forces. Both Sharif and Musharraf denied direct Pakistani involvement, almost till the end of May. It was only when Pakistani troops suffering casualties started becoming a matter of public knowledge that there was a reluctant acknowledgement of direct Pakistani participation. Once the Indian Army had come into possession of the diaries of Pakistani officers and soldiers, and once prisoners of war were taken by the Indian armed forces, India gave publicity to all of this and Pakistan could not maintain their mendacious obfuscation any more. So it changed track in its policy-statements on the conflict. The first point made was that the confrontation in Kargil occurred because the Indian Army was indulging in aggressive patrolling and the Pakistan assessment was that India would "do another Siachen" on Pakistan. The second was the Line of Control was not clearly demarcated in several sectors along the 700-odd kilometres. The third was skirmishes on the Line of Control were affecting Pakistani
civilians across it in Pakistani territory to prevent which retaliatory action had to be taken. Fourth, the widespread military conflict in Kargil was the result of India's obduracy on the Kashmir issue.

**Financial Implications of the Conflict:**

**Cost of the Conflict -**

It was estimated that the seventy-four day Kargil Conflict cost India approximately Rs. 10 to 20 crore per day (average Rs. 15 crore), a total of Rs. 1100 crore to Rs. 2000 crore. During the Conflict, the Government allotted special funds for emergent purchases of Defense Equipment and ammunition, from abroad, like Bofors ammunition from South Africa. As Pakistan could not be relied upon to honor the sanctity of the Line of Control in future, the Government decided to deploy 8 Mountain Division in Kargil Sector. For guarding the extra length of the Line of control, based on experience of the Glacier where maintaining a Brigade Group costs Rs 4 crore per day, the additional expenditure comes to Rs 4386 crore (approximately) per year. As permanent deployment of 8 Mountain Division in Kargil resulted in a vacuum in the Counter Insurgency grid in the Valley, ten extra battalions of Rashtriya Rifles were ordered to the raised, resulting in an extra expenditure of Rs 1100 crores.

Responding to the opinion the Indian Army against red tapeism in defense procurement the Government for the first time permitted Commanding Officers of units being deployed in the Kargil Sector, to go abroad and buy essential equipment and clothing before the onset of winter. The approximate cost of cladding a soldier in the Glaciated Terrain comes to Rs 1 lakh (US$2200). Though Indian Defense and Research Development Organization has working on these items and a few are being manufactured within the country with foreign collaboration, the quantities required would have taken them a long time to supply. For instance, the uniform of a soldier consists of Snow Boots costing Rs 6230, a jacket Rs 5300 and a trouser Rs 6700. A shirt costs Rs 3140, a cap Rs 760 and a windcheater Rs 1340. A sleeping bag costs 11,755 while the collective cost of snow and mountaineering equipment,
per soldier works to Rs 8000. For habitat, fiber glass huts and oil heaters for housing six soldiers cost up to Rs 2 lakhs, and need special effort for carriage and construction. these are needed at the formidable heights above 4500 m, where snow storms of speeds up to 100 kph and temperatures as low as \(-50^{\circ}\) Celsius are very frequent, for up to six months in a year. Most of these items had to be imported from Austria, Canada, Finland and Switzerland, on payment in dollars.

**War Casualties:**

The figures for Pakistani casualties as assessed by Indian authorities towards the end of the conflict were 745 Pakistani officers and soldiers had been killed and some 2,500 injured. While the war was costly in terms of human life for India, it was even more costly for Pakistan. That Pakistani troops mined areas being vacated was illustrative of a vengeful and frustrated mindset.

While it would not be prudent to compare the casualties suffered by the Indian Army in OPERATION VIJAY with those of previous operations as the number of troops involved was much less and the Pakistan Air Force was absent, it would be seen that since Independence India has lost the following brave and gallant men-

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<tr>
<td>Sino-India War 1962</td>
<td>1521</td>
<td>548</td>
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<tr>
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<td>OPERATION VIJAY 1999</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kargil War</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9,637</td>
<td>23,337</td>
<td>2,306</td>
<td>35,190</td>
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</table>
A record number of 1159 Indian soldiers were injured mainly due to artillery shelling by Pakistani troops in Kargil.
According to official sources, the rank structure of casualties during OPERATION VIJAY (from 9th May to July 31, 1999) were as per trends of previous conflicts, as under -

<table>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>481</td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1642</td>
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</table>

The load on surgical teams was very high, as out of the total 1248 casualties during OPERATION VIJAY, 832 required surgery, 50% of them of major type.

**List of PVC Awardees – Kargil 1999:**


**Captain Vikram Batra**

13 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles was ordered to move to Dras on 12 June 1999 as reserve to 18 Grenadiers for the capture of a feature called 'Hump' which was in fact an extension of the Tololting feature. Hump along with Rocky Knob, another important feature in the vicinity was captured by 1700 hours on 17 June 1999 after two nights of
intense fighting. The enemy suffered 8 killed and 9 wounded and left behind 3 UMGs (Universal Machine Guns) and large quantities of ammunition. These UMGs were thereafter used by our troops against the enemy.

The next task given to 13 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles was the capture of Pt 5140. This was one of the most strategically located and important features in the Dras Valley. It was from here that the enemy brought down one of our helicopters with a Stinger missile, and thereafter no helicopter could fly in the vicinity. Its capture therefore assumed paramount importance.

The task of capturing Pt 5140 was given to 'B' and 'D' Companies of 13 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles. 'B' Company commanded by Captain S.S. Jamwal and 'D' Company commanded by Captain Vikram Batra moved from Tololing Top at 0400 hours on 19 June 1999 and concentrated on the western slopes of Hump by 0630 hours, and lay 'doggo' there for the day.

**Lieutenant Manoj Kumar Pandey**

The 1st Battalion the 11th Gorkha Rifles had just finished a tough assignment on the Siachen Glacier and the officers and men were looking forward to their peace tenure at Poona. The battalion advance party had already reached Poona and handed over its winter clothing, most of its weapons and equipment and a large number of its personnel had been sent on leave. The Commanding Officer had moved out on premature retirement, the second-in-command was on leave and the battalion was being commanded by the officiating second-in-command. Fighting a war at Siachen—the world's highest battlefield—has its own outcomes. Climate and weather, besides the enemy, are implacable foes and the men were tired. Each man had lost about 5 kg in weight. It was in such a situation that the battalion, instead of proceeding to Poona, was ordered for operations in the Kargil Sector and told to move to Batalik.

Divested of its major equipment, very short on manpower and in the absence of its Commanding Officer the battalion was set impossible tasks.
That it responded positively and achieved the impossible, speaks very highly of the calibre of its officers and the fortitude and resilience of its men.

When 1/11 Gorkha Rifles was launched on Operation Vijay, Lieutenant Manoj Pandey always volunteered for the toughest jobs. Predictably, he was the first officer to move to the forward posts. On 9 May 1999, it was he who recovered the dead bodies of four jawans of another unit who were part of a patrol ambushed by the Pakistanis in their own area. Soon after, it was his mission that established contact with Kukar Thang, which led to its eventual capture. Yet again, he was part of the team that captured Jubar and it was he who established the first post there.

**Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav**

![Image of Lieutenant Yogender Singh Yadav]

The Tiger Hill complex is one of the most dominating and awe-inspiring features in the Dras Sector. Pakistani soldiers had occupied this in strength and were bringing effective artillery fire on large tracts of the National Highway IA. Eviction of the enemy from this feature was urgent and important. It was the key to enemy positions in the Dras Sector. The Tiger Hill complex was isolated from the north, south and east by Sikh on 21 May 1999. However, isolation from the west could not be done as the complete ridge line was occupied by the enemy. The Indian Army moreover was not permitted to cross the Line of Control to get behind the enemy to cut his line of communications.

On the night of 3-4 July 18 Grenadiers was assigned the task of capturing Tiger Hill from the east with 8 Sikh providing the firm base. 8 Sikh was also tasked to simulate attacks from the south and north as also to cut off Tiger Hill from the west.

The attack on Tiger Hill commenced on 3 July at 2030 hours. By 0130 hours 4 July 18 Grenadiers had captured part of its objective and 8 Sikh, exploiting the success of its simulated attacks, also captured important
Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav of 18 Grenadiers was erroneously mentioned as having been awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously for gallantry in Kargil War, when he was alive and undergoing treatment at Base hospital, Delhi. The Army Chief SK Vialik called on the brave soldier on Aug 15, 1999 to express regret. A ludicrous goofup for political expediency.
features of Tiger Hill on its western spur by 0400 hours on 5 July 1999, thereby isolating the enemy deployed on Tiger Hill.

Meanwhile 18 Grenadiers continued attacking its remaining objectives on Tiger Hill and capturing them against fierce opposition. Counter-attacks against objectives captured by 8 Sikh were repulsed and beaten back. The final objectives of Tiger Hill were captured by 18 Grenadiers on 11 July 1999 and the battle of Tiger Hill was over.

**Rifleman Sanjay Kumar**

The battle for Pt 4875 has already been described in the account of Captain Vikram Batra. 13 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles was awarded two Param Vir Chakras for the same operation. This is the first time in the history of our Army that two individuals of the same battalion have been awarded the nation’s highest award for courage in the same operation. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his action in the capture of Flat Top, a feature of Pt 4875, and Captain Vikram Batra for his action in the capture of Ledge also a feature north of Pt 4875, but the same feature.

In the operation for the capture of Flat Top on 4 July 1999, Rifleman Sanjay Kumar volunteered to be the leading scout of the attacking column. As the attack progressed, enemy automatic fire from one of the sangars posed a serious challenge, stalling its progress. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar realizing the seriousness of the situation charged the enemy sangar and in the hand-to-hand struggle that followed killed three of the intruders and disregarding his injuries charged the second sangar. The enemy taken by surprise fled leaving behind an Universal Machine Gun (UMG). Rifleman Sanjay Kumar picked up the UMG and used it to kill more of the fleeing enemy. His bold and courageous action motivated his comrades who rushed the remaining sangars and cleared Flat Top of the enemy. Although bleeding profusely from his wounds he refused to be evacuated till Flat Top was cleared of all the enemy. His bold and courageous act, well beyond the call of duty earned for him and his unit the nation's highest award for courage in the face of the enemy.
India-Pakistan Relations in the Context of the Kargil Conflict:

The outbreak of the Kargil conflict so soon after the much publicised Lahore Summit and the Lahore Declaration has shaken the Indian subcontinent. The far-reaching political implications of the Pakistani game plan in the Kargil peaks have put a question mark on the future of the India-Pakistan relations. Indeed, the bloody conflict in Kargil will cast a lasting shadow over the India-Pakistan relations. The widespread feeling of betrayal and of being let down after the exhilarations of the Lahore spirit will continue to colour India's vision of its neighbour.

Pakistan has attempted to link the Kargil intrusion with the larger issue of Jammu and Kashmir while denying its own involvement in the fighting claiming that only the LOCAL Kashmiri militants are involved. No one in India is taken in by this version of the events.

The entire game plan of Pakistani advance as conceived by the Pakistani Army has long-term military and political implications. After having occupied strategic positions on the high peaks in Kargil, traffic on the Srinagar-Leh Highway would have been easily interdicted cutting off Ladakh from the rest of the country. That would have helped the outbreak of insurgency in the Ladakh region. Pakistan then would have easily reoccupied Siachen area which has been long a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. The flagging militancy in the Valley would have got a boost bringing to an end the normalcy that had been brought about by New Delhi after so much hard work.

The Indian response to Pakistani advance would have been difficult because of the element of surprise and the disadvantage of terrain in which Indian Army would have been fighting. A prolonged campaign had obviously been planned by Islamabad. Both India and Pakistan, having become nuclear powers, a nuclear confrontation could not have been ruled out once the fighting spread to other areas of Kashmir or India retaliated by
crossing the Line of Control. This would have attracted world attention and international intervention was Islamabad's goal. Unlike 1948 and 1965, when Pakistan planned to seize the State of Jammu and Kashmir once the infiltrators had overrun the State in the wake of general uprising, the Kargil operation's objective appears to be giving fillip to widespread insurgency in the State and escalating the conflict to a level where nuclear blackmail could be used to invite international intervention and force India to the negotiating table.

The basic question here is does Pakistan want Kashmir alone? Is it a territorial dispute and once Pakistan gets Kashmir will then India-Pakistan relations become normal? Pakistani rulers during the last sixty one years have been claiming that Kashmir is the cause of India-Pakistan conflict. The submission of this is that Kashmir is only a symptom of India-Pakistan hostility. The roots of this conflict go to the ideological dispute which led to partition. India and Pakistan represent two ideologies and two world-views. If Kashmir had not been there Pakistan would have found some other contentious issue which would have become the reason for the continued conflict. In the context of the world of the forties India represented the ideology of anti-imperialism, non-alignment, composite nationalism, secularism and democracy. Pakistan opted for Muslim nationalism (another name for communalism); it could never settle its identity or system of governance and hence for almost form of military rule. Pakistan's raison d'être was to be different in every respect from that of India, its leaders disowned the common history, common culture and common traditions of the subcontinent. This was achieved through following a consistent implacable hostility towards India. Pakistan nurtured an enemy image of India, a legacy of the bitter pre-partition controversies between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. A consequence of it was the desire to attain equality and parity with India in every respect, though the disparity in size, population, natural resources and economic resources made it impossible. Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons, wholly India-centric, were
motivated by this obsession for parity with India. This psyche of Pakistan's ruling class ruled out any search by them for a friendly *modus vivendi* with India. This was reflected in the first war they launched against India within eight weeks of attaining Independence for seizing the State of Jammu and Kashmir. It was of no consequence that Jinnah had rejected Mountbatten's suggestion that the people of each Princely State might be consulted to determine their choice for the State's accession to either of the two Dominions. It was well-known that the people of Kashmir under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah had rejected Jinnah's overtures to win them over to Pakistan as early as 1944. Pakistan launched the second attempt to seize Kashmir in 1965 once again by inducting infiltrators into the State to be followed by Pakistani armed forces. The India-Pakistan war which followed ended in a stalemate and Pakistan failed in its attempt to overrun the State. The Tashkent declaration restored the *status quo ante*. The Kashmir misadventure by the then Pakistan's military rulers General Ayub Khan marked the starting point of his own downfall.

The Indian policy towards Pakistan has been marked by a kind of indulgence which has often cost India dear. Indian leadership had hoped that once democratic processes are enforced in Pakistan the economic and political aspirations of the people of the country would play a role in moderating that country's approach to India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's promise of ascertaining the wishes of the people of Kashmir soon after its accession to India despite Pakistan's brazen sponsoring of tribal invasion of the State in 1947 reflected his own democratic instinct and a desire to be fair to Pakistan.

The Indian approach was also reflected at the time of Simla negotiations in July 1972. One of the Pakistani participants at the Simla Conference has described how Prime Minister Indira Gandhi agreed to the inclusion of the phrases in the final text despite Indian ministers' objections, which provided a face-saving device to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to return to Pakistan in triumph. India at that time could have used its position
as the victor in the 1971 war to impose its conditions on the defeated Pakistan with an insecure government. It is also well-known that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made these concessions to Bhutto because it was feared that if he returned empty handed from Simla there might be a military takeover in Pakistan.

Once Bhutto was jubilantly at home he did not bother about the Simla Agreement nor did his successors. It was General Zia-ul-Haq who planned and sponsored the current militancy in Kashmir. He carried on a relentless anti-India campaign on front and every forum. His Afghan policy had also an anti-India dimension. According to some analysts General Zia-ul-Haq’s plan to have a friendly regime in Kabul was aimed at securing a strategic depth for Pakistan in case of a confrontation with India. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto took up from where General Zia-ul-Haq had left off. After a brief interlude of friendly chat with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi she outdid every other Pakistani ruler in her shrill war cries against India during her two terms. Her recent repentance on her hawkish past has come somewhat late in the day.

It is argued in some circles in India that Pakistan’s India and Kashmir policy has been the exclusive preserve of its military establishment. This argument is only partly true. In 1988 when Benazir obtained a majority in the National Assembly in the first election held after the death of General Zia-ul-Haq, then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan delayed inducting her into office for almost a fortnight. It had become known that she was sworn in only after she agreed to some conditions and one of them was an undertaking not to interfere in military establishment’s Kashmir policy. It was well-known that during her two terms in office she was not allowed any say in the affairs of the military establishment. She had publicly clashed with the President over her right to have a say in the appointment of Chiefs of three military wings.

However, over the last decade some changes have taken place in the equation between the political leadership and the GHQ. The election of Nawaz Sharif with two-third majority and subsequent repeal of the Eighth
Amendment in early 1997, has considerably strengthened his position. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif later manoeuvred out a Chief Justice, an ambitious President and a meddlesome Army Chief. However, it does not mean that the Army has ceased to be the final arbiter in all decisions of national importance. The Kashmir dispute has been a case apart. Pakistan's India policy including the Kashmir dispute has always been above the changing balance in power structure in Pakistan. The political class in Pakistan as represented by the establishment which includes the politicians, the bureaucracy and the military have a consensus on Pakistan's Kashmir campaign. This was so in 1965 and it continues till today.

No evidence has been cited till today to prove that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was not taken into confidence in regard to the Kargil adventure. On the contrary there is enough to show that it was a well-thought-out plan both militarily and politically in all its implications. Even the reports that Prime Minister was not fully in the picture about the Kargil affair appear to be carefully pre-planned to provide an alibi to the political leadership.

Another dimension of the Kargil game plan should be noted. Within a few days of the Indian response to the infiltration, Pakistani foreign ministry had gone on an assiduous campaign for a dialogue to de-escalate the conflict while linking Kargil as a part of the larger Kashmir problem. That was Sartaj Aziz's mission in New Delhi in mid June. This was also in a way answer to the increasing disapproval of the Pakistani intrusion by the international community. The objective was to show that the Line of Control was not clear and the intrusion was by the ILOCAL militants, the Indian response to the intrusion also amounted to the violation of the Line of Control. And further that Pakistan was only wanting a reopening of the dialogue on Kashmir. Unfortunately for Pakistan nobody bought its line.

In fact Pakistan's strategy for a long time has been to force India to the negotiating table on the Kashmir dispute. What they want is to reopen the question of the accession of Kashmir to India. In any such dialogue Pakistan
would press for the implementation of the outdated United Nations resolutions and the holding of a plebiscite in Kashmir. Obviously these demands will not be met by India. Pakistan would then accuse India of not willing to settle the Kashmir dispute. For Pakistan a reasonable settlement means handing over of Kashmir to Pakistan on the negotiating table which they could not get through three wars.

Another illusion has been created by some in India that if India agrees to the conversion of Line of Control into a permanent border Pakistan would jump at it. Pakistan will not agree to this. The Kashmir dispute is not about Ladakh, it is also not about Jammu, it is about the Kashmir Valley. And Kashmir Valley is on this side of the Line of Control.

Lastly even if, in the unlikely event, the Kashmir dispute is resolved, will India-Pakistan relations become normal and friendly? As argued in the early part of this paper, Pakistan has opposed cultural relations with India, has persistently placed obstructions on economic and trade relations, on people to people contacts not because of the Kashmir dispute. The reason is more fundamental and ideological. Pakistan has been alleging that India has not accepted it and its ideology of two nation theory, has sympathised With the autonomy movement of the Bengalis and has tried to break up the country. It is Pakistan's basic insecurity and vulnerability against India that explains its relentless hostility to it. The major charge by Pakistan government against Pakistani journalist Najam Sethi was that he made a critical speech before an audience in an "enemy" country. This was the official statement of a few months after the Lahore Declaration and days before the Kargil conflict erupted. India for the Pakistani Establishment is the enemy, Kashmir or no Kashmir.

Kargil may have been a minor clash but it marks a qualitative change in India-Pakistan relations. No agreements like Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration will ever again inspire the same confidence. No wars may be fought between the two neighbours but peace will henceforth be an armed peace for a long time to come.