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# HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

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Vol. 3 Nos. 3-4

July - December 1999

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## ***KARGIL SPECIAL***

**Politico-Military Dimensions of Operation Vijay**

*Vinod Anand*

**Kargil Conflict : View from Kashmir**

*K. Warikoo*

**Kargil : Displacement of Population**

*Bupinder Zutshi*

**Kargil Conflict : An Eyewitness Account**

*Paul Beersmans*

**International Law Perspective**

*V. S. Mani*

**US Approach to Kargil Conflict**

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**China's Response to Kargil Conflict**

*Swaran Singh*

**Kargil and Beyond**

*A. K. Ray*

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**Editor : K. WARIKOO**

**Assistant Editor : SHARAD K. SONI**

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## *Editor's Page*

Kargil (2704 metres), 204 kms. from Srinagar in the west and 234 kms. from Leh in the east, was in 1979 carved out as a separate district out of Ladakh province of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. With a population of over 90,000 (1999 estimates) and an area of 14,036 sq. kms., Kargil has been an important base for adventure tours in Great Himalayas and also a night halt for those travelling from Srinagar to Leh. Situated across the Zoji La pass in Great Himalayan range on the Srinagar-Leh national highway and dominating routes from Leh, Dras and Skardo, Kargil assumes a unique geo-strategic importance in the Indian Himalayas.

This land of high adventures came into sharp focus of national and global attention in early May 1999 when Pakistan army belonging to the 4th Northern Light Infantry (NLI), 6th NLI ex Skardo, 5th NLI ex Minimarg and 3rd NLI ex Dansarn (west of Siachen glacier) alongwith the irregulars called *Mujahideen* of the Pak based Islamist terrorist groups-*Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*, *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Al Badr* were found to have intruded about 7 to 10 kms. inside the Indian side of LoC along a stretch of about 150 kms., occupying the high points in Dras, Kaksar and Batalik area of Kargil. Pakistani intrusion was vacated by the Indian forces in an intense battle over high features ranging from 11,000 to 20,000 feet. The 70 days conflict cost Indian forces 470 precious lives and many more wounded, whereas Pakistan is reported to have lost 700 men and many more injured. It was for the first time that the Indo-Pak military conflict was brought live into the drawing rooms by intense media coverage.

The Kargil crisis unleashed latent nationalism and fierce patriotism throughout India cutting across regional, religious and caste barriers. It demonstrated deep rooted sense of national unity and

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commitment to the territorial integrity of India. Kargil symbolises the grit and heroism of Indian troops getting the better of Pakistani perfidy. Kargil which followed the decade long proxy war launched by Pakistan in Kashmir, involved a calculated Pak strategy combining the use of sub-conventional and conventional modern weapons and highly equipped regular and irregular forces with initiative and surprise as a key element. It is now clear that Kargil intrusions were planned for quite some time even before the Lahore process had begun. Its Kargil misadventure boomeranged on Pakistan which was held responsible for this unwanted conflict. The international community expressed itself against any alteration in the existing LoC in Jammu and Kashmir, thereby reiterating the principle of inviolability of state boundaries.

It was in August 1999 that the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation organised a day long Seminar at Delhi to deliberate upon various dimensions and challenges posed by the Kargil conflict. This was followed by a fortnight long field study visit by this Editor alongwith the Secretary (J&K Chapter) of the Himalayan Reserach and Cultural Foundation through Jammu to Srinagar, Dras, Kargil and Leh. This Special Issue is largely based on this Seminar proceedings, with eminent academics, defence analysts and area specialists contributing to our endeavour. There is a consensus that India needs to look beyond Kargil and take urgent remedial steps to bring the level of defence outlay at least to that of 1989-90 which was more than 3 per cent of the GDP, besides creating a combined structure of three defence services and the Defence Ministry with a unified command. Kargil episode has only underlined the need to take concerted steps to beef up internal and external security. Time has come to adopt a long term policy to defend its strategic frontiers in the Himalayas so that no hostile country dares to repeat Kargil in future.

**K. WARIKOO**

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# **POLITICO-MILITARY DIMENSIONS OF OPERATION VIJAY**

*Vinod Anand*

The artillery duels and firing of small arms have been a regular feature along the LoC (Line of Control) between India and Pakistan in the troubled state of Jammu & Kashmir. The LoC came about as a result of Simla Agreement of 1972 signed between the two parties superseding the earlier cease fire line. As a matter of routine there would be an increase in the intensity of shelling by Pakistan across the LoC whenever Pakistan wanted to support the infiltration of militants and mercenaries across the LoC or whenever there were diplomatic parleys between the two countries. This activity was undertaken in order to keep the pot boiling in the Kashmir Valley and draw the attention of international community besides diverting the attention of its own populace from domestic affairs. The upsurge in artillery shelling across the LoC had increased both in frequency and intensity since September 1997 as compared to earlier years, when Pakistan moved long range guns to Baltistan.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, when month of May 1999 dawned in Kargil, it was business as usual with heavy artillery shelling on Srinagar - Kargil - Leh road. As the news of intrusion by infiltrators started filtering in, Brigade Headquarters started dispatching reconnaissance patrols on the premise that infiltrators may be using Kargil route to reach the Valley. Two of these patrols walked into well-laid ambushes of the enemy. On May 14, eight days after Lt. Saurabh Kalia's patrol had disappeared, Indian reconnaissance parties encountered a number of defensive positions being occupied by intruders with the intentions of holding on to the high peaks held by them.

The Defence Minister had visited Siachen on May 12 and was apprised of some local militants having been caught in Turtuk area.<sup>2</sup> However, by May 14, it was confirmed that large number of infiltrators had sneaked in and occupied the unheld areas in Kargil sector. Defence



*Vinod Anand*

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Minister described the intrusion as sporadic and announced that Army was well prepared to meet the situation. On May 16, he went on to add that 'intruders will be evicted in 48 hours'.<sup>3</sup> Next day he again asserted that Army had cordoned off the area entirely and that military objectives would be realised within next two days. Meanwhile, General V.P. Malik, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) had left for tour of Poland on May 10.

The above events have been recounted to indicate that hardly anyone was aware of the correct situation on the ground. By May 17, Army had commenced sidestepping additional infantry and artillery to meet the developing military situation. On May 19, GOC 15 Corps. Lt. Gen. Krishan Pal gave a press conference and made two points. First, infiltration was fully backed by Pakistani Army and second, the well-trained infiltrators were on a suicidal mission.

Thereafter, it was decided to carry out an air survey of Kargil sector. On May 21, one Canberra aircraft (the oldest bomber aircraft in the Indian Air Force) was dispatched on the mission of surveying border. It could not be sent on 19 and 20 May because of bad weather. The Canberra was shot at and its engines damaged but it landed back safely at Srinagar. It reported that upto eight helipads could be seen on the Indian side of the LoC and there were a number of pockets of intrusions. It was perhaps then that the gravity of situation became evident and army started seriously considering the use of air power. The COAS finally returned by then from foreign tour. Initial requests of Army for air support were side stepped citing the likely ineffectiveness of air strikes due to mountainous terrain and the qualitative upgradation of the military response. COAS as chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee could not enforce a military decision (that is use of air power) which was objected to by a service chief. On 24 May, the two Prime Ministers spoke on telephone but the matters could not be resolved. Meanwhile, two Director Generals of Military Operations had also spoken to each other on telephone and Pakistani counterpart tried in vain to obfuscate the issue.

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On May 24, first meeting of apex Cabinet Committee on Security was held. It was decided to launch Operation Vijay and use air power to evict the intruders. After the meeting Prime Minister described Kargil situation as a “War-like” situation.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, over 50 soldiers had been killed and useful time had been lost which could have been gainfully utilized to interdict and pulverise the pockets of intrusion by use of air power.

#### ***Pak Military Plans***

The Pak operation plan in Kargil was a brilliant tactical move but as hindsight has proved, it turned out to be a strategic disaster. There were too many assumptions and presumptions made and likely post-conflict situation had not been thoroughly war-gamed. The main players in the Kargil plan were Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the COAS, his Chief of General Staff, Lt. Gen. Mohammad Aziz Khan, Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad, GOC 10 Corps, Force Commander Northern Areas (FCNA) Maj. Gen. Javed Hassan and Lt. Gen. Tauqif Zia, the DGMO. The Prime Minister was also kept informed. The other Pakistan Army's Corps Commanders and politicians were informed only on 19 May after the fighting had broken out.<sup>5</sup>

The planning for Kargil started soon after Gen. Pervez Musharraf took over as COAS in October 1998. The key ingredients of plan were :

- (a) To occupy dominating heights overlooking the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road which were left unheld by Indians during the winter period.
- (b) After having thus established a firm base, the next step was to cut off line of communications to Ladakh sector thus undermining ongoing Siachen operations.
- (c) To use the lodgement thus established for infiltration of militants and mercenaries into Kashmir Valley.

Pakistan's strategy had been built around internationalising the Kashmir issue and simultaneously undermining the sanctity of LoC,

which was in existence for 27 years. Pakistani planners believed that with Kargil operation they might secure the intervention of the UN or a third party as they had succeeded in doing so earlier in 1947-48 and 1965 operations. The severing off of Srinagar-Kargil-Leh artery that facilitated build up of supply of and troops would have not only affected Leh and Siachen but also it would have prevented side stepping of military resources to Kargil sector once the battle was joined with Indian forces.<sup>6</sup>

The other major element of plan was secrecy and surprise. In order to maintain surprise, all major troop movements were made into Northern Areas in the period preceding the operation.<sup>7</sup> Movements and readjustments within the sector were kept to the minimum and these were done at night. Radio silence was observed till Indian Air Force strikes began. Battalions of Northern Light Infantry (NLI) which were under FCNA were formed into a number of columns and groups.<sup>8</sup> There was a sprinkling of Special Services Group teams for undertaking commando operations. These columns were led by regular officers and were armed with state-of-the art light weapons and equipment, Stinger missiles and 12.7 mm anti-aircraft guns. Logistically, these columns were well-prepared and provided for. They were well trained, waited out the worst of winter and every column occupied 10 to 12 posts as snows melted in April.

When battle commenced the total force level in Batalik, Kaksar, Drass and Mashkoh Valley was assessed to be eight to nine hundred regulars with a thousand or so fighting porters. It was also believed that a similar number were waiting on the other side of LoC to join the battle. This force was being provided with artillery support from well-prepared artillery emplacements from across the LoC. The artillery component consisted of 25 Pounders, 105 mm Howitzers, 155 mm Howitzers, 5.5 Inch Howitzers, 120 mm Mortars and some 122 mm Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers. However, the most potent force multiplier was the use of gun locating radar ANTPQ-37 that directed accurate counter bombardment against Indian artillery gun positions in Drass and Kargil.<sup>9</sup>

### ***POLITICO-MILITARY DIMENSIONS OF OPERATION VIJAY***

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One of the major flaws in Pakistan's strategy was that it wanted the world to presume that such a well-trained, well-prepared and well-armed force supported by a preponderance of artillery, was an indigenous *Mujahideen* force. This force started intrusions around middle of April and was to have consolidated its positions by third week of May. However, Indian Army opened Zoji La Pass earlier on May 15, and Indian reinforcements started rushing in to Kargil sector throwing intrusion plans out of gear. By third week of June, after capture of Tololing Heights by Indian Army, the tide had turned decidedly in favour of India.

#### ***India's Response***

When the meeting of apex Cabinet Committee on Security took place, it was realised that Kargil intrusions posed not only a challenge on military front but it also posed challenges on political and diplomatic fronts. Pakistan's perception or rather mind-set (as revealed to Stephen P. Cohen of Brookings Institution by Pakistan leadership in mid-eighties) was that a bold strike by Pakistan army to capture areas in Jammu & Kashmir may go unchallenged because of weak and indecisive political leadership at Delhi. And especially so when the nuclear deterrence was in place and also at a time when scholars like Stephen Cohen and many others in the world were propagating the theory of South Asia being a nuclear flash point. Such a thought process, Pakistan assumed, would invite an early intervention by international community and enable Pakistan to retain the initial gains made after an early termination of hostilities.<sup>10</sup> Indian political leadership did not oblige Pakistan; it upgraded the military response by launching air strikes. This also conveyed the message of India's firm resolve to vacate Pakistan's aggression. The political directive given to the Indian armed forces was very cut and dried, that is, to evict the pockets of intrusion and restore the sanctity of LoC. No time frame was given. The only restraining factor was that LoC was not to be crossed and if it became necessary to cross it, approval of cabinet had to be sought. This proved to be a very prudent decision as the latter events showed. The national objective was to attack Pakistan on flanks

where it was weak, that is, political and diplomatic fronts simultaneously with attacks on military front.

### *India's Military Plans*

India's military strategy in Kargil was based on three objectives. First was to contain the enemy's pockets of intrusion and prevent their further build-up and consolidation. After having achieved this objective, the second step was to evict the intruders and restore the LoC. The third and final step was to hold the ground so vacated and deny the same to the enemy.

Any military appreciation of a situation takes a minimum of four basic factors into account. These are terrain, enemy strength and dispositions, own strength and dispositions, and the factor of time and space. Terrain had very high peaks with very steep gradients, which were difficult to climb even for mountaineers. Well-trained and well-prepared and initially well-motivated enemy in four areas of Drass, Batalik, Kaksar and Mashkoh valley held these heights. At the commencement of operations, our forces were inadequate in strength. To launch a deliberate attack against well prepared defences in the mountains, the attacker needs a favourable force ratio of almost 9:1 as against 3:1 in the plains. Due to the difficult nature of terrain, one could not even estimate the time it would take to conclude the operations. All this had a bearing on the military plans, which were made to tackle the situation.

The key ingredients of Indian military plans in Kargil were :

- a) To side step reinforcements from Leh and Srinagar to contain even increasing barnacle like encrustation of hills and peaks by enemy intruders.
- b) To address the pockets of intrusions sector by sector in order of priority of threat to Kargil, i.e. Drass, Batalik, Mashkoh and Kaksar respectively.
- c) To use overwhelming and concentrated firepower including air strikes to interdict enemy supply lines and neutralise enemy ground positions.

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Drass heights which dominated a very long section of the Kargil road and camping ground in Drass where Brigade HQ is located, were undoubtedly the vital ground or center of gravity of the entire Kargil region. The clearance of the Drass heights was, therefore, first priority. Although Batalik did not pose any immediate threat to Kargil, it would have opened route for further intrusions into Nubra and Shyok Valleys thus turning the flank of Siachen sector. Therefore, this was allotted second priority. The last priority was allotted to Mashkoh and Kaksar intrusions as they were considered less important and could be tackled once the Drass heights had been captured.

While clearing the objectives, the tactics were to soften up the enemy with fire assaults, keep his head down, carry out multi-pronged thrusts, surround the enemy and thereafter deliver the final strike in the shape of infantry assault. As a normal part of the battle procedure, a quick reorganisation at captured objective was to be undertaken to ward off expected counter attacks by the intruders.

In the initial phases, only one brigade was available. As the gravity of situation started becoming clear, an infantry brigade from Leh sector and a mountain division along with the reserve brigade of 15 Corps were rushed in to contain the intruders. By the time attacks on Tololing height were launched there were five to six infantry brigades in Kargil sector consisting of a total of sixteen to eighteen infantry battalions. The infantry brigades were in turn under the two divisional headquarters.<sup>11</sup>

Artillery was side stepped into Kargil sector after milking the resources from dormant sectors of Northern Command and reserves of Western Command. When deliberate attacks on enemy positions commenced, there were five to six regiments of 155 mm Bofors, about six regiments of 105 mm Field Regiments, some units of 130 mm medium guns, 160 mm Heavy Mortars and 120 mm Mortars. There were one or two sub-units of 122 mm Multi-barrel Rocket launchers.

By the middle of June, two mountain divisions from Eastern sector were moved to Western sector to meet any eventuality, which could arise out of possible escalation of hostilities. Meanwhile defensive formations had also moved to their operational areas.

*Options of Corssing the LoC*

Initially, it seemed that the proverbial Hamletian predicament of 'to be or not to be' was applicable to our dithering on whether to cross the LoC or not. Eventually, our carefully calibrated and ambiguous strategy of stating that 'LoC will not be crossed but it would be crossed if it became necessary in the supreme national interest' paid handsome political and diplomatic dividends.<sup>12</sup>

There were three military options open to the planners for making the enemy recoil from its intrusions in Kargil. These were :

- (a) Cross the LoC in suitable area anywhere along its length of 720 kms.
- (b) Cross the LoC in the vicinity of Kargil area of operations.
- (c) Open up another front along the international border as was done in Indo-Pak conflict of 1965.

A critical examination of military implications of above possible courses of action would reveal that as the time passed, the military utility of crossing the LoC also diminished in direct proportion. A considerable time had already lapsed in appreciating the correct situation and bringing in the Indian Air Force on 26 May. While Indian forces were rushing in to contain the intrusions, Pakistan had started moving its reserve formations opposite LoC. One division of Central Strategic Reserve and one division of GHQ reserve were moved in to augment Pakistani positions all along the LoC. These troops were deployed in likely areas of incursion across the LoC by Indian Army. There were also other difficulties in concentrating two forces in a suitable time frame, one for carrying out a counter offensive along the LoC and the other for containing Kargil intrusions.

The second option of crossing the LoC in the vicinity of Kargil intrusions was also militarily unsound for a number of reasons. The pockets of intrusions had a depth of 5 to 10 kms and were spread almost all along the entire sector. Pakistan had already sealed the gaps between intrusions across the LoC. Indian penetration would have had

### ***POLITICO-MILITARY DIMENSIONS OF OPERATION VIJAY***

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to go through or in the near vicinity of the intruders. This would have invited heavy casualties, stretched our lines of communications and logistical resupply chain and compromised the element of surprise.

Eventually, not crossing the LoC which turned out to be a sound decision politically and diplomatically, was also a sound decision militarily. The third option of opening up another front across the International Border (IB) had wider ramifications. The analysis of this option has been done subsequently.

#### ***India's Military Strategy***

India's overall military strategy revolves around a posture of 'dissuasive deterrence' against Pakistan and a policy of 'dissuasive defence' against China.<sup>13</sup> A strong dissuasive deterrence capability against Pakistan implies maintaining a pro-active posture with significantly favourable force ratio in the region of 2:1. However, since early nineties, due to dwindling defence budgets and ever-burgeoning voids of equipment, armaments, ammunition and stores, this favourable force ratio started declining. The problem was compounded by delays in upgradation and modernisation plans of all the three services. The combat effectiveness ratios had, perhaps, declined to such an extent that Pakistan was no longer deterred to carry out Kargil aggression and we were on the defensive.

The third option of opening up another front across the IB would have obviously invited adverse reaction from international community and hostilities would have escalated into a limited war. The lack of any significant military edge in our conventional capabilities may not have given us any clear and decisive military victory. The cryptic remark of COAS, Gen. V.P. Malik that in case war is thrust on us 'we will fight with whatever we have' had a number of military implications and is a reflection on the state of defence preparedness. Further, Pakistan having anticipated our moves had also moved its defensive formations along the IB, which prevented the Indian Army from achieving an element of surprise. Any incursion across the IB would have most likely resulted into a stalemate. It would have also escalated the conflagration to such



### *Vinod Anand*

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an extent that it would have invited the intervention of international community. Crossing of either the LoC or IB would have also changed the international community's perceptions about India being a mature nuclear power, which exercised utmost restraint in the face of extreme provocation by Pakistan.

### *Nuclear Deterrence*

Though there was lot of nuclear rhetoric emanating from across the border during the conflict, yet, it is believed that when Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Beijing, he was advised on the state of readiness of the Indian nuclear arsenal. This, perhaps, had a sobering effect on the Pakistan's PM and generals, and prevented further escalation of the conflict. The escalation could have easily taken the shape of either Pakistan using its Air Force or launching any other misadventure anywhere along the LoC or IB. The nuclear factor also imparted an impetus to efforts of international community in diffusing the situation by dealing firmly with the perpetrator of Kargil aggression. The recklessness and misadventure of Pakistan in Kargil cleared the fog in collective minds of G-8 nations, P-5 Nuclear Club and particularly America, about the role of Pakistan and calling their regulars and mercenaries as indigenous *Mujahideen*. Throughout the conflict India down played the nuclear factor which reflected that India was a mature nuclear power. However, India on its part was also restrained from escalating the situation, perhaps, because of the nuclear factor in the background. Earlier in 1987, during the Brass Tacks manoeuvres, when Pakistan had moved its armoured division opposite Ferozepur in Punjab, war was prevented largely because of likely presence of nuclear weapons with Pakistan. The only incident of armed conflict between two nuclear nations was that of Sino-Russian intense border clashes on the River Ussuri in 1969. However, this conflict did not progress beyond a point, perhaps because of nuclear factor. As mentioned earlier, Indo-Pak artillery duels and border clashes along the LoC are a regular feature and they are likely to continue into future without the likelihood of their escalation into a large-scale war because of nuclear deterrence in the subcontinent.<sup>14</sup>

***POLITICO-MILITARY DIMENSIONS OF OPERATION VIJAY***

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***Air Force Operations***

At the commencement of operations the Air Force was reluctant to launch air strikes due to a number of inhibiting factors. The difficulties of operating at high altitudes, the high speeds of aircrafts, problems of identification between friend and foe and restraints on crossing the LoC prevented the Air Force from fully utilizing its combat potential for battlefield air interdiction and close air support tasks. The downing of Mig-27 and Mig-21 on May 27 and of MI-17 helicopter on May 28 and presence of hand held Stinger missiles with the intruders forced the Air Force to change its strategy.

On May 30, IAF stepped up its air campaign by pressing into service state-of-the art Mirage-2000 aircraft for air strikes against the intruders.<sup>15</sup> It could stand off and release laser-guided bombs with pinpoint accuracy. It also had the necessary electronic warfare systems on board. IAF also shifted weight of air strikes to posts and camps in the rear for interdiction of lines of communications. It located and destroyed logistic bases like Muntho Dalo. Mig-21 and Mig-27 followed the Mirage-2000 fighters and attacked the enemy positions with missiles, rockets and bombs. A total of about 1200 air strikes were carried out which included reconnaissance sorties, search and destroy missions, escort missions and close air support tasks. The helicopters including the helicopters meant for carrying out the tasks of Forward Air Controller, who guides the fighter aircrafts on to targets, undertook over 200 sorties in 'Operation Vijay'. The use of Air Force had a tremendous morale-boosting effect on our ground troops and at the same time it demoralised the intruders. It was perhaps for the first time that battlefield air strikes were carried out in the night, thus engaging the enemy relentlessly during both day and night without giving him any respite. The use of Air Force contributed greatly to the maintenance of momentum of our operations, softening up of objectives and reducing our casualties and degrading the combat potential of the intruders.

*Naval Dimension*

Due to escalation of tensions, Indian Navy was put on high alert as a direct result of Pakistan's build-up. Before the commencement of operations Navy was to carry out its exercises in the Eastern theatre. However, later on, as a result of developing situation the scene of exercises was shifted to the Western theatre, that is, the Arabian Sea. Indian Navy was well poised to control sea lines of communications and put an effective blockade of oil and vital trade routes to Pakistan. The naval formations had moved right upto the mouth of the Gulf and were within striking distance of the enemy. The aircraft carrier was also kept in a state of operational readiness with seven days notice to meet any eventuality. The amphibious units of the Army were also moved from Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Western theatre.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the preventive naval deployment inhibited the Pakistanis to embark on a misadventure at sea. It is believed that with favourable balance of Indian naval power, the maritime front had a strategic influence on the ongoing operations on the land frontier.

*Success in Operations*

By first week of June, after adequate build-up of troops, fire support means and logistics, a major offensive was launched in Kargil and Drass sectors. These were accompanied by air strikes. By June 20, crucial Tololing heights which overlooked the Kargil-Leh road had been captured completely. On July 4, when Nawaz Sharif was being told by Clinton to restore the sanctity of LoC, army had recaptured Tiger Hill from the intruders using the strategy mentioned earlier. By this time, almost 80 per cent of the intrusions had been vacated. By July 8, the army shifted its weight of attack to Batalik and recaptured major vantage points along the Jubar heights in Batalik sector. With this, threat to turning the flank of Siachen and cutting off of Leh had been removed. By now, there was panic among Pakistanis.

When DGMOs of the two sides met at Wagah on July 11 to discuss modalities of withdrawal by Pakistanis, over 95 per cent of area had been cleared off of the intruders due to relentless military action

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against the intruders. Some pockets of intrusions still remaining in Mashkoh valley and in Kaksar areas were finally vacated by third week of July. Thereafter, army commenced executing the phase three of the plan, that is, consolidation of the recaptured areas and restoring the sanctity of LoC. On July 14, Prime Minister of India declared Operation Vijay as a grand success.

### **LESSONS OF KARGIL**

The failure of surveillance and intelligence machinery in detecting the intruders has been so monumental that it can not be easily ignored. The intelligence agencies usually couch their assessment in generalities without providing any specific assessments on the likely capabilities and intentions of our adversaries in a real-time situation. The bureaucratic nature of the intelligence organisations inhibits them from sharing the information with the affected entity, which needs it most. Our intelligence history is dotted with such failures. The failure to detect construction of road through Aksai Chin by Chinese, the ignorance about Pakistan adding an armoured division before 1965 Indo-Pak war and failing to inform our army about the capabilities of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) are some of the prominent examples of our tardy intelligence set up.<sup>17</sup>

National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra accepted that “we did not assess the situation properly .... we did not expect this sort of intrusion”. Lt. Gen. Krishan Pal, GOC 15 Corps acknowledged that “there has been some amount of intelligence failure”.

It is quite evident that a review and revamp of our intelligence structures is long over due.<sup>18</sup> We also need to acquire the state-of-art battlefield surveillance systems. In this era of information age knowledge based warfare, the news that it was a shepherd who first reported the presence of intruders, caused us endless embarrassment. Therefore, there is a crying need to acquire or develop satellites for surveillance, RPVs (remotely piloted vehicles), UAVs (uninhabited aerial vehicles), battlefield surveillance radars and ground - based and

air-based sensors of various types. The side way looking infra red radar capabilities of IAF aircraft also need to be enhanced.

The infantry needs to be equipped with state-of-the art lighter weapon systems and suitable clothing and equipment for fighting in the mountains. The deficiency of night vision devices and thermal imaging devices for fighting at night was greatly felt. Initial infantry patrols sent out on reports of intruders could not be contacted on radio for two days. Not only we need to acquire suitable HF and VHF radio sets; there is a need to induct GPS (Global Positioning Systems) for accurate navigation and fixation. Their induction into the other arms like armour and artillery would give a tremendous force multiplier effect.

When reinforcement from the valley, that is, 1 Naga and 8 Sikh were rushed in on May 11 and May 13 respectively, they were not acclimatised for high altitude. It takes 12 days to acclimatise the troops thus affecting the momentum of operations. It was providential that two battalions-1/11 Gurkhas and 12 J & K LI which were on their way down from Siachen after being relieved-were diverted to Kargil to prevent the rot of intrusions from spreading. This dictates to us the need for maintaining an acclimatised reserve of infantry in Ladakh sector. But it is better said than done since army is already over extended on internal security duties in the Valley and along the LoC.

In view of the prolonged tenure of duties of the infantry units on internal security tasks in the Valley and Eastern theatre, some of the artillery, armour and mechanised infantry units had been tasked to perform such duties to provide relief to hard pressed infantry units. This has adverse implications on the operational readiness and state of training of such units in case of war. However, when Kargil operations commenced such units were reverted to their primary duties.

The above mentioned two points dictate to us the need for selectively and gradually releasing any formations and units from external security tasks and the same should be handed over to para military forces. This may involve raising of additional para military counter insurgency units like the Rashtriya Rifles and reorganisation of the present para military set up. The para military forces also need to

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be modernised by providing them suitable weapons systems and other equipment like state-of-the-art radio sets to perform their counter insurgency and border manning duties efficiently.

In modern battlefield it is the lethal punch of precision firepower, which would cause maximum damage to the enemy morale and troops while, at the same time saving own casualties. Lt. Gen. Krishan Pal accepted that 82 per cent of our casualties were caused by accurate artillery shelling by the enemy. This is equally applicable to the casualties caused to the intruders by own concentrated artillery fire assaults.

For Kargil operations we had inducted over 12 to 15 artillery units along a single axis, that is, Srinagar - Kargil - Leh road. The ammunition expenditure was at an average rate of 4,000 rounds per day. It is estimated that over 150,000 rounds were fired during the entire operation. The movement of such a large amount of ammunition required a Herculean effort with concomitant logistical and administrative problems. Whereas, 300 conventional artillery shells are required to achieve the desired effect on the target end, the same effect can be achieved by 30 rounds of improved conventional ammunitions and two to three rounds of PGMs (Precision Guided Munitions).

Therefore, acquisition of PGMs like the CLGP (Cannon Launched Guided Projectile), would not only add to the lethal punch, it would also reduce problems of movement and replenishment since ammunition requirement will be drastically reduced. Another noticeable flaw revealed during Kargil operations was the lack of long-range firepower. While ground forces and air force could not cross the LoC, this restriction was not applicable to Artillery duels. Thus, a rocket strike from a weapon system like SMERCH MBRL with ranges of 70 to 100 kms. would have completely devastated intruders' logistics bases and fire support means in depth areas across the LoC and also would have posed threat to outlying areas of Skardu.

For carrying out accurate counter bombardment of hostile gun positions there is a need to acquire a modern gun locating radar like

ANTPQ 36 and 37. These radars have been used by the Pakistan to bring down accurate fire on our gun positions. With a combination of PGMs, smart bombs, MBRLs, missiles and heavy volume of fire power we can achieve devastating effects on the target and which would be equivalent to or better than effects which can be achieved by use of battlefield nuclear weapons. Induction of precision weapons and long range firepower would reinforce our stated policy of not inducting tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>19</sup>

Nawaz Sharif has promised us with many more 'Kargils'. Though our Prime Minister referred to Kargil conflagration as a 'war-like' situation, however, it was more like a limited war. The current trends world over, in the nature of warfare, point towards likelihood of limited wars only. The Indo-Pak wars in the past also have been limited wars. The nuclear factor in the sub-continent inhibits the attacker in planning for deep objectives in the adversary's terrain lest the nuclear threshold is crossed resulting into a nuclear exchange, which should be avoided at all costs. Therefore, if a conventional conflict does occur in the Indian sub-continent in future, it would have limited objectives and most likely would be of short duration. Apart from the sheer unaffordability of a protracted conventional war, it would also be in the interest of Nuclear Club not to allow the war beyond shallow depths (the pressure put on Pakistan to withdraw intruders by America and G-8 countries would reinforce this point), as the conflict will affect regional as well as global security. Therefore, we need to examine the implications of likely nature of future warfare on our armoured and mechanised assets earmarked for deep battle. Do we want to consolidate at present levels or do we need to change our strategy for their employment or do we want to reorganise these assets? In the light of Kargil, do we need to modernise our mountain divisions and infantry formations on priority?<sup>20</sup> These issues can be best addressed to by our top military hierachy.

Media reports of defence purchase teams being sent abroad during Kargil conflict for procurement of ammunition and spares point towards our state of defence preparedness. As mentioned by our Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh in his book, *Defending India*, there are voids

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of maintenance stores, spares, materials, armaments and ammunition to the tune of Rs. 30,000 crores each in the Army and Air Force and Rs. 10,000 crores in the Navy.<sup>21</sup>

Over the years, in order to balance the budget, the War Wastage Reserves have continued to get depleted. Allotment of lesser scales of ammunition has imposed a restrictive training regime. All this affected the operational readiness, training and combat capability of our armed forces. The non-availability of adequate defence funds has resulted in the mission reliability of all capital military stock dropping to about a third of the required rate. The sanctioned levels of stocks of ammunitions, spares and other material are supposed to ensure that our armed forces could fight for a certain number of days. With the present depleted levels of stocks, our armed forces can, perhaps, fight a war for one half of the required number of days.

Kargil has brought into focus the need for adopting a long-term perspective for developing our defence capabilities. Last year, the Ninth Five-Year Defence Plan, after having been down sized progressively by Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Finance was approved in principle only. It is yet to be sanctioned and put into effect. Earlier, we have managed to do without Eighth Five-Year plan for defence. Even the seventh plan was approved late in the plan period and, therefore, could hardly be operationalised. The defence plans, which are actually put into effect, are dictated by annual defence budgets. All the finance ministers add an important caveat at the end of presentations of annual defence budgets; 'in case more funds are required for Defence Forces during the year they will be provided for'.

Therefore, Kargil holds a lessor for us. Time is ripe for removal of our sense of complacency towards long term defence planning. Also, if the Indian Armed Forces are to acquire a conventional edge to deter our adversaries, it is quite evident that we need to allot a larger percentage of GDP for the defence budget.<sup>22</sup> An increase of defence budget from present level of 2.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent would release adequate funds for filling up voids and modernisation of armed forces in a phased manner over a period of next two five-year defence plans.



The TV images of Kargil conflict, which filtered across the entire nation, conveyed very powerfully the joint service effort between the Air Force and Army to vacate the Pakistani aggression. In the absence of Pakistani Air Force, IAF had complete air superiority in the operations. This was a peculiar situation where Pakistan could not employ air power since it was caught in its own strategy of labelling the disguised Pakistani regulars as indigenous *Mujahideen*. The massive number of battlefield air interdiction and close air support missions could only be undertaken because there was no requirement of counter air operations. The Air Force would prefer carrying out strategic air strikes and counter air operations rather than battlefield interdiction missions as against the messy business of close air support tasks for surface forces.

A considerable delay of about three weeks before IAF could be pressed into service, was largely due to difference in single service perceptions on employment of air.<sup>23</sup> The American and NATO role model of using strategic air strikes against comparatively weaker nations with limited access to modern technologies against non-nuclear nations, may not be applicable in its entirety to the sub-continental wars. The sub-continental wars, whether border skirmishes or limited wars would continue to be dominated by land warfare and, therefore, equal stress needs to be paid for air operations at strategic, operational and tactical levels.

Kargil air operations have focussed on the need for acquiring a suitable ground attack aircraft of the likes of A-10 or equivalent. It was also felt that if the long-delayed Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT) had been inducted into IAF, the same could have been used for close support air tasks. Although close air support is considered least efficient application of air power, at times (as Kargil operations revealed), it may be most critical in ensuring the success and survival of land forces. Therefore, there is also a pressing need to evolve joint doctrinal percepts between IAF and the army to achieve synergies in application of our military force.

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In post-Kargil scenario, surveillance and reconnaissance assets of IAF also need to be reviewed along with induction of state-of-the-art radars and weapon systems. In this age of information technology the incompatibility between IAF and Army communications systems needs to be removed. This flaw was noticeable during army-air coordination for air strikes. The future wars would not only be fought in air, on sea and land but also in electro-magnetic spectrum and along information highways and information fronts. The future battle space will be dominated by wide variety of precision platforms using all type of media. Thus, there is a need to evolve joint and integrated structures at various levels for smooth functioning of the services.

### **POST-KARGIL DEVELOPMENTS IN PAKISTAN**

Though the onslaught of Indian armed forces on the intruders was largely instrumental in forcing the intruders out of Kargil, yet in Pakistan, the credit to the forced retreat of intruders was given to their Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Clinton accord of July 4, 1999. The Army and fundamentalist groups considered it a humiliating retreat. Even, Benazir Bhutto joined the chorus and stated that Kargil humiliation was worse than the 1971 war. The Kargil defeat sowed seeds of dissension between the Army establishment and civilian government of Pakistan, both attempting to blame each other directly or indirectly for the Kargil defeat. The dissonance between Pakistan's military and political hierarchies gained momentum towards second half of September when Nawaz Sharif sent his brother Shahbaz Sharif, the then Chief Minister of Punjab, and other representatives to the U.S. to apprise the Americans of likelihood of a military coup in Pakistan. The Americans, dutifully, cautioned the Pakistan's military establishment against taking such a step.

However, things came to a head on October 12, when in a spasm of mutual dismissals by the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief, Gen. Musharraf, the Pakistan Army prevailed. This change of guard in Pakistan, both its manner and content, has caused concern in

India because of its implications for India's security. Gen. Musharraf, the self styled CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of Pakistan has always been considered as a hardliner. Being a *Mohajir*, it is said that he has always felt compelled to prove that he is more loyal to the king than king himself. As a commander of the Special Services Group, he planned and executed a number of operations against Indian troops in Siachen glacier. He was the main architect of executing the Kargil plan, which had been formed in the hey-days of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq's rule and was held in abeyance and then not implemented by the likes of Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg and Gen. Jehangir Keramat. Gen. Musharraf is believed to have been also involved in training the fundamentalist groups during Gen. Zia's reign and thus has developed close connections with Islamist groups as well as with narco-terrorist elements. *Jane's Foreign Report* magazine has predicted that "Musharraf will prove, on balance, to be more Islamist than a pro-western democratic free-marketeer. He will be an autocrat with a finger on the nuclear trigger."

With Musharraf at helm of affairs in Pakistan, do we see an increase in tempo of Pak sponsored proxy war in Kashmir and is there a possibility of another Kargil - like misadventure in near future? The internal situation in Pakistan militates against exacerbating current level of hostilities against India. Musharraf made a dramatic gesture of withdrawing Pakistani forces from the International Boundary (IB) but this gesture was not extended to the LoC, thus, indicating his continued commitment to intervention in Kashmir. In the first statement on Pakistan's TV, after taking over, he pledged 'moral, political and diplomatic support' to Kashmiris. Within a few days after taking over, he released over a hundred of so called *Mujahideen*, other fundamentalist elements and members of groups like *Lashkar-e-Toiba* who had been arrested by Nawaz Sharif's government.

The signals emanating from across the border indicate that Musharraf is unlikely to abandon his agenda against India in the long term, however, for the time being he would defer the agenda due to domestic compulsions. But that is no reason for India to throw caution to winds because once Pakistani public's honeymoon with Musharraf is over (which is bound to be sooner than later), Gen. Musharraf is

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bound to create a situation on Indian borders to divert the attention of its populace. This is a time-tested tactic employed by the previous rulers of Pakistan with some success. Pakistani military establishment considers itself to be guardian of ideology of its nation but does not realise that it is also contributing to a widely-held belief that Pakistan is a 'failing' state. The disproportionate defence expenditure by Pakistan is one of the main reasons for its economic adversities. Most of the ailments in Pakistan can be directly or indirectly linked to its obsession with Kashmir and India. Gen. Musharraf has remarked that even if Kashmir issue is resolved, things are unlikely to improve between India and Pakistan. Such mind-sets are hardly conducive to peace and security in the sub-continent.

India is right in stating that the dialogue with Pakistan can only continue once it stops its cross-border terrorism. There seems to be no signs of such a terrorism abating in the Kashmir valley. Musharraf's further actions on the ground would reveal whether he intends to increase the incidence of terrorism and level of discomfiture for India's politico - military establishment. Thus, India has to remain wary of General's move and it can not afford to neglect either the long term and sustained development of its armed forces or its state of surveillance and alert along the LoC.

### **CONCLUSION**

Kargil is a turning point in the history of sub-continent. Even though it was not fought with the intensity and force levels of earlier Indo-Pak wars, TV images filtering across India conveyed the valour and grit with which the war was fought by our soldiers. The entire nation identified with the soldiers fighting at Kargil heights and this boosted their morale greatly. The returning body bags did have a sad tinge but it further strengthened their resolve to throw out the intruders. Pakistan chose the time and place to carry out its offensive. It seized the initiative, but soon its brilliant tactical move turned out to be an unmitigated disaster militarily, politically and diplomatically. Pakistan agreed to withdraw due to relentless pressure put by the Indian armed

forces. Diplomatic isolation of Pakistan and American pressure also helped in speeding up things. Pakistan's attempts to question the sanctity of LoC have failed and international community has endorsed the principle of inviolability of the LoC. The utmost restraint on the part of India in not crossing the LoC, inspite of grave provocation, paid handsome dividends.

The return of military junta with Gen. Musharraf at its head has added a new dimension to the ongoing Indo-Pak strife. The hardline stance of Musharraf on Kashmir issue and continuing support to the Pak-inspired proxy war is hardly conducive to reduction of tensions between India and Pakistan. The increasing Islamisation of Pakistani Armed Forces is being viewed with concern in India and the west. Pakistan also has the dubious distinction of being the only nuclear weapon country with military running its state of affairs. Though Pakistan's military suffers from an obsessive, compulsive disorder of hostility against India, yet there seems to be no alternative but to keep the Indo-Pak dialogue going. However, while pursuing peace with Pakistan, we need to be wary and remain alert for any repeats of Kargil-like situations. Pakistan needs to be dealt with a multi-disciplinary approach, that is, diplomatically, politically and militarily. One thing which stands out is that we can no longer neglect the long-term and sustained development of both our economic and military capabilities. Kargil is definitely a wake-up call for India's politico-military establishment and intellectual elite.

There is a need to carry out introspection and learn from the mistakes, which resulted in Kargil. The greatest tribute to our martyrs would be that we rectify shortcomings revealed in the entire Kargil episode and take time-bound measures to overcome them. There is also a pressing need to carry out a strategic defence review for a comprehensive and holistic vision of our national security strategy for the new century. A committee has been formed which hopefully would carry out a detailed review of the entire conflict. It is also hoped that our National Security Council will come out with its "strategic defence review" sooner than later.

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# KARGIL CONFLICT

## *VIEW FROM KASHMIR*

*K. Warikoo*

Kargil conflict (May-July 1999) has well been described as Pakistan's fourth war against India in its bid to wrest Kashmir by means of armed aggression. Kargil is a continuum in a series of attacks launched by Pakistan in Kashmir in 1947, 1965, 1971 and then in the eighties through the proxy war. Whereas in 1947 the tribal raiders and irregulars led and backed up by regular Pak forces were sent, the invasion of 1965 was also preceded by infiltration of Pak regulars as well as irregulars into Jammu and Kashmir. Though the Indo-Pak war of 1971 was not fought primarily for Kashmir, its end result did have substantial impact on the subsequent political developments in Kashmir. Emergence of independent Bangladesh was a fitting repudiation of Pakistan's two nation theory. After this decisive defeat of Pakistan, the separatist and pro-Pak elements in Kashmir realised the futility of their approach and joined the national mainstream. Plebiscite Front was dissolved. National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah assumed power after the historic Sheikh-Indira accord was signed in February 1975. A new era of political stability and socio-economic progress was ushered in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Things moved in the right direction for nearly a decade, till Pakistan under the leadership of General Zia-ul-Haq initiated the proxy war code-named Operation Topac in Kashmir in late eighties. Having failed in its earlier attempts to capture Kashmir by direct attacks, Pakistan now resorted to the violent means of subversion and terrorism in Kashmir.

The decade long proxy war has claimed thousands of lives and displaced more than 350,000 persons who were forced out by the terrorists out of their homeland in Kashmir. Kargil aggression came at a time when the security forces had gained an upper hand and the common masses in Kashmir had distanced themselves away from

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militancy. Kargil was a calculated Pak move to isolate the strategic areas of Ladakh, Kargil and Dras from the Kashmir valley and at the same time revive the sagging militancy in Kashmir by infiltrating thousands of Pak and Afghan mercenaries. But Pak perfidy was defeated by the heroism and determination of Indian forces who demonstrated exemplary courage to repulse the armed intrusion against immense odds. That the post-Kargil phase has witnessed intensification of armed attacks on civilian and military targets by the Pak trained terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, only underlines the need to draw appropriate lessons and face the challenge. This paper seeks to present the local perspectives on the Kargil conflict and its implications for Kashmir, based on author's field study and his interaction with the local people in Srinagar, Dras, Kargil and Leh in September 1999.

The advent of spring in Kashmir in 1999 had blown fresh winds with an aura of relative peace and calm pervading across the valley. Srinagar city and other places of tourist attraction, particularly Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg, were being thronged by tourists from different parts of the country. Houseboats, hotels and guest-houses had become full. It was for the first time after a gap of 10 years, that Kashmir had received about 70,000 tourists in May alone. To quote Mohammad Ashraf, the Director of Tourism, J&K government, number of the tourist arrivals in Kashmir was expected to touch about 400,000 in 1999.<sup>1</sup> This assumption was based upon the high tourist inflow witnessed in May and also that about 10 per cent of 46 lakh pilgrims to Vaishno Devi were expected to visit Kashmir. Such large tourist arrivals had raised high hopes of giving a boost to the sagging economy of Kashmir by generating earnings for hoteliers, houseboat owners, boatmen, transporters, taxi operators, handicrafts dealers, shopkeepers, that is a sizeable section of Kashmiri society. There was an atmosphere of hope and prospective peace until it was suddenly dashed with the news of Pak intrusion in Kargil-Dras sector. As a valley journalist puts it, "When the war broke out, there were more than 55,000 tourists in Srinagar. All the eleven hundred houseboats and dozens of hotels around Dal lake were full to their capacity. But within

twenty four hours, the lake again wore that deserted look.”<sup>2</sup>

When the news of Kargil conflict hit the media headlines, it caused immediate setback to the reviving tourism in the valley. And the closure of Srinagar airport for a couple of days due to security reasons, created panic reaction. Within a week all the tourists left the valley. Efforts of the State government to revive the tourism industry by giving various incentives to those involved in this trade, such as houseboat owners, hoteliers etc. in the form of soft loans, 11 per cent subsidy to meet interest on these loans, waiving off loans, and grant of loans upto 25,000 rupees each to porters and pony holders, were thwarted by Pak aggression in Kargil. Economic prospects of tens of thousands of Kashmiris involved in tourist and allied trades, were thus adversely affected. The boom in tourist traffic was suddenly reversed by the Kargil episode. These people resented Pak military action in Kargil, as it hit their economic interests directly. Though this resentment did not find an open expression through protests or demonstrations, it is there. A number of Kashmiri Muslim businessmen and traders involved in the tourism and handicrafts sector, while speaking to this author, gave vent to their bitterness against Pakistan. They believed that Pakistan’s only aim is to grab the territory of Kashmir and has no interest in the welfare of Kashmiris. Common masses in Kashmir are peeved at the fact that Pakistan launched the Kargil intrusion at a time when Kashmir was beginning to have a tourism boom after a gap of 10 years, thereby inflicting considerable damage to the economy and people of Kashmir. At the same time there is a general feeling of despondency among the Kashmiris to the extent that they feel only a full scale decisive war between India and Pakistan can settle the issue once and for all.

Generally speaking, Kashmiris were impressed by Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee’s historic bus ride to Lahore and his friendly gesture towards Pakistan which culminated in the Lahore Declaration and other confidence building measures such as introduction of Delhi-Lahore bus service, easing visa curbs and improving bilateral trade. There was a belief that the Lahore process could pave way for a long term and lasting settlement of Kashmir issue, thus bringing peace

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and prosperity to the State. The people in Kashmir were, therefore, surprised and dismayed at the Pak military action in Kargil which they felt was a betrayal of the peace process set in motion at Lahore. While analysing the local view of Kargil conflict, a prominent local daily newspaper reported, "There is consensus that Kargil is to be seen in the backdrop of the Kashmir problem. People in the valley shivered anticipating a holocaust in Kashmir as a fall out of Kargil, which could lead to full scale war. It hit tourism which was reviving. Soon people would like to have a war between India and Pakistan so that the Kashmir issue is resolved for ever."<sup>3</sup> Beersmans Paul, a Belgian activist who visited Jammu and Kashmir from 4 to 30 June 1999, experienced similar sentiments during his interaction with the local people. He states:

The situation in Kargil and the ongoing fighting in that area was of their first concern and overshadowed the activities of the militants elsewhere in Jammu and Kashmir. It was crystal clear to everyone that Pakistan is the aggressor and that not only so called *Mujahideen* but also the regular Pakistan army are fighting and violating the Line of Control. Only the leaders of All Parties Hurriyat Conference and Shabir Shah, Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, welcomed the Pakistani aggression. The common man I met in Jammu region, in the valley, in Leh or in Kargil condemned the aggression and hopes that peace will return soon. The Kashmiris are fed up with the gun; they want peace; they are against the gun. They are against the interference of Pakistan. They are against the foreign terrorists. They want a negotiated settlement between India and Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

In the beginning the people of Kashmir were indifferent to the Kargil conflict. As Muzamil Jaleel puts it, "even for the Kashmiri armymen who died in the fighting, there were no emotional scenes at funeral processions".<sup>5</sup> This is quite understandable due to fear psychosis generated by the decade long militancy and the presence of armed Pak- sponsored mercenaries in the valley prying for soft targets. However, the ambivalent attitude of Kashmiri Muslims gradually turned to disillusionment and antipathy towards Pakistan.

### ***K. Warikoo***

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Even the pro-Pakistan activists were disillusioned with the Pak action. To quote a Kashmiri academic, their “desperation was reflected in the Hurriyat Conference’s call for a bandh in support of *Mujahideen* in Kargil on a Sunday, which in any case, remains a holiday for government, commercial and educational establishments in Kashmir.”<sup>6</sup> Shabir Shah, Chairman of Democratic Freedom Party who once took out a small procession with very few participants in Srinagar in support of Pak intruders in Kargil, also expressed his stand against the war stating, “our party welcomed the Lahore Declaration and the intention to hold bilateral talks”.<sup>7</sup> Hashim Qureshi, one of the founders of JKLF and now Chairman of Jammu & Kashmir Democratic Liberation Party, castigated those Kashmir leaders who welcomed or supported the foreign mercenaries - Afghans, Pakistanis, Sudanese etc., as their “liberators and deliverers” for inflicting sufferings and privations on Kashmiri masses.<sup>8</sup>

The separatist circles in Kashmir were utterly disappointed at the final outcome of the Kargil conflict, when Pakistan had to withdraw its forces under international pressure. A local newspaper summed up the local sentiments as : “The unexpected fiasco is widely being viewed as Pakistan’s psychological surrender before India through the USA. There is consensus among different political schools of thought in the valley that Nawaz Sharif’s misadventure could not only reflect on his electoral prospects next year but also thrust a psychological defeat on Kashmir militants and separatist leaders”.<sup>9</sup> Hilal Ahmed War described “Sharif’s appeal for de-escalation of tension as Pakistan’s psychological surrender before India”.<sup>10</sup> According to him Kashmir’s separatist leadership was rendered ‘completely irrelevant’ by Nawaz Sharif. A staunch pro-Pakistani leader and Chairman of Hurriyat Conference, Syed Ali Geelani described “Pakistan as a factor that has done irreparable damage to Kashmir issue during last fifty years”.<sup>11</sup> He dismissed the Pak claim of success in internationalising the issue by Kargil intrusion as a “blatant lie”.<sup>12</sup>

Another Hurriyat leader, Maulvi Omar Farooq described Pakistan’s intrusion in Kargil as “uncalled for” saying that it

### ***KARGIL CONFLICT : VIEW FROM KASHMIR***

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“damaged the separatist cause”.<sup>13</sup> He lamented that the “Kargil issue put the Lahore peace process in the dock”.<sup>14</sup> Omar Farooq is also reported to have proposed direct dialogue with the central government to resolve Kashmir issue. Another prominent Hurriyat leader, Abdul Gani Lone expressed his anguish when some Pakistani journalists met him during his brief stay in USA. “Just leave us alone. Kargil has proved that Pakistan cannot liberate Kashmir. Pakistan has refused to accept Kashmiris as a party in the dispute and never consulted them in any initiative by Islamabad to talk about Kashmir with India,” he said.<sup>15</sup>

Yet another cause of worry among the Kashmiri Muslims is that Pakistan has pushed in several thousand mercenaries into Kashmir during and after the Kargil operations. Reports about the infiltration of thousands of armed Afghan and Pak mercenaries belonging to *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* through Mushkoh valley, Gurez, Kupwara, Doda, Poonch and Rajouri sectors have appeared in the local press. The people of Kashmir are clear about Pakistan’s strategy of escalating the level of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, which has been borne out by the post-Kargil events of intensification in armed attacks, bomb and mine blasts and killings. These mercenaries calling themselves *Fidayeen* are committed to pan-Islamic ideology and ready to do or die. That the military regime led by Pervez Musharaf released hundreds of Islamic militants, who were earlier arrested by Nawaz Sharif government, has further unnerved the Kashmiris. Kashmiris view this as a retrograde step that bodes ill for peace and tranquility in the region. It is also believed that the new regime will in its desperation to avenge the Pak defeat in Kargil, open up new fronts in Jammu and Kashmir besides intensifying the terrorist attacks on soft targets. As such, Kashmiris do not want the valley to be turned into another Afghanistan. Having been witness to bloodshed and mayhem during the past ten years of militancy, Kashmiris are against the Talibanisation of their society. Whereas the pro-Pak or secessionist elements in Kashmir have been talking about “soft borders” in Kashmir with greater autonomy to facilitate free

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movement and trade between the “divided people” across the LoC, the reality is that the present LoC is a sort of ethnic-cultural divide with ethnic Kashmiris and Ladakhis living on the Indian side of the LoC and non-Kashmiri groups living across the LoC. In fact the common Kashmiris want the borders tightened, so that there is no further infiltration of mercenaries and terrorists. When this author broached the subject of ‘soft borders’ with a number of Kashmiris, they opposed the idea, which they felt would render the State perpetually vulnerable to external disruptive forces.

Moving from Kashmir valley to the conflict area in Dras-Kargil sector, one found life going on as usual while passing through Srinagar, Ganderbal, Nunar, Kangan, Baltal and Sonamarg. Gagan Gir, about 85 kms. from Srinagar and about 6 kms. from Sonamarg on the Srinagar-Leh highway, had been turned into a makeshift camp for about 400 refugees from the area between Matayan and Dras. However, at the time of this author’s visit to Gagan Gir in mid-September 1999, these refugees had gone back to their own places. Winding our way up the Zojila pass, we reached Dras which holds key to Srinagar-Leh national highway commanding the supply lines to Kargil, Leh and onwards to the border. We found the area from Pandras to Dras littered with used artillery shell covers. The electric sub-station and transformer in Dras was found to have been directly hit and damaged by Pak shells. Similar was the case with local school, hospital, dak bungalow and other government buildings. The people living in the entire stretch of villages between Pandras and Kargil were uprooted due to the Pak intrusion as they had to flee to safer places. In Ranbir Pora, the town of Dras nearly all houses and shops had been damaged by Pak shelling, with their windows, doors, roofs and even walls destroyed. As such, even as late as in September 1999, the affected residents of Dras were unable to shift to their old houses. They also suffered on account of loss of crops and fodder, which were destroyed by shelling. And if there was anything left, it could not be harvested due to exodus of the villagers. 50 to 60 per cent of livestock was also reported to have been lost.

***KARGIL CONFLICT : VIEW FROM KASHMIR***

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***Identity Cards and Pay Books of Pakistani Soldiers recovered from the Battlefield***



***Pak Shelling at Garkun near Batalik***

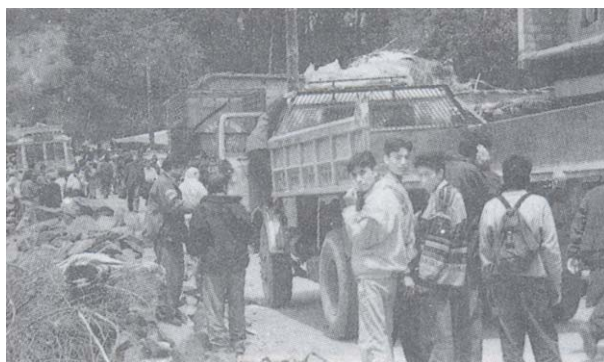


***Electric Station at Dras destroyed by Pak Shelling***

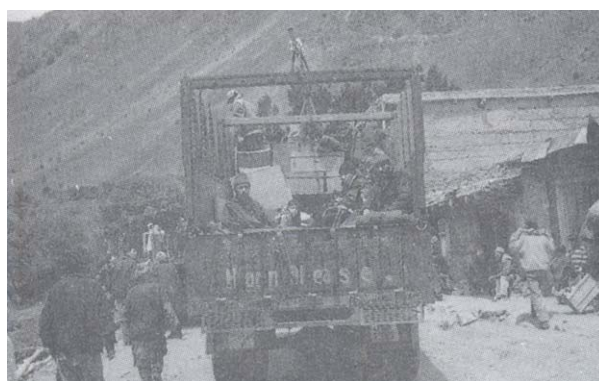




*Petrol Depot at Gooma (Kargil) destroyed by Pak Shelling*



*Refugees fleeing from Kargil*



*Refugees fleeing from Kargil*



***Refugees from Dras***

Both the Buddhist and Muslim population of Ladakh and Kargil feel that successive Indian governments have shown lack of imagination and resolve in tackling the security problems of this vital strategic frontier of India. Kargil town and portions of Srinagar-Leh national highway between Dras and Kargil have been subjected to Pak artillery shelling since 1997. It was as early as in April 1997 that the local press reported about the displacement of about 15,000 people in Kargil, who had to seek refuge in safer places due to Pak shelling.<sup>16</sup> That year, several houses, a school and a mosque were damaged and 6 persons killed and 10 injured as a result of this shelling. Ever since, Kargil has been witnessing intermittent shelling from across the LoC, adversely affecting the daily lives of the local people. The portion of national highway from Dras upto Kargil, being close to the LoC, has been within the firing range of Pakistani gunners, who command the heights in this sector. As such all the vehicles passing between Dras and Kargil have been forced to move in dark hours with lights off, to escape from being hit by Pak shelling. We also had to leave Dras in the evening to reach Kargil in late night and on our return journey from Leh we had to leave Kargil at 4 A.M. to reach Dras in early morning, so as to cover this vulnerable stretch without any mishap. The stark reality is that Dras-Kargil-Batalik sector on the Indian side of LoC is and will remain prone to Pakistani attacks. Ironically the Indian political leadership and

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also the defence authorities, failed to take into account this vital factor while drawing the Ceasefire Line in 1949 and also while deciding upon the LoC in 1972. The heights occupied by Pakistan overlooking Srinagar-Leh national highway in this sector, are a festering sore for both the civilian population and Indian security forces.

There was unanimity of opinion among informed sections of intellectual, public and political circles in Leh and Kargil that Jawaharlal Nehru committed a blunder ordering ceasefire in 1949 at a time when Indian forces alongwith the volunteers from Ladakh and Kargil operating under the banner of Ladakh Home Guards were about to reoccupy Skardo. Rigzin Namgyal, presently Chairman of Leh Citizens Council, who was Commander of about 1200 Ladakh Home Guards in 1947-48, recapitulated the heroic fight put up by Ladakhis with very little resources to save Ladakh and Kargil from the Pak raiders. Rigzin stated that these Ladakhis had covered the long distance from Leh to reach Skardo within next four days. "But Nehru's declaration of ceasefire lost that golden opportunity,"<sup>17</sup> he lamented. Yeshe Choesphel, who was the Quarter Master of Ladakh Home Guards in 1948, also narrated similar experiences. Recalling with nostalgia his participation in the Ladakhis' fight against the Pak invaders, Choesphel mentioned that Ladakh Home Guards were too short of arms with only one or two rifles for every five persons. He was sore at the fact that Marol which was regained in 1948, was later occupied by Pak troops after the 1949 ceasefire, without any remedial action by India.<sup>18</sup> It is in the Kargil and Skardo sector that Balti people sharing same language, culture and religion are living on both sides of the LoC. The people of Kargil and Leh districts lament that Skardo (Baltistan), formerly a Tehsil of Ladakh, was lost to Pakistan in 1948 as a result of ceasefire at a time when Indian forces were about to reoccupy it. They cherish the restoration of Baltistan with Ladakh Division of Jammu and Kashmir.

That Ladakhis have been continuing with the tradition of their sacrifice, gallantry and heroic defence of Ladakh against Pak invaders, is borne out by the fact that Ladakh Scouts is one of the highest decorated units of the Indian Army. 25 jawans of Ladakh Scouts died

### ***KARGIL CONFLICT : VIEW FROM KASHMIR***

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during the Kargil conflict of 1999. Hundreds of young volunteers from Leh and Kargil districts participated in the 'Operation Vijay' by acting as guides and ferrying logistic loads such as arms, ammunition and food supplies to the Indian troops fighting on the front. Both Buddhists and Muslims of Ladakh and Kargil provided the requisite local logistic support, with each family contributing at least one member as a volunteer for several days.<sup>19</sup> The Chief of the Army Staff, General V.P. Malik while commending the role of local population stated, "They have stood behind the soldier and backed him up to the hilt. Such commitment not only contributed to the physical requirements of the troops, it also was a morale-boosting factor. There was such a tremendous exhibition of unity and solidarity wherein Buddhists and Muslims came out with physical, moral and material support, sharing the tough adversities and privations normally faced by soldiers".<sup>20</sup> So "in acknowledgement of the outstanding valour, sacrifice and patriotism displayed during 'Operation Vijay,' " the Chief of the Army Staff awarded to the Ladakh Scouts, the "COAS Banner" at a special parade at Leh on 18 September 1999.<sup>21</sup> It was for the first time in the history of the Indian Army, that the "COAS Banner" was presented to any unit. This author witnessed the enthusiastic participation of thousands of Ladakhi men and women, old and young at this special parade in Leh. This was a moment of pride for Ladakh. There is a persistent demand from the people of Ladakh including Kargil for upgrading Ladakh Scouts as a full-fledged Regiment.

Whereas Ladakhis take immense pride in their active participation and sacrifices in the Kargil operations, people of Kargil nurse deep resentment against Pakistan for shelling their houses for the last few years and dislocating their lives. Several processions were brought out in Kargil expressing their anger against Pakistan and solidarity with Indian forces. Pakistani shelling hit and destroyed the petrol pump, T.V. relay centre, government buildings and staff quarters, Food Corporation godown, besides houses and shops in and around Kargil town. Local people risked their lives to carry the food stock of about 16,000 quintals from the FCI godown by shifting

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it to safer places.<sup>22</sup> Now an alternative godown is being constructed at Sankpo, which is relatively out of the firing range of Pak artillery. 3 MW Iqbal Hydel Power Station at Kargil was also hit by Pak shelling. But it suffered no major damage, as the shells fell astray. Nearly 35,000 people from Matayan, Pandras, Dras, Kargil and Batalik area were displaced due to Pak shelling. They fled from their homes and sought refuge in safer places at Minjee (8 kms. from Kargil town) and other villages in the Suru valley. Similarly about 1500 Brokpa Dards from Da, Baima, Darchi and Garkun villages, who were also affected due to Pak firing, remained camped in the Central School and adjoining government buildings at Leh till mid-September 1999 after which they left for their homes. All these displaced people suffered great hardships in terms of loss of their livestock, crops and fodder besides destruction of or damage to their houses. Since this was a period when the local people stock their wood, food and fodder supplies for the hard winter ahead, their loss was even greater. Those affected by the Kargil conflict included the inhabitants of the area from Dras to Batalik who were directly hit, or those who came in the firing range and even those who shared their meagre resources with the refugees. This displacement also had an adverse impact on education of the children and the health of the affected people.

People of Kargil are convinced that they being Shia Muslims are being targetted by Pakistan and more so because they did not align themselves with the secessionists in the valley of Kashmir. To quote Mohammad Hussain Zakiri, Chairman, Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust, Kargil, "Pakistan is angry with the people of Kargil, because they did not support militancy in Kashmir. Pak policy is to engulf Kargil region alongwith Kashmir in militancy".<sup>23</sup> There is a belief among the Shia people of Kargil, who share their faith, language, food and customs with those of Skardo (across the LoC), that the people of Skardo (Baltistan) are being discriminated in Pakistan and they do not enjoy any democratic rights. Shias of Kargil also feel that Pakistan adopted a deliberate policy of pushing soldiers of Northern Light Infantry, which

### ***KARGIL CONFLICT : VIEW FROM KASHMIR***

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is mainly comprised of Shias from Gilgit and Baltistan, to the death traps in Kargil heights. Their resentment turned to anger when Pakistan refused to accept the dead bodies of these NLI soldiers from the Indian side. Karakoram National Movement and Karakoram Students Organisation organised a joint demonstration in Aliabad in Hunza (North Areas), which turned into a big congregation at the Hospital Chowk. Hajat Ali is reported to have addressed the group, stating : “Pakistan government was preparing for a tourism conference in Northern Areas on the one hand, but simultancously on the other hand she began a clash on Kargil front. This senseless fighting has destroyed our already weak economy. Having stopped supply of gunny bags full of floor to the Northern Areas, we are receiving bags of our soldiers. How long can we bear this loss of human resource. Our sacrifices have been made controversial”.<sup>24</sup> Another local leader, Muhammad Jami, who is the President of Karakoram Students Organisation, lamented that while more than 100 families in Northern Areas were mourning the killing of their dear ones, Pakistan's Minister Majid Malik who had come to Northern Areas to participate in the Tourism Conference, did not care to pay condolence visit to the family of any one of the killed soldiers.<sup>25</sup> He alleged that “while our fathers and brothers were facing bullets on the war front to save money for the fees of their children receiving education, the government jobs were denied to them as these were kept for the candidates from Punjab”.<sup>26</sup> The prevailing ferment among the people of Gilgit and Baltistan prompted former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif to visit these areas and assuage their hurt sentiments. Nawaz Sharif also announced a “compensation of 500,000 rupees and a house for the next of kin of every NLI martyr”.<sup>27</sup>

To conclude, Pakistan failed in her objectives of snapping the Srinagar-Leh National Highway and to isolate the Dras, Kargil and Ladakh areas from the rest of Jammu and Kashmir. Indian military response also defeated the Pak design to secure additional territory in these strategic heights. Pakistani hopes of creating a sort of popular upheaval or uprising in Kashmir so that she could turn the attention from Kargil to Kashmir with the aim of internationalising the Kashmir

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issue and secure intervention of western powers, were frustrated by general Kashmiri indifference which soon graduated to disillusionment and resentment. India adopted a policy of restraint to ensure that Kargil conflict remained localised and did not escalate into a larger conflict, inspite of high cost in men and materials. Whereas Indian decision not to cross the LoC, even in the face of armed intrusion of such a magnitude, is debatable on several accounts, it did impart a sanctity and universal recognition to the LoC as the virtual border in Jammu and Kashmir. However, the post-Kargil developments particularly open threats by Pak terrorist groups to open new fronts and intensification of Pak-sponsored terrorist attacks on civilians and security forces in Jammu and Kashmir call for resolute response from India.

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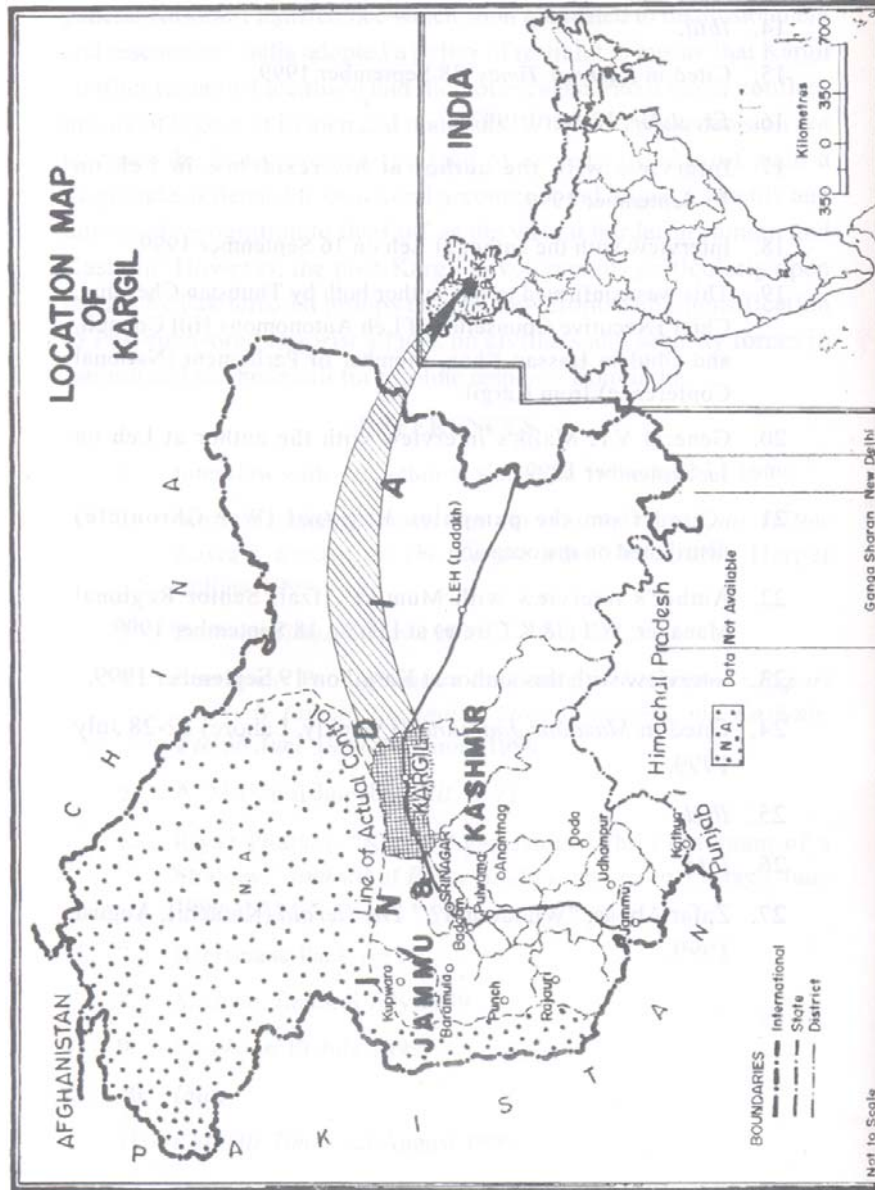
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***KARGIL CONFLICT : VIEW FROM KASHMIR***

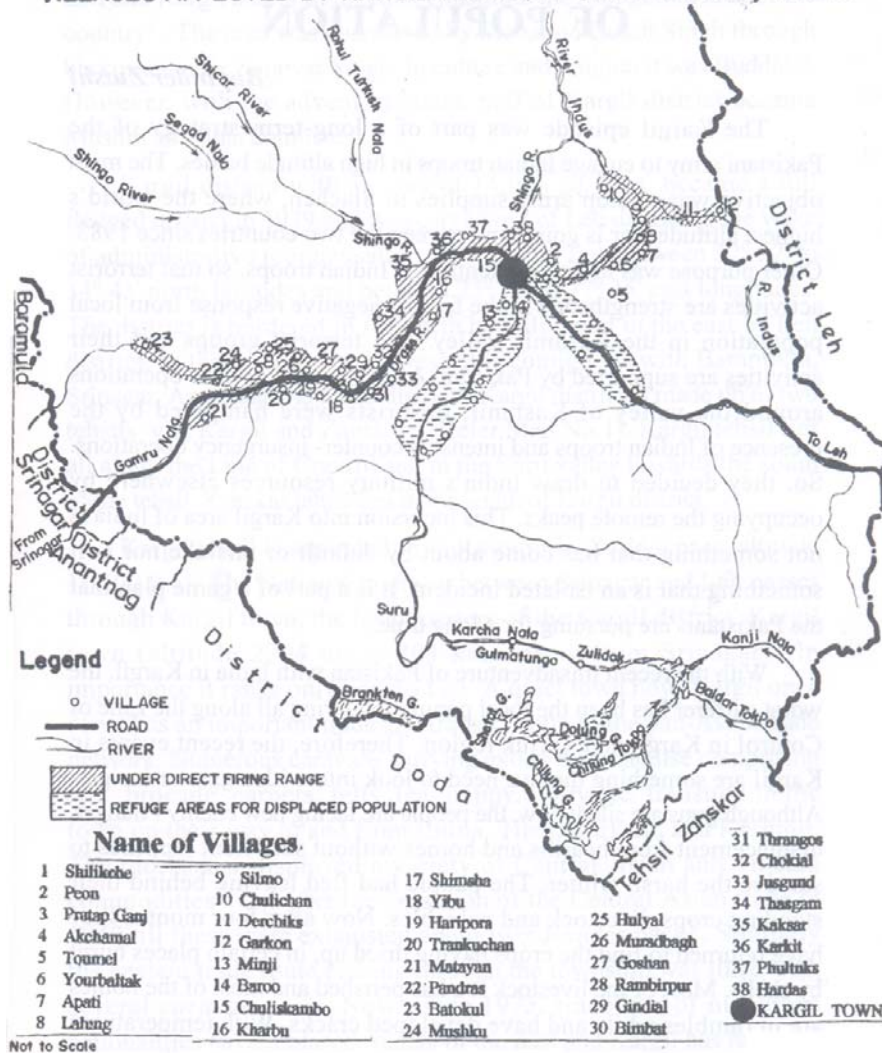
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**KARGIL REGION**  
**VILLAGES AFFECTED BY KARGIL CONFLICT (MAY-AUGUST, 1999)**



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# KARGIL CONFLICT-1999: HUMAN DIMENSION AND DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION

*Bupinder Zutshi*

The Kargil episode was part of a long-term strategy of the Pakistani army to engage Indian troops in high altitude battles. The main objective was to stop army supplies to Siachen, where the world's highest altitude war is going on between the two countries since 1983. Other purpose was to divert attention of Indian troops, so that terrorist activities are strengthened in the face of negative response from local population in the Kashmir Valley. The terrorist groups and their activities are supported by Pakistan. After 10 years of their operations around the valley of Kashmir, terrorists were hampered by the presence of Indian troops and intensive counter- insurgency operations. So, they decided to draw India's military resources elsewhere by occupying the remote peaks. This incursion into Kargil area of India is not something that has come about by default or mistake nor is it something that is an isolated incident. It is a part of a game plan that the Pakistanis are pursuing for a long time.

With the recent misadventure of Pakistan with India in Kargil, the worst sufferer has been the local population living all along the Line of Control in Kargil and Turtuk region. Therefore, the recent events in Kargil are something that we need to look into with a greater insight. Although guns are silent now, the people are facing new enemy - hunger, displacement from hearths and homes without sufficient facilities to survive the harsh winter. The people had fled leaving behind their standing crops, livestock and valuables. Now after four months they have returned to find the crops having dried up, in certain places burnt by shells. Most of the livestock too has perished and most of the homes are in rumbles while and have developed cracks. With temperatures dipping around -30 degree Celsius, the existing structures are inadequate to make them survive the harsh winter.

## ***KARGIL : DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION***

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### ***Kargil Region: Physical, Social and Economic Landscape***

Kargil region is a part of Ladakh division, which constitutes highest altitude part of India. Ladakh has been bifurcated into two districts of Leh and Kargil and both together constitute the Mongoloid area of the country<sup>1</sup>. The area was conquered by Maharaja Gulab Singh through his commander Zorawar Singh. In culture and religion it was Buddhist. However, with the advent of Islam, half of Kargil district became Muslim and Shia dominated.

Kargil district with an area of 14,036 sq. kms. became a full fledged district in 1979 and was carved out of Leh district in the wake of administrative reorganisation. The district lies between 32<sup>o</sup> 57' to 34<sup>o</sup> 45' north latitudes and between 75<sup>o</sup> 20' to 77<sup>o</sup> 35' east longitudes. The district is bordered in the north by Gilgit and in the east by Leh district. In the west and southwest, it is contiguous with Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag and Doda districts. Kargil district is made up of two tehsils, viz. Kargil and Zaskar<sup>2</sup> (Refer Map No.1). Kargil tehsil lies all along the Line of Control and in the Suru valley towards the south of the tehsil. Zaskar tehsil lies in the south of Kargil district.

Kargil tehsil is separated from Kashmir by Zoji La pass (altitude 11,500 ft.)<sup>3</sup>. The National highway between Srinagar and Leh passes through Kargil town, the headquarters of the Kargil district. Kargil town (altitude 2704 m) is 204 kms. away from Srinagar<sup>4</sup>. In importance it ranks only next to Leh. A quiet town now, Kargil once served as an important trade and transit centre in the pan-Asian trade network. Numerous caravans carrying exotic merchandise comprising silk, brocade, carpets, felts, tea, poppy, ivory etc. transited in the town on their way to and from China, Tibet, Yarkand and Kashmir. The old bazaar displayed a variety of Central Asian and Tibetan commodities even after the cessation of the Central Asian trade in 1949 till these were exhausted about two decades back<sup>5</sup>. Similarly the ancient trade route passing through the township was lined with several *caravanserais*. Now, since 1975, travellers of numerous nationalities have replaced traders of the past and Kargil has regained its importance as a centre of travel-related activities. Being located

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in the centre of a Himalayan region with tremendous potential for adventure tourism activities, Kargil serves as an important base for adventure tours in the heart of the Himalayas. It is also the take-off station for visitors to the exotic Zaskar Valley. Tourists travelling between Srinagar and Leh have to make a night halt here before starting the second leg of their journey. Kargil town is the second largest urban centre of Ladakh and headquarters of the district Kargil. The town lies nestling along the rising hillsides of the lower Suru basin. Two tributaries of the Suru river that meet here are the Drass and the Wakha. The land available along the narrow valley and hillsides are intensively cultivated in neat terraces to grow barley, wheat, peas, a variety of vegetables and other cereals.

Zaskar range forms an administrative subdivision of Kargil tehsil. After crossing Zoji La, the natural scenario is bare and forbiddingly barren. Dras is the first major village over the pass, inhabited by a population partly of Kashmiri origin and partly Dards. The place is the second coldest inhabited spot in the world and has earned unenviable distinction of third Arctic region. In summer the climate is temperate. There are groves of willow trees and lush greenery, which greets the visitor's eyes.

Suru valley lies in between the Kargil town and Zaskar. Suru is a fertile valley of immense charm and beauty. The Suru is a little known but large river from which the valley takes its name. It flows south to north, one of the peculiarities of the left bank tributaries of the Indus. The glaciers on the north side of the Great Himalayan range feed it. The Suru is a big river by the time it exits in the valley near Kargil. Suru valley is predominantly Shia Muslim. Consequently they draw religious inspiration from Iran and the walls of the village mosques are plastered with posters of the Ayatollahs of Iran. Religious and extremely peace loving, the inhabitants of Suru are a beautiful people living in a beautiful landscape. Albeit a grimmer people than their Ladakhi neighbours, at least to the outsider, for the prevailing Shia orthodoxy imposes a strict code, restricting contact with outsiders, secluding women behind the

### ***KARGIL : DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION***

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purdah and, as Islamic purists, frowning upon the arts like music, dance and the cinema<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, the lower Suru valley is like a long, magical garden with hostile looking mountains towering on all sides. Suru is a crossroads between the Muslim and Buddhist regions of the Himalayas and represents the easternmost extension of Islam in the Himalayas.

The middle Suru valley consists of a picturesque “alluvial pan towered over the lofty Nun (17,135m) and Kun (7,035m), massif. Kartse village near Sankoo has seven metre high rock sculpture of Maitreya which is remnant of ancient Buddhist culture”<sup>7</sup>. The valley remains fairly wide, except for some sharp points of contraction, almost all the way to Panniker, where the landscape begins to change... great peaks like Nun and Kun become visible and at every bend you become aware of the looming presence of the Great Himalaya itself.

From Parkachik to Ringdom is a long drive, over extremely rough country, and through some truly spectacular landscapes. The terrain is glacial with large boulders scattered about and the track weaving its way around these, and over, the smaller ones. Ringdom is a gateway to Zaskar, and an indication to the start of Buddhist regions, is the Ringdum Gompa, overlooked by a fantastically striated, pyramidal mountain, its sedimentary layers clearly visible. Ringdom is an orthodox Gelupga monastery standing right on the frontier of the Himalayan Buddhist regions - the westernmost Gompa in the Himalayas. The approach to Ringdom is across a flat plain kilometres wide, where the Suru stream has meandered and distributed into dozens of streams, which again converge at the point where the valley broadens into the plain. Sandwiched between the ancient tethyan sediments of the Zaskar range and the crystalline and granite structures of the main range, Suru valley is a geologist and prospector’s delight. The rocks in the region abound in garnet and other semi-precious stones and copper sediments are heavy in some glacial streams.

*Bupinder Zutshi*

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***Kargil Region : Population and Settlement Distribution***

Kargil tehsil consists of Kargil town and 104 villages. According to 1981 census, the tehsil registered 57,675 people out of which 54,148 were rural inhabitants and 3,527 were urban inhabitants<sup>8</sup>. Due to disturbed conditions, census could not be conducted in the state in 1991. However, the Government of India set up an expert committee, to project population estimates for the State. According to the expert committee, the projected population for the State was 77,18,700 persons in 1991, assuming a decadal growth rate of 28.91% during 1981-91<sup>9</sup>. Based on expert committee presumptions, the projected population of Kargil tehsil has been projected as 70,940 in 1991, which has been further, projected to 88,105 in 1999, keeping in view the growth rate of 2.1% per annum.

***Kargil Conflict- 1999 : Displacement of Local Population***

Kargil town and 38 villages located all along the Line of Actual Control in Kargil tehsil were subjected to heavy shelling by Pakistan army during May 1999 (Refer Table No.1 and Map No.2 for List of Settlements under direct firing range by Pakistan along the Line of Control)<sup>10</sup>. Pakistani army captured major commanding peaks all along the National Highway well inside the Indian side of Line of Control (LOC), in Kargil tehsil. The usual practice followed by both the armies of India and Pakistan has been to return to base camp, before the onset of winters to avoid harsh winters and heavy snowfall. The army returns to commanding peaks in the month of May after snow has melted. This year Pakistani army captured the commanding peaks well inside the Indian side of Line of Control much before April 1999<sup>11</sup>. Heavy shelling was resorted by the Pakistani army from the commanding peaks on the settlements and movement of traffic in the National Highway (Baltal to Leh in Kargil Sector). This was done in order to intercept supplies to Siachen. Its main objective was to disrupt economic life in the region by subjecting the region all along the National Highway to incessant shelling. This resulted in the blockade of the flow of traffic and movement of goods and arms and

### ***KARGIL : DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION***

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supplies on Srinagar-Leh road. The inhabitants of the settlements were compelled to leave their homes and hearths in search of safe refuge.

#### ***Displaced Areas: Population Size & Demographic Composition***

The inhabitants of Kargil town and 39 villages estimated to be around 31,982 persons in May 1999 were displaced when heavy shelling was resorted from the commanding peaks by Pakistani army<sup>12</sup>. They had to flee leaving behind standing crops, livestock, valuables and other sources of income. Out of the 39 displaced villages, 27 villages are located all along the National Highway between Baltal to Kargil. 12 villages are located in the Garkon valley in Turtuk sector<sup>13</sup>. These 27 villages and Kargil town all along the National highway between Baltal-Kargil had projected population of 19,761 persons, whereas 12 villages in the Garkon valley had projected population of 12,221 persons in May 1999<sup>14</sup>. According to 1981 Census estimated persons per household were recorded as 6.61, 6.57 and 6.59 respectively for villages in Garkon valley, National Highway between Baltal -Kargil, and for All Displaced Areas. Keeping this ratio in mind it is estimated that 1848, 3007 and 4855 households were displaced respectively from Garkon Valley, National Highway between Baltal-Leh and from All Displaced Areas.

A large proportion of displaced population included women and children. The sex ratio (number of females per '000' males) is projected 831, 880 and 857 respectively for Garkon valley, National Highway between Baltal -Kargil and for All Displaced Areas in May 1999. Keeping this ratio in mind, it is expected that 16,050 females were displaced during the conflict. 5,546 females were displaced from Garkon valley and the rest were displaced from National Highway between Baltal and Kargil. Majority of the population dwelling in these settlements are illiterate, even without any non-formal education. Only 22- 25 % population dwelling in these areas were literate with or without formal education. The illiteracy among women is more pronounced in view of strict and orthodox religious codes<sup>15</sup> (Refer Table No. 3).



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*Displaced Areas - Economic Characteristics of Population*

The inhabitants of Kargil are primarily agriculturists. Both the landowners as well as hired farmers help to till the land together. The land in Kargil is not very fertile except in some parts which are adjacent to the riverbeds. Land holdings are small, though the average agricultural family owns enough land to produce food grains to meet their requirements. Those who are not able to earn enough by tilling the land supplement their income by other means such as animal husbandry. Other sources of livelihood include daily wage labour, government service, work in the tourism industry, and business—mainly as shopkeepers, cobblers, artisans and weavers. The source of economy of the displaced areas is mainly dependent on agriculture, horticulture, livestock, tourist industry and labour work for defence personnel<sup>16</sup>. The agricultural activities are concentrated in the valley bottoms all along river streams and are confined during May- September. The growing season is restricted to these five months due to severe winters after and heavy snowfall, which starts melting only after April. A high proportion of land is under cultural waste due to less rainfall and unpredictable weather conditions even during summer months. The presence of rugged terrain and lack of irrigation facilities have restricted cultivable land in these areas. The agricultural practices are primitive and the production is not even sufficient to meet their annual demand. Major crops grown are barley and oats (Refer Table No.4).

Kargil and its surroundings are famous for the fine apricots grown here. In May, the entire countryside becomes awash with fragrant white apricot blossoms while in August, the ripening fruit lends it an orange hue. Thick plantations of poplars and willows besides apricot, apple and mulberry trees adorn the valley bottom and the hills alike. Dried apricots are exported for sale in other parts of the country. Livestock and poultry meet daily requirement of milk, mutton and eggs, which are being reared at homes. However, the production is barely sufficient to meet family requirements.

### ***KARGIL : DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION***

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The other sources of income are from labour activities. Defence personnel employ local labourers for the transportation of essential services to the border areas with the help of mules. The transportation is mostly accomplished during May- August months, as the areas remain cut-off due to heavy snowfall afterwards. Large-scale labour is also engaged in tourist activities. All along the way little shops provide day-to-day requirements for the tourists. Heavy rush of foreign tourists is witnessed between May- August months every year. The tourist visits Leh after halting one night at Kargil. The other tourist attraction is the Suru valley. After Panniker, the Suru valley offers varied landscape with great peaks like Nun and Kun becoming visible at every bend. After the Great Bend at Nanga Parbat, Nun and Kun are the first peaks above 20,000 ft. in this region. Nun peak is at 23,410 ft. and Kun peak at 23,250 ft. above sea level. These high mountains have been magnets for different nationalities and have come to be associated with them as national obsessions, particularly, the Germans with Nanga Parbat and the Japanese with Nun and Kun peaks. This is great trekking and climbing country, the route from Dras across Umba la pass being the popular one. The climb to Nun base camp starts at Tangol. At Tangol the landscape changes dramatically, the valley narrowing down and the great peaks crowding in the river flowing in a deep gorge, almost like a crack at points till Parkachik, where the valley widens again<sup>17</sup>. Beyond Parkachik is glacier country with the valleys having been gouged out by long extinct glaciers. Not all are extinct though. With ice walls stretching hundreds of feet, the Rangri glacier debauches straight from Nun into the Suru river itself. In one of the most amazing sights in the Himalayas, large chunks of the glacier can be seen crashing straight into the river. Great slabs of ice periodically peel off the glacier's 300 ft. high front wall, to go crashing into the river flowing below. Majority of the workers are engaged here as guides, labourers for transporting day-to-day requirements of the foreigners<sup>18</sup>.

The industrial classification of workers indicates overwhelming dependence on agricultural activities followed by service activities. Small-scale industrial activities especially handicrafts are completely

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absent in the region. This could be due to inaccessibility and lack of market for the products. Thus generation of economic activities during the long and arduous winter months are nil. People have to depend on service activities during summer months for the whole year. The service activities are mostly confined to menial labour for defence personnel, tourists and small shop owners etc. (Refer Table No.5).

***Kargil Conflict -1999 : Consequences on Local Population***

The Kargil conflict - 1999 has led to displacement of 31,982 persons from Kargil town and 39 villages. Their inhabitants were forced to shift to safer areas in the villages falling in the middle of the Suru valley<sup>19</sup>, which were considered comparatively safe from continuous shelling due to the adjacent mountain barrier. As already discussed, May- August are the only months in these areas for economic activities like tourism, transportation, horticulture and agricultural production. Unfortunately, the shelling continued during May-August 1999, thereby forcing the people to remain away from their houses. Thus all economic activities were suspended from May till August 1999. Also it was during these months that people used to gather wood, dried grass and food grains for storage to meet their sustenance during long winter months. But this year they could not gather anything due to displacement because of heavy shelling.

During the period of displacement, people were compelled to stay with their brethren in Sankoo and adjacent villages, sharing with them rooms for stay and kitchen for cooking. The density per room was as high as 25 persons for the size of 12x15 feet, during the period of displacements. The infrastructure in terms of water, toilets, electricity and drainage are usually very low for the regular population of the area. However, it deteriorated further due to sudden increase in the population size. Hence the living conditions were pathetic. Moreover bedding was inadequate especially when temperature is below 10 degree centigrade during nights. Majority of the women, old people and children were huddled up inside rooms like livestock during this period of displacement. Children lost valuable time without education. Adults

### ***KARGIL : DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION***

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were also inside without any productive work. Health facilities were inadequate, especially during the period of trauma due to displacement. However, relief measures although insufficient in terms of food and bedding were made available by the State government.

Now the people have moved back to their villages only in September 1999 after the intruders were pushed back to the Line of Actual Control. This forced temporary displacement of the people from their hearths and homes has compelled the people to face the harsh winters without any preparations in terms of food for self and animals as well as to face cold climate without sufficient heating arrangements. No provisions could be made for storing wood and kerosene for heating purposes.

Majority of the houses are broken and dilapidated due to heavy shelling and they are unsafe and unfit for living especially during extreme cold winter months. Moreover the shelling on a limited scale is still continuing forcing the people to remain indoors and not to attend the much needed repairs of their houses. Livestock too has perished, crops have dried and people have no income to purchase essential food items. They are presently living in trenches as shelling is still resorted to occasionally.

Now people have apprehensions for future survival, as harsh winters have set in. They have no facilities for heating the houses. “ We just don’t know what will happen. We have been assured of help but whether this will be adequate to keep us going is doubtful”, said Ali Musa a resident of Yourbaltik. Mohd. Iqbal of Trankuchen village said, “ I had 25 goats, two cows, one ox and one yak, when I fled the village on 13<sup>th</sup> May, now I have been able to recover only three goats and one cow from the mountains.”<sup>20</sup>

It is estimated that at least 30 to 40 quintals of wood is required per family for cooking and heating during the winters. As fodder they need 15 quintals for a couple of goats and cows. Thus rearing the livestock during winters would be a big challenge and the existing livestock might perish without food if sufficient relief is not provided.

However, the government has recognised them as war displaced persons and has provided them 7 kgs. of rice, 2 kgs. of flour wheat and ten litres of kerosene per family per month. The unemployed are being provided with Rs.200 as monthly stipend. The administration has also announced that each family will get 10 quintals of wood.<sup>21</sup> Some non-governmental agencies are also pooling their resources to provide some relief to the war-displaced people. But in spite of these efforts the rehabilitation measures are not sufficient enough to meet their requirements. A large majority of families have family size of more than 15 persons; hence the supply may not be sufficient for them.<sup>22</sup>

The areas are far-flung without accessibility. Hence several places could not get the relief in time. Sohra Banu of Garkon village said, "The measures taken by the State government and the central government to rehabilitate the war-ravaged population are insufficient and fall short of the requirements of the villagers". The main problem of Kargil area is the lack of transport facilities, as many villages are not adequately connected with the remote areas of the district. Thus even the supplies meant for the far-flung villages have not reached them in time. Therefore, the situation must be tackled on war footing, so that the people may not perish due to food shortages and heating requirement in the houses during the winters.

Long term measures are needed to improve the economy of the people living in the border areas of Jammu and Kashmir, so that these people may not suffer in future due to such misadventures by Pakistan. Moreover the state and the central government must evolve permanent strategies to avoid food shortages in case of such misadventures in the future. Among the permanent strategies, development of good road network and communication system is essential. It would facilitate immediate relief in case of emergency. With the removal of transport bottleneck the district has the potential of developing horticulture, as the climate and the terrain are suited for horticultural development and animal husbandry. Similarly the cottage and small-scale industries need to be promoted for solving

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the problem of unemployment. Government must provide marketing of the products produced by them through cooperatives. It can provide source of income in the slack season when there is no agricultural work. To improve human resources it devolves on the government to set up a network of elementary and high school as well as primary health centres. Tourism can provide alternative job opportunities during summer months. However, the development of tourism in the border areas may not be a permanent solution.

Given the existing situation in Pakistan and its activities in stepping up the proxy war in Kashmir, it appears that several Kargil type situations may come up all along the Line of Control. Hence contingency plans must be prepared well in advance, so that sufferings of the local population due to their displacements are minimised. Temporary sheds in the safe areas must be built to accommodate displaced population in case of emergency. Efforts must be made to pool in all non-governmental help for the displaced population. Education to the affected children must continue in these make shift arrangements during the period of displacement.

**Table 1**  
**KARGIL CONFLICT -1999**  
**Displaced Areas under direct firing range from Pakistan**

Population Parameters (Based on 1981 Census)												
S.No.	Village Name	Popn-1999*	Person Per HH	Sex Ratio	Literate %	Workers %	Cultivators %	Labourers %	Agri. %	Workers %	HH %	Others %
1	Shilikche	968	7.08	798	23.81	61.60	71.57	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	27.93
2	Peon	1223	8.22	827	28.83	57.30	74.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	25.69
3	Pratap Ganj	235	7.18	717	35.44	56.96	50.00	17.78	17.78	2.22	2.22	30.00
4	Akchamal	1409	6.53	770	24.92	43.93	68.51	0.72	0.72	0.00	0.00	30.77
5	Toumel	683	6.20	1013	14.16	40.74	83.42	3.21	3.21	2.67	2.67	11.23
6	Yourbaltak	1647	6.47	777	15.00	62.60	78.79	0.58	0.58	0.00	0.00	20.49
7	Apati	884	6.91	880	28.79	57.74	88.92	0.00	0.00	0.87	0.87	10.20
8	Lalung	622	6.15	891	2.87	86.60	98.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.66
9	Silmo	1266	7.03	807	24.21	46.89	69.67	1.75	1.75	0.00	0.00	28.57
10	Chulichan	659	7.15	969	14.00	38.60	87.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.28
11	Derchiks	453	7.44	753	10.49	51.48	96.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.82
12	Garkon	645	5.49	847	6.45	56.68	95.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.47
13	Minji	1522	5.62	850	23.17	36.56	58.02	5.88	5.88	0.27	0.27	35.83
14	Baroo	1718	6.08	869	21.73	57.49	71.23	0.45	0.45	0.00	0.00	28.31
15	Chuliskambo	625	9.55	1090	15.95	45.95	95.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.15
16	Kharbu	675	6.68	694	33.04	52.42	53.78	0.42	0.42	0.00	0.00	45.80
17	Shimsha	433	6.33	819	28.18	25.77	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	33.33

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18	Yibu	605	6.56	717	30.96	61.43	80.80	0.00	0.00	19.20
19	Haripora	UN		HA	BI	TE	D			
20	Trankuchan	641	6.73	811	23.67	18.33	44.30	0.00	0.00	55.70
21	Matayan	427	5.98	852	22.30	23.69	1.47	0.00	0.00	98.53
22	Pandras	568	6.47	1065	34.03	19.11	21.92	0.00	0.00	78.08
23	Batokul	UN		HA	BI	TE	D			
24	Mushku	379	5.31	783	22.75	20.00	66.67	0.00	0.00	33.33
25	Hulyal	458	6.16	925	22.08	20.78	53.13	0.00	0.00	46.88
26	Muradbagh	498	9.49	668	33.13	40.66	68.15	0.00	0.00	31.85
27	Goshan	925	6.84	920	18.17	29.74	68.65	0.00	0.00	31.35
28	Rambirpur	891	4.54	788	39.23	26.88	14.91	0.00	0.00	85.09
29	Gindial	363	6.97	921	26.64	30.33	60.81	0.00	0.00	39.19
30	Bimbat	846	7.11	841	26.89	30.76	61.14	0.00	0.00	38.86
31	Thrangos	312	6.77	981	29.52	27.62	70.69	0.00	0.00	29.31
32	Chokial	592	6.42	1062	27.39	47.99	80.63	0.00	0.52	18.85
33	Jusgund	314	6.81	936	22.75	24.64	69.23	0.00	3.85	26.92
34	Thasgam	248	4.91	942	28.74	51.50	74.42	0.00	0.00	25.58
35	Kaksar	561	6.85	984	21.49	53.32	95.02	0.00	0.00	4.48
36	Karkit	1387	7.70	942	12.02	45.28	94.55	0.24	0.00	5.21
37	Phultuks	135	5.06	1167	17.58	49.45	97.78	0.00	0.00	2.22
38	Hardas	971	7.51	887	17.00	25.57	88.62	0.60	0.00	10.78
39	KARGIL TOWN	5184	6.17	758	41.31	40.83	22.50	0.90	1.46	75.14
	Kargil Tehsil	88105	6.22	839	19.96	43.62	71.12	3.85	0.30	24.73

*Source* : Researcher's Work and District Census Handbook - Kargil District - 1981



**Table 2**

**Kargil Conflict - 1999**

**Displaced Areas under direct firing range from Pakistan**

Agricultural Land use (Based on Census 1981 and Sample Survey 1999)

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Name of Village</b>	<b>% irrigated Area</b>	<b>% cultural waste</b>	<b>% Not Cultivable Area</b>
1	Shilikche	65.77	8.72	25.51
2	Peon	50.00	14.30	29.46
3	Pratap Ganj	64.41	24.04	11.55
4	Akchamal	50.80	20.40	28.80
5	Toumel	53.23	17.41	24.38
6	Yourbaltak	53.28	18.29	28.43
7	Apati	62.04	13.14	24.82
8	Lalung	61.98	14.05	23.14
9	Silmo	60.68	17.23	19.91
10	Chulichan	60.45	9.00	24.76
11	Derchiks	57.63	16.10	26.27
12	Garkon	59.28	11.78	25.75
13	Minji	49.36	19.05	29.27
14	Baroo	43.16	29.46	26.14
15	Chuliskambo	52.06	20.62	25.78
16	Kharbu	68.77	22.63	6.34
17	Shimsha	52.48	14.91	27.33
18	Yibu	53.91	25.22	19.13
19	Haripora	U N I N H A B I T E D		
20	Trankuchan	48.64	34.55	16.81
21	Matayan	22.28	62.65	6.03
22	Pandras	47.06	24.18	22.88
23	Batokul	U N I N H A B I T E D		
24	Mushku	56.88	24.37	13.75
25	Hulyal	29.09	61.44	9.15
26	Muradbagh	64.04	22.29	10.79
27	Goshan	36.98	46.69	13.25
28	Rambirpur	21.74	40.90	31.88

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29	Gindial	58.69	15.02	24.41
30	Bimbat	50.10	29.75	18.98
31	Thrangos	37.72	16.67	42.10
32	Chokial	38.11	22.59	37.33
33	Jusgund	49.99	13.19	30.91
34	Thasgam	45.00	25.42	26.24
35	Kaksar	37.94	42.71	4.77
36	Karkit	44.90	15.32	31.02
37	Phultuks	41.71	16.68	41.61
38	Hardas	40.33	4.55	46.02

*Source* : Researcher's Work and District Census Handbook - Kargil District - 1981.

**Table 3**

**Kargil Conflict -1999**

**Displaced Areas under direct firing range from Pakistan**

Population Parameters (Based on Census 1981 and Sample Survey)

Displaced Area	Popn. 1999*	Total Settlements	Total HH	Person Per HH	Sex Ratio	% Literates
Garkon Valley	12,221	12	1,848	6.61	831	20.25
National Highway between Baltal - Kargil	19,761	27*	3,007	6.57	880	24.10
All Displaced Areas	31,982	39*	4,855	6.59	857	22.35

\* Includes Kargil Town.

\* Projected population based on Expert Committee Assumptions.

\* Based on Sample survey conducted in September 1999 and Census data 1981

**Table 4**  
**Kargil Conflict -1999**

**Displaced Areas under direct firing range from Pakistan**  
Land use Pattern (Based on Census 1981 and Sample Survey)

<b>Displaced Area</b>	<b>% irrigated Area</b>	<b>% cultural waste</b>	<b>% Not cultivable</b>
Garkon Valley	56.28	15.93	25.82
National Highway Between Baltal - Kargil	42.24	29.75	22.29
All Displaced Areas	47.52	24.55	23.62

*Source* : District Census Report - Kargil District 1981 and Researcher's Work.

**Table 5**  
**Kargil Conflict -1999**

**Displaced Areas under direct firing range from Pakistan**  
Workers Classification (Based on Census 1981 and Sample Survey)

<b>Displaced Area</b>	<b>% Workers</b>	<b>% Culti.</b>	<b>% Lab.</b>	<b>%HH Workers</b>	<b>% Others</b>
Garkon Valley	52.48	78.00	1.39	0.26	20.37
National Highway Between Baltal-Kargil	37.85	70.95	0.16	0.08	28.78
All Displaced Areas	44.52	74.74	0.82	0.17	24.26

*Source*: Sample survey and Census data 1981

## **KARGIL : DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATION**

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11. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 18 May 1999.
12. The estimated population of the displaced villages and Kargil town was worked out by the researcher, keeping in view the actual population of these settlements in 1981. The actual population of 1981 was projected till 1991 and 1999 taking into account the decadal and annual population growth rate as suggested by the Expert Committee appointed for this purpose by the Census Commissioner.

13. *Op cit*, No. 10.
14. *Op cit*, No. 12.
15. A sample survey of 25 households from three selected villages viz.; Yourbaltik, Garkon, and Trankuchan and the town of Kargil were conducted in September 1999. The survey of these displaced settlements was conducted to examine the extent of loss of property and present problems faced by the inhabitants. The demographic data of the displaced population is based on 1981 census. However, based on the results obtained from the small sample survey, the demographic data presented is modified accordingly.
16. Based on field data collected by the researcher during the sample survey.
17. *Himalayas* -website in [www. Altavista @ .com](http://www.Altavista.com)
18. *Ibid.*
19. Estimates made by the researcher.
20. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 18 September 1999.
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# THE KARGIL CONFLICT

## *AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT*

*Paul Beersmans*

Until May 1999 Dras, Kargil and Batalik were relatively unknown places. Only privileged tourists and the truck drivers, responsible for the transport of the supply of goods to this area and further to Leh during the summer months, knew these places. Since the beginning of May 1999, however, everyone knows about Dras, Kargil, Batalik, Tiger Hills and other strategic important parts of this remote Himalayan area.

### **SPATIAL SETTING AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND**

Already in 1922 C.E. Tyndale Biscoe found it difficult to write about Kashmir and its population:

To write about Kashmir is not easy, as the country, including the province of Jammu, is large and contains many races of people. Then again, these various countries included under the name of Kashmir are separated, the one from the other by high mountain passes, so that the people of these various states differ considerably the one from the other in features, manners, customs, language, character and religion.

Kargil is not only the name of the second large town in Ladakh, after Leh, but it is also the name of the district of Kargil carved out of the erstwhile Ladakh district in 1979. It has sparse population and most of the habitation is along the watercourse. The entire district is replete with places of breathtaking scenic beauty. The peaks in Kargil range between 4,000 and 6,000 metres in height. One third of the area of Kargil is glacial including the Mushkoh Valley, Sando, Kaksar and upper Batalik, and half is rocky terrain.

Geographical area: 14,036 sq. kms.

Population: 65,990 in 1981; 81,000 in 1991 (estimated);  
91,670 in 1995/96 (estimated)

***Paul Beersmans***

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Literacy percentage: 19%

Forest: only 6 sq. kms.

Cattle: 73,000; sheep and goats: 3,24,000

Kargil's only road link with the rest of the State is through the Zoji La (La means pass) at an altitude of 3,529 metres, which remains snow bound for about seven months in a year, forcing the residents to build up sufficient winter stocks.

The district has one of the oldest civilizations. Their life style has not yet undergone much transformation and is still away from the winds of modernity. It presents a composite culture of Balti, Ladakhi, Purki, Dardi, Zanskari and Shina cultures. Dards are located in Dras. The Baltis are said to be the descendants of Sakas, a Central Asian race. Their colourful rich culture is still one of the attractions for the foreign tourists who throng the district in large number.

People mostly live in rural areas and only 5.3 per cent reside in the town. The majority of the population is Muslim. The Buddhists come next. A few families of Sikhs and Hindus also live in the district. Shia sect of Islam was spread by the missionaries who came from the west. Its success was guaranteed by the early conversion of the chiefs of Dras, Kargil and the Suru Valley. In these areas, 'mani walls' (long chest-high structures faced with engraved stones bearing the mantra *om mane padme hum*) and chorten (commemorative cairns, like stone pepper-pots) were then replaced by mosques, often small unpretentious buildings, or Imambaras-the imposing structures in the Islamic style, surmounted by domes of sheet metal that gleam cheerfully in the sun.

Of the secular culture, the most important element is the rich oral literature of songs and poems for every occasion, as well as local versions of the *Kesar Saga*, the Tibetan national epic. This literature is common to both Muslims and Buddhists. In fact, the most highly developed versions of the *Kesar Saga*, and some of the most exuberant and lyrical songs are said to be found in Shakar-Chigtan, an area of the western Kargil district exclusively inhabited by Muslims.

### ***KARGIL CONFLICT : AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT***

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For centuries Kargil was traversed by caravans carrying textiles, spices, raw silk, carpets, dyestuffs and narcotics. Heedless of the land's rugged terrain and apparent remoteness, merchants entrusted their goods to relays of pony transporters who took about two months to carry them from Amritsar to the Central Asian towns of Yarkand and Khotan. Today, travellers from Srinagar drive on this route in the relative comfort of taxis, local buses or their own vehicles, taking two days to reach Leh and breaking journey at Kargil. At one step, as you cross the Zoji La, you pass from the lushness of Kashmir into the bare uncompromising contours of a trans-Himalayan landscape. Dras, the first major village over the pass, inhabited by a population of mixed Kashmiri and Dard origins, has the local reputation of being the second coldest permanently inhabited spot in the world. In winter the temperature plummets to minus 50° C, but in summer when the pass is open, the standing crops and clumps of willows give it a gentle smiling look.

Kargil, the second town of Ladakh, is situated on the Suru river just short of its confluence with the Dras-Shingo. Almost equidistant, at a little over 200 kms from Leh, Srinagar, Padum in Zaskar and Skardu, the capital of Baltistan, it was in old days the centre of a network of routes joining these places. Since partition, Skardu has been lost to Ladakh, but Kargil remains the main staging point between Srinagar and Leh, and the gateway to the Suru Valley and Zaskar.

The soil is generally coarse, mixed with stones and gravels. It is alkaline in reaction and organic matter content is very low. The fertility of the soil varies from place to place and the growing season is short. The average rainfall in Kargil is 26 cms only. The district gets snowfall varying from 2 to 5 feet. Some areas around Kargil town get a double crop of barley, wheat, peas and some varieties of vegetables. The barley is the staple crop of the district.

### **GEO-STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE**

The geo-strategic importance of the Dras, Kargil, Batalik area is obvious. Through this area runs the highway from Srinagar to Leh and although transport by air makes it possible to fly in reinforcements



whenever need be, the bulk of the supplies have to be transported by road. Possessing the mountains overlooking this road means possessing the control over the use of it and at the same time over the transport of the winter supplies for the whole region including Leh and the remote areas with a total population of some 200,000 inhabitants.

### **ARMED PAKISTANI INTRUSION**

In June 1999 I happened to be on a one-month study tour through Jammu and Kashmir. The armed Pakistani intrusion in the Dras, Kargil, Batalik area was in full swing. To the Kashmiris it was clear that Pakistan was behind this intrusion, not only by giving moral and diplomatic support to the ‘*Mujahideen*’, but also by giving logistic support and by participating actively with regular units of the Pakistani army. It was also clear that this intrusion was not a spontaneous action of some amateurs but prepared on a professional manner since a longer time. An intrusion of this dimension, with highly sophisticated weapons, can be carried out only by highly trained, well-clothed, fed and motivated regulars troops with logistic support from base camps on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control. It is more than likely that the preparations were in full swing at the moment, the two Prime Ministers signed the Lahore Peace Declaration in February 1999. On 15 July 1999 F.S. Aijazuddin wrote in the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, “The Indians came to Lahore with an olive branch. We responded with Kargil”.

In Srinagar I attended an exposition of arms and documents captured from the intruders by the Indian Army. The documents (pay books, identity cards, ...) proved that several battalions of the Northern Light Infantry of the Pakistani army participated actively in the fighting. In Kargil, the Northern Light Infantry occupied posts in the heights and Pakistan called them ‘*Mujahideen*’. At the same time militant outfits of religious organizations like *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* and *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* declared their involvement in the Kargil conflict. Pakistani Army Chief, General Pervez Musharraf, told the BBC that his troops had crossed the Line of Control and were

### ***KARGIL CONFLICT : AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT***

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involved in the fighting (they occupied some 500 sq. kms of Indian territory). In addition to that the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif' visited the border area where he stated: 'Insha Allah Kashmir will soon become Pakistan'. These statements belied all the previous statements and briefings of Pakistani political leaders and military brass.



***Some Weapons Captured from Pakistan Army  
in Dras-Kargil-Batalik area***

While being in Jammu and Kashmir my first question was: 'why did Pakistan attack in May 1999 and not in 1998 or in 2000 or at any other moment'? I asked this question from many people: officials, militants, political leaders, common Kashmiris in the street, journalists, etc. Some people, especially the leaders of the separatist movement or those in favour of accession to Pakistan told me that it had to happen some day, that was a part of the "freedom movement" and a logical consequence of militancy. It was nothing new, just a continuation. Other people told me that militancy has lost ground and it needed something special to give impulse and boost to their waning activities and morale. Opening a new front and pushing clandestinely foreign mercenaries into Jammu and Kashmir would give oxygen to the dying militancy. The month of May seemed to be the best period to come into action because the Indian positions along the Line of Control are at that moment still unmanned and can be occupied without facing opposition.

***Paul Beersmans***

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My second question was as to what could be the motivation behind the attack?. I received many answers which are summed as follows :

- Because of the increased interest of the USA in Central Asia and of the NATO intervention in Kosovo, the Pakistani leaders were of the opinion that the politico-diplomatic climate was favourable for internationalizing the Kashmir issue. The Kargil conflict could lead to an open war between India and Pakistan and even to a nuclear war. In these circumstances the international community would be obliged to take active diplomatic steps.
- Bind the Indian army in this sector and in doing so weaken its positions elsewhere.
- Open a new front in order to divert Indian forces with the intention to open, in a second phase, a new front on the weakened section along the Line of Control.
- Cut off or at least disturb the traffic on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh national highway and in doing so disrupt the winter supplies and the supplies to the Siachen glacier.
- Test the readiness, preparedness and reactions of the Indian army and politicians.
- Put the caretaker government in a difficult position.
- Talk to India from a position of power and advantage once the two countries sit down to talk about resolving the Kashmir issue.
- Punish the population living in the fighting area for their lack of support to 'the movement'.
- Bring a split between the Muslims in Kargil and the Buddhists in Leh.
- Give a setback to the reviving tourism.
- Put the delimitation of the Line of Control under discussion.
- Divert attention from domestic problems in Pakistan.

### ***KARGIL CONFLICT : AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT***

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- Sabotage the Lahore Peace Declaration of February 1999. The Pakistani military establishment has vested interests in prolonging the Kashmir issue and has been opposing a peaceful and negotiated settlement. It is not a new phenomenon that Pakistani artillery shelling along the Line of Control increases every time, peace negotiations start between India and Pakistan.
- Put a high financial burden on India.

### **SHELLING ON KARGIL**

After having interacted with many people in Jammu, I went by road to Srinagar where I stayed for one week and met many people. I wanted to proceed by road to Kargil in order to learn more about the feelings of the population and the general situation in that area. Due to security reasons I could not execute this plan. So I went from Srinagar to Leh by air and from Leh to Kargil by road. Here I didn't have any problems to reach Kargil.

Arriving in Kargil I noticed a dramatic change as compared to my last years' visit. Whereas in June 1998 Kargil was a busy city, this year it looked deserted. Most of the shops were closed, there was almost no traffic and no people in the streets, schools were closed. Most of the population had left the city and taken shelter with their relatives, friends or in camps at safer places. No need to say that the innocent civilian population of this area was the first sufferer of the artillery shelling. People told me about the loss of life and showed the damage to and the destruction of property. They told me that they were used to the sporadic artillery shelling for years. But since November-December 1998 the shelling was so intense that it was impossible to stay in the city. Ladies and children were sent to safer places.

From early in the morning till late in the evening I heard the noise of artillery shelling in the mountains, it was like the noise of a heavy thunderstorm. Sometimes the noise came closer and I also witnessed a deliberate artillery shelling on the centre of Kargil : some 50 metres from the place where I was standing a salvo came down luckily without

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hurting people or damaging buildings. Clearly shelling of targets inhabited by innocent civilians is a violation of human rights and has nothing to do with bringing a solution for the Kashmir issue.



*Deserted Kargil town due to Pak shelling*

### **PAKISTANI WITHDRAWAL**

The signing of the Lahore Peace Declaration gave Pakistan a chance to win a point against India: had the Kashmir talks failed under this declaration, Pakistan could have told the world that she had made all efforts but India was unwilling, thereby paving the way for a third party intervention. But the occupation of Indian territory was being prepared, and the process was perhaps already going on at the time when the Lahore Peace Declaration was signed. The ink had hardly dried on this document when Pakistan opened the Kargil front.

As the battle in Dras-Kargil-Batalik area went on, it became more and more clear that this was not an isolated action but a well planned and prepared military action close to an un-declared war. India declared that it would respect the sanctity of the Line of Control but at the same time use all military means to push back the intruders. As a result, it was Pakistan that provided a proof to the world that 'India

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was a peace loving country'. India drummed up throughout the world that inspite of her initiative in Lahore, Pakistan was on the warpath. The world at large and the USA in particular accepted India's position.

At the beginning of July 1999, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif went to USA where he had a meeting with President Clinton and where he received a clear message that Pakistan should respect the sanctity of the Line of Control and vacate the occupied Indian territory. By the middle of July 1999 the intruders started withdrawing but even after the withdrawal was finalized, the situation has been far from normal and artillery shelling continues in the northeastern sector.



***Damaged Building after Pak Shelling***

The cost of Kargil in terms of human losses is enormous. According to official reports 407 soldiers died on the Indian side (though unofficial estimates are much higher) and Pakistan has finally accepted that 267 regular soldiers were killed (Indian military intelligence estimates that 710 Pakistani regulars were killed). But, as Syed Ali Geelani puts it: "The figures do not mean anything in absolute terms but every person who died in Kargil was an incalculable, irreparable loss for a whole family. Wherever a person dies, somebody

loses his or her father; woman loses her husband; brothers and sisters lose their brother and parents lose their son, for ever. Brave images televised on the broadcasting networks notwithstanding, the death remains a tragedy and the loss is permanent”.

### CONCLUSIONS

- (1) Pakistan didn't succeed in internationalizing the Kashmir issue. On the contrary, she didn't receive international support at all, even not from her good friend China and was forced to withdraw and vacate the territory occupied on the Indian side of the Line of Control.
- (2) During the days of fighting in Kargil, Pakistani political and military leadership proved that there was confusion and contradiction in their words and deeds. This made the international community to believe that Pakistan was not only not telling the truth but was also the aggressor behind the scene.
- (3) Throughout the battle India exercised restraint and was commended by the international community for this attitude. The verdict of the international community was that both countries should recognize and respect the sanctity of the Line of Control. It gave a clear signal to both India and Pakistan to resolve their outstanding issues, including Kashmir, through bilateral negotiations and defeated Pakistan's effort of third party mediation in the case of Jammu and Kashmir.
- (4) The intrusion brought again clearly to surface the credibility of the Pakistani leadership as she initially denied any involvement (only political and diplomatic support was given) followed by statements confirming the participation of units of the Pakistani armed forces.
- (5) The intrusion also brought to surface the doubts about the credibility and the real power of the politicians in Pakistan: 'who is ruling the country and taking the decisions: the elected government or the army generals?'
- (6) The intrusion didn't bring a solution to the Kashmir issue. On the contrary, it was in contradiction of the spirit of the Lahore Peace

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Declaration and a violation of the Shimla agreement signed in July 1992 and ratified by the parliaments of India and Pakistan.

- (7) The intrusion has been a setback in the relations between India and Pakistan. Obviously the preparations for this intrusion took a longer time. It is believed that these started in the beginning of 1999 and were in full swing while the two Prime Ministers were signing the Lahore Peace Declaration. This will certainly have repercussions on the future relations between India and Pakistan in general and on the negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue in particular.
- (8) The Kargil conflict affected the response of the Kashmiris to normal democratic political process.

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# KARGIL CONFLICT

## *INTERNATIONAL LAW PERSPECTIVE*

*V.S. Mani*

The current active military engagement between India and Pakistan in the Kargil sector on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) cannot be dismissed as a yet another border skirmish, nor as a “routine incident” of Pakistani artillery covering fire to enable a few Pakistani trained Kashmiri militants along with a few Afghan or other mercenaries to sneak in to the Kashmir Valley in order to augment the flagging terrorist activities there. This summer the Indian army acting alone could not push out the swarms of invaders who had already crossed the LoC hardly before the snow started melting. The Indian Air Force (IAF) came to its rescue, as part of the “Operation Vijay”, and started the aerial bombardment of the numerous outposts and camps which had been erected/ occupied by these invaders well deep in the Indian territory. It is by now well established that the invaders accompanied by some Stinger missile wielding Taliban and other Afghan mercenaries who are reportedly paid as much as US\$ 18,000 to 20,000 per head. Their objective is to cut off the supply route of the Indian army by taking control of the Srinagar- Leh National Highway by forcibly occupying a large tract of Indian territory across the LoC overlooking the Kargil heights.

In fact, the current military engagement appears to have commenced around 5 May 1999 when the Indian army sent a six - member reconnaissance patrol towards the LoC on the Indian side in the Kargil sector under the command of Lt.V. Kalia. The patrol never returned. The next day, however, Radio Skardu from the Pakistani side of the LoC reported the capture of Kalia! A few days later, another recci patrol of eight soldiers was dispatched to the LoC in the Batalik area to the north of Kargil which also disappeared without any trace. It was subsequently learned that its leader, a lieutenant and another soldier fought and died covering the retreat of the rest of the patrol. Reports of sightings of newly erected/occupied Pakistani tents in scores

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over an area 7 to 100 kilometres deep into the Indian territory off the LoC started streaming in. On 14 May, two helicopters of the Indian army were downed by the infiltrators. By the third week of May, intense hostilities broke out in the area. Pakistanis, both the infiltrators as well as the regular Pakistani army from across the LoC, indulged in indiscriminate firing. They hit hospitals and other civilian targets, including the civilian residents, most of whom are Shia Muslims. About 23,000 of these hapless people have become refugees in their own country, leaving their hearth and home.

After a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security on 25 May, the Government of India decided to authorize its defence forces to launch the “Operation Vijay” to flush out the infiltrators. The IAF mounted aerial bombardments on the posts held by them. One of its aircraft was shot down by Pakistani missiles fired from across the LoC. The pilots of both the aircraft jumped out by parachute and were caught alive by the Pakistani army. One of them, Ajay Ahuja, was shot dead in cold blood and his body was handed over to the Indian army, while the other, Nachiketa, was taken prisoner, to be released through the good offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the eve of the Pakistani Foreign Minister’s visit to New Delhi on 12 June.

This time there has been ample evidence of direct involvement of the Pakistani army, even if one question (as the Pakistani Foreign Minister did at New Delhi ) the admissibility of the taped telephonic conversations between the Pakistani Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf (then in Beijing) and his Chief of General Staff, Lt. General Mohammad Aziz (at Lahore). There is clear evidence of premeditation and months of planning of the Kargil operation. Many of the Indian Prisoners of War (PoWs) are being held by Pakistan with their existence denied. The members of the first recci patrol led by Lt. Kalia returned home dead, with their bodies bearing tell-tale evidence of mutilation, torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment at the hands of the Pakistani army : It was an exemplary show of barbarism that shocked the public conscience.

The Pakistani perfidy violating the established LoC in the Kargil sector appears to have brought to naught the much publicised, newly found camaraderie between the two countries at the Indian Prime Minister's historic bus ride to Lahore and the signing of the Lahore Declaration, even as Pakistani army was hatching the Kargil operation.

### **ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW**

The principal legal issues emerging from the above facts of the current India - Pakistan armed engagement are the following : (a) the status of the LoC, (b) acts of unlawful use of force, (c) the right of self-defence, (d) deployment of mercenaries into the Indian territory, (e) violation of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflict, and (f) the role of ICRC

#### *The Legal Status of LoC*

The LoC , an Indo- Pak euphemy for a cease-fire line of the United Nations fame, was clearly established in 1972 on the basis of as many as 19 mosaic maps agreed to by both sides. It has held the ground to this day, largely respected by both sides, save for some sporadic Pakistani artillery fire to cover the periodic infiltration of Pakistan-trained terrorists and supporting mercenaries into the Indian territory, with India often returning the fire. Pakistan now argues that the LoC has not been transcribed on to the ground terrain with any certainty. India finds this argument rather specious, only betraying the malafides of Pakistan in justifying its current military operations into the Indian territory. How does a legal and factual boundary respected so long by both parties suddenly become unclear, uncertain, and difficult to locate on the ground? Even assuming (but not admitting) that it is so, does that permit use of force? And why was it not ever raised earlier at the bilateral level, during the 27 years of the line's existence?

The relevant provisions of Article IV of the Shimla Agreement of 2 July 1972 provide as follows :

“In order to initiate the process of the establishment of durable peace, both the Governments agree that :

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- (i) Indian and Pakistani forces shall be withdrawn to their [respective] sides of the international border;
- (ii) In Jammu and Kashmir, the line of control resulting from the ceasefire of December 17, 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognised position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or use of force in violation of this line.”

Evidently, the emphasis in the Shimla Agreement on the inviolability of the LoC is at par with that of the traditional international boundary. After all, the political boundary determines the physical manifestation of the territorial integrity of a country. The Shimla Agreement, ratified by both countries (and approved by the parliaments of both countries) highlights the absolute inviolability of the LoC and either party is explicitly interdicted not to resort to unilateral measures including use of force to alter it in any manner, even under the pretext of transcribing it on to the ground. The only permissible way of altering or ‘clarifying’ it is primarily by bilateral negotiations and peaceful means as may mutually be agreed. (Article I (ii) of the Shimla Agreement).

Acts of use of force by Pakistan seeking to alter the LoC is a material breach of the Shimla Agreement (within the meaning of Article 60 (3) of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 1970, leaving India totally free even to consider itself not bound by that agreement any longer, should it choose to do so), and a grave violation of the principle of prohibition of force under Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter as well as under general international law. Further, any change of the LoC by the unilateral use of force by Pakistan and consequent military occupation of the Indian territory, however temporary, is ipso facto and ab initio illegal. Such occupation of the Indian territory can not confer upon Pakistan any legal title to it; it cannot be recognised by the international community : on the contrary, other states have an obligation not to recognise the consequences of such unlawful use of force.

*Acts of Unlawful Use of Force by Pakistan*

The principle of prohibition of the threat of the use of force, well enshrined in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and reaffirmed in Article I (vi) of the Shimla Agreement, has been further elaborated by several consensual law-making decisions of the UN General Assembly including, in particular, the 1970 Declaration on the Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations (the United Nations euphemy for the principles of peaceful coexistence), and the 1974 Declaration on the Definition of Aggression.

The 1970 Declaration on Friendly Relations, besides restating Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, emphasizes that such threat or use of force “shall never be employed as a means of settling international issues.” It characterizes a war of aggression as a “crime against peace, for which there is responsibility under international law”. Indeed, this responsibility is both delictual and criminal - the criminal responsibility befalls not only on the state perpetrating the aggression but also on the high functionaries of the state including those of the armed forces at whose instance the aggression was mounted. The Friendly Relations Declaration also reminds states of their duty to refrain from war propaganda. (Article II of the Shimla Agreement imposes a duty on both parties to take all steps to prevent hostile propaganda against each other). It also postulates the principle of the inviolability of boundaries and other “international lines of demarcation” such as armistice or ceasefire lines, “established by or pursuant to an international agreement to which it [a state] is a party.” The LoC is evidently entitled to absolute respect by Pakistan.

The Friendly Relations Declaration further reminds every state of its duty “to refrain from organising or encouraging the organization of irregular forces or armed bands, including mercenaries, for incursion into the territory of another State”. Further, “Every State has the duty to refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terrorist acts in another State or acquiescing in organised activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts....” (This postulate is also reiterated as part of the principle

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of non-intervention in the same declaration). There is clear evidence to show that the infiltrators this time are regulars, irregulars and mercenaries despatched by the Pakistani army, and not Kashmiri “freedom fighters” as claimed by Pakistan.

“The territory of a State shall not be the object of military occupation”, or “the object of acquisition”, resulting from unlawful threat or use of force by another state, proclaims the Friendly Relations Declaration. “No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be regarded as legal”, evidently because an illegal resort to force can only produce situations that *per se* illegal. (Article 5(3) of the 1974 Declaration on Definition of Aggression reaffirms this principle).

### ***The Right of Self-Defence***

The principle of prohibition of force recognizes one exception - the right of self-defence. Article 51 of the UN Charter speaks of “the inherent right [of every state] of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs” against it. (The French version of the Charter speaks of ‘*agression armee*’). The right of self-defence is fundamentally conditioned by the customary international law principles of necessity (of warding off of the attack), and of proportionality (the force to be used in self-defence not to be out of proportion with the danger to be warded off), besides respect for the principles of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflict.

What then constitutes an “armed attack”? As the International Court of Justice held in the *Nicaragua case*, “an armed attack must be understood as including not merely action by regular armed forces across an international border, but also the sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force of such gravity as to amount to (*inter alia*) an actual armed attack conducted by regular forces or its substantial involvement therein”. (*ICJ Reports 1986*, p.103). The Court thus gave its judicial *imprimatur* to Article 3 (g) of the Declaration on the Definition of Aggression. It further ruled that “in customary

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[international] law, the prohibition of armed attacks may apply to the sending by a State of armed bands to the territory of another State, if such an operation, because of its scale and effects, would have been classified as an armed attack rather than a mere frontier incident had it been carried out by regular armed forces.” (Id)

The Declaration on Definition of Aggression also includes in the definition of aggression : (a) “The invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State, or any military occupation, however temporary, resulting from such invasion or attack”, (b) “use of any weapon by a State against the territory of another State”, and (c) “an attack by the armed forces of a State on the land , sea, or air forces,...of another State.” (Article 3, (a), (b), & (d) ).

In view the above, the acts of unlawful use of force by Pakistan against and on the Indian territory amount to acts of such sufficient gravity as to constitute “armed attacks” and India is well within its inherent right of self-defence” to take the necessary forcible measures to push out the Pakistani infiltrators and the accompanying mercenaries. These defensive measures include aerial bombardment of the posts occupied by these intruders on the Indian side of the LoC and measures to cut off their supply lines originating from Pakistani bases along or close to the LoC . Yet by and large, India seems to have confined its defensive actions to its own side of the LoC. It will, however, be within its right of self-defence, if it decides to go across the line to destroy the supply bases that sustain the infiltrators on the Indian side of the line. The right of self-defence extends to the complete routing out of the present danger, even keeping in the mind the principle of proportionality. This will, of course, depend on a military judgment backed by a political decision, which will obviously be dictated by diverse domestic and external considerations.

### ***Dispatch of Mercenaries into Indian Territory***

Ever since the Dogs of War controversy in Angola in the 70’s, the international law relating to mercenaries has vastly changed. The International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and

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Training of Mercenaries adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, substantive provisions of which have since become part of general international law, interdicts states from recruiting, using, financing or training mercenaries. Both the mercenary and his employer state bear criminal responsibility under international law. States have duties with respect to extradition or prosecution of mercenaries. All these are in addition to the fundamental duty of a state to ensure that its territory is not being used to the detriment of another state.

In the case of Pakistan, its involvement with the recruitment, training, financing and use of mercenaries across the LoC and the international border into the Indian territories has been a decade old. The fall of the Soviet-backed Afghan government only further augmented it, with the increased availability of mercenaries now released from duty in Afghanistan, along with a surfeit of light but sophisticated weapons originally supplied by the United States. According to one estimate, over 80% of the American supplied military hardware originally for use in Afghanistan, came to be deployed in the Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorist activities against India. The Kargil situation has further revealed the nexus between the Pakistani army and the Afghan mercenaries now used in large numbers, often wielding weapons like the Stinger missiles and using them against Indian targets, that too operating from within the Indian territory. Pakistan has tried to dismiss the Indian complaint, by describing the mercenaries, nay the whole lot of intruders, as “freedom fighters”. For the first time since the beginning of the Pakistan-engineered cross border terrorism in Kashmir, the evidence of overt Pakistani involvement in the recruitment, training, financing and deliberate use of mercenaries across the LoC on the Indian territory is overwhelming and the international community has refused to accept the Pakistani explanation. Pakistan bears both delictual and criminal responsibility in respect of employment of mercenaries against India. The Pakistani government has an obligation to bring to book not only the mercenaries but the high functionaries of the state (including the Army) who perpetrated the crime of use of mercenaries against India.



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*Violations of International Humanitarian Law*

The Kargil conflict has brought to fore a number of violations of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflict by the Pakistani army, its irregulars and the mercenaries under its command and control. The inhuman torture, mutilation including disfigurement and removal of vital parts of the body, and killing of Indian prisoners of war by the Pakistani army and its mercenaries has shocked the public conscience. With the direct involvement of Pakistani army in the hostilities in the Kargil conflict, the 1949 Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law readily apply to the conflict. Under Article 13 of the Convention for the Protection of the PoWs, the PoWs are entitled to humane treatment. Further, "Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health" of a PoW in its custody is prohibited. "In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation..." Even assuming that there is some doubt about the nature of the armed conflict (an assumption not sustained by the facts of the situation), there are minimum guarantees of humane treatment of PoWs, the sick and the wounded in action, and the civilian population, under the common Article 3 of all the four conventions. Indeed, as the ICJ declared in the *Nicaragua case*, these guarantees are part of general international law and do not depend on the character of the conflict (whether it is of international or non-international character). Article 3 (1) prohibits "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" (clause (a)), as well as "outrage upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment" (clause (c)).

Pakistan has by all accounts violated these tenets of civilized behaviour, and committed grave breaches to the international humanitarian law. It has the duty to proceed against the persons responsible for the commission of these offences-see, e.g., Article 129 of the Convention for the Protection of the PoWs. These are war crimes for which there is both individual as well as collective responsibility.

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India's conduct in giving a decent burial to the dead bodies of infiltrators either left behind or refused acceptance by Pakistan has been widely appreciated. Pakistan did make an allegation that the Indian armed forces have used chemical weapons during the conflict. However, the international community is yet to be presented with any convincing evidence to substantiate this charge.

The mines left behind by the infiltrators continue to give problems for India. Indiscriminate use of mines is against the spirit of the humanitarian laws of armed conflict. In terms of International criminal law, aggression, and grave violations of international humanitarian law constitute international crimes for which both the state and the individuals committing them are criminally responsible.

### ***The Role of ICRC***

The Kargil conflict also raises questions on the role of the international organization, particularly, that of the ICRC. The ICRC is essentially an NGO performing commendable humanitarian work in conflict situations the world over. Under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, ICRC performs two levels of humanitarian functions. One, it may engage in "humanitarian activities", including, subject to the consent of the parties to the conflict, those for the amelioration of the sick and the wounded and the protection of the PoWs (Article 9 of the first three conventions, and Article 10 of the fourth convention). Two, it may offer its services to assume the humanitarian functions performed by the Protecting Power, if such an offer is accepted by the Detaining Power, or it may perform these functions, should it be requested to do so by the Detaining Power. (Article 10 of the first three conventions, and Article 11 of the fourth convention).

In fact, it was open to either or both the parties to the Kargil conflict to seek the services of the ICRC, particularly for the protection of the sick and the wounded, and the PoWs. The ICRC's interposition would have given greater credence to India's claims. On the other hand, both the parties to the conflict sought to exploit the international standing of the organization by seeking its involvement in certain specific

events, to derive some political mileage from it. ICRC's good offices for the handing over of Nachiketa, an India PoW, were sought by Pakistan, when it failed to deliver him to the Indian authorities in full publicity on the eve of its Foreign Minister's visit to New Delhi. On the other hand, according to some media reports, India had sought ICRC's presence at the post mortem operations of the mutilated bodies of six Indian soldiers handed over by the Pakistani army. However, the ICRC has denied that it was "officially" contacted by India for the purpose. Instead of following an eclectic approach, India should have authorized the ICRC to perform humanitarian activities of a Protecting Power within the zone of conflict, if it could allow some ICRC role in respect of its anti-terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

The ICRC, on its part, allowed itself to be used by Pakistan in the handing over of Nachiketa, whereas it thought that its impartiality would be tainted if it lent its presence at the autopsies of the mutilated bodies. It thus left itself open to blame as partial to Pakistan. The facts established by the autopsies were based on medical and forensic sciences, which are by and large precise and verifiable. The presence of ICRC would have ensured further credibility to the scientific conclusions reached as a result of the autopsies and vouchsafed that proper procedures were followed for and during the autopsies.

India's hesitation to approach the United Nations seeking a resolution of the Kargil conflict is understandable for a number of plausible reasons, including in particular the past record of the UN in *suppressio veri et suggestio falsi* in relation to Kashmir. However, India failed to enlist, to the fullest extent possible, the credentials of ICRC in the international projection and vindication of its stand on the conflict. It was gratifying to note that towards the end of the active hostilities India did utilise the assistance of ICRC in respect of the delivery of the dead to the Pakistani side.

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## US APPROACH TO KARGIL CONFLICT

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Washington's stand on the Pakistani offensive in Kargil is markedly distinct from the traditional US approach towards decades-long Kashmir question between India and Pakistan. This is not the first time that Pakistan has committed blatant aggression in Kashmir by initially despatching groups of trained and equipped "intruders" and subsequently using its military force. Similar was the Pakistani tactics in 1947-48 and in 1965. What was the US approach then?

The United States, on both the occasions, sought to project an image of neutrality in the conflict, by imposing arms embargo on both the parties. However, during the first round of Indo-Pak conflict, the US representative in the United Nations clarified the actual US position by opposing the resolution that would have called spade a spade by branding Pakistan as the aggressor. The then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was not only upset but also was enraged over the US position on the Kashmir issue in the United Nations. During the "Operation Gibraltar" of 1965, the United States once again sought to equate the aggressor with the victim by imposing arms embargo against both India and Pakistan. Unlike in the past, the Clinton Administration has taken up a position on the Kargil issue clearly indicating Pakistani hand in the current situation in Kargil. An editorial in the *Indian Express* remarked: "For once, the US has put world peace above its geopolitical compulsions".<sup>1</sup>

Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth was quick to remark that the "intruders" must go back before peace prevails in Kashmir. Inderfurth believed that the fighting in the Kargil area of Kashmir would not end until the militants who had entered from Pakistani side had left. "Clearly, the Indians are not going to cede this territory that these militants have taken," said Inderfurth and then went on to warn: "They have to depart and they will depart, either voluntarily or because the Indians take them out".<sup>2</sup> Secretary of State Madeline Albright reportedly told Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj

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Aziz over the phone to pull back the intruders from Kargil. Other State Department officials refused to believe the Pakistani version that Kashmiri militants, and not Pakistani regular forces, were involved in the Kargil offensive. One official maintained that there “may be a handful of the Islamic militant irregulars known as *Mujahideen* with the troops, but most of the invaders are regulars from the 10th Corps of the Pakistani Army”.<sup>3</sup>

President Bill Clinton, both through his letters and telephonic conversations with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, asked him to pull back his troops from across the Line of Control (LoC). Significantly, President Clinton himself informed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee about his advice to Nawaz Sharif “to take steps to defuse the crisis and respect the Line of Control”.<sup>4</sup> While Washington repeatedly asked India and Pakistan to respect the Line of Control, to refrain from escalating the situation and to keep the line of communication open, it simultaneously well publicized its advice to Islamabad to pull back its forces from the Indian side of the LoC. The Clinton White House maintained that Shimla Agreement was the best way to resolve the Kashmir dispute and refused to buy Nawaz Sharif’s contention that the LoC was undefined.

Significantly, the White House and the State Department were not alone in issuing warnings to Islamabad. Several American legislators, South Asia specialists and defence analysts branded Pakistan as the trouble maker and saw logic in India’s military action against the “intruders”. Two senators, Republican Benjamin Gilman and Democrat Sam Gejdenson wrote in their letter to fellow legislators: “The responsibility for the unnecessary deaths and casualties as well as displacement of thousands of innocent civilians resulting from the recent fighting (in Kargil) falls squarely on the infiltrators and their patrons in the Pakistani military”.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, Gilman, also the Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, submitted a resolution, co-sponsored by nine Democrats and three Republicans, calling upon the White House to oppose Pakistan’s support to the armed incursion into Indian Kashmir.<sup>6</sup>

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Congressional activism over the Kashmir issue did not die down even after Pakistan agreed to withdraw its forces from across the LoC. Democratic Congressman Frank Pallone, former co-Chairman of the India Caucus in the US Congress, urged President Clinton to oppose Islamabad's frequent efforts to drag Washington into resolving the Kashmir issue. He said: "It's clear that Pakistan has long sought to drag the United States into this conflict as an international mediator, as a strategic ploy to enhance its position in the conflict. Such a step would not be appropriate for the Kashmir conflict".<sup>7</sup> While branding radical Islamic militants and their supporter, Pakistan, as the main culprit of Kargil incident, Pallone went to the extent of urging Indian National Human Rights Commission to declare the Kashmiri Pundits as "victims of genocide and internally displaced persons".<sup>8</sup> Prominent Congressman and co-Chairman of the India Caucus Gary Ackerman wanted the US Administration to press upon Islamabad to stop funding and equipping the Kashmiri militants before asking New Delhi to resume the Lahore process.<sup>9</sup>

The Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Benjamin Gilman, on the other hand, said: "we will want to assure ourselves that the conditions do not deteriorate, and Pakistan must dismantle the structure for training militants for disrupting peace in Jammu and Kashmir, and maintain sanctity over the LoC, not only in Kargil but also throughout Jammu and Kashmir. Further, Pakistan must stop its support for cross-border terrorism against India".<sup>10</sup> Yet another influential Congressman Sherrod Brown, one of the founder members of the Congressional Caucus on India, wrote to Prime Minister Vajpayee expressing his sympathy for "the Indian soldiers who have lost their lives in Kashmir" and commending India's restraint "from widening the conflict to include Pakistani controlled territory".<sup>11</sup> So overwhelming was Congressional support for India's policy of restraint during the Kargil war that traditional anti-India resolutions in the Capitol Hill could not be moved. India's bete-noire Dan Burton, the Republican from Indiana, had to withdraw his anti-India amendment to Foreign Operations Authorization Bill for 2000 in the

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face of strong opposition by his fellow Congressmen. His angry reaction against his fellow legislators was reflected in his comment: “You obviously are concerned about your constituents ... and that is why you don’t want to do a damn thing about it-alleged human rights violations by India”.<sup>12</sup>

Ironically, the US imposed limited military sanctions against India and Pakistan during Pakistani aggression in 1947-48 and in 1965. But this time, in the midst of the Kargil crisis, the US Senate voted to lift the sanctions, imposed in the wake of the series of nuclear tests in South Asia, for five years. Some analysts quickly read some peculiar motives into this American Senatorial action. They felt that the idea was to reward Pakistan. Nothing was farther from the truth. The US Senate vote did not reflect an opinion poll on the Kargil conflict. Secondly, the lifting of sanctions, in any case, was not to be automatic after the measure adopted by the Senate. Thirdly, Pakistan, which suffered much more than India due to the US sanctions, would obviously benefit less in relative terms than India after such sanctions were to be removed. In the case of Pakistan, it would be restoration of normal economic life or prevention of further erosion of the country’s economy. India, which managed to face the US sanctions and incurred some opportunity costs, would benefit from the lifting of sanctions.

The strong American position against Pakistan’s misadventure had an impact on international community as well. Even countries traditionally friendly towards Pakistan found it difficult to condone that country’s irresponsible military move into Kargil. None of the P-5 or G-8 member countries had any sympathy for Islamabad. Pakistan was almost completely isolated. In the backdrop of international disapproval of its action, total diplomatic failure and military reverses on the ground, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited China and London. And both the trips turned out to be “chilly pilgrimages”.<sup>13</sup> At last, Sharif made a hurried trip to the United States. The high hope of the Pakistani Prime Minister was that the US-the traditional ally of the country-would ultimately come to its rescue. But the Clinton Administration had already

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been sending signals of its disapproval of Islamabad's military actions in Kashmir. There were reports about the possibility of denying or delaying the IMF loans to Pakistan, which, if implemented, could ruin the Pakistani economy.<sup>14</sup>

Before landing up in Washington, Nawaz Sharif appeared almost perplexed, not knowing how to extricate himself from the Kargil quagmire. The US decision to freeze trade with Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan and Sharif's visit to Washington were announced simultaneously, adding to the woes of the Pakistani Prime Minister. Even China cold-shouldered Nawaz during his visit to Beijing in late June and his reception in the Chinese capital appeared to be frosty. His journey to the US capital also coincided with the Indian army's recapture of the strategic Tiger Hill which meant that the Srinagar-Leh Highway was safe from the Pakistani shelling. *Far Eastern Economic Review* wrote: "The administration in Islamabad appears to be in turmoil. Sharif's office, the army and the Foreign Ministry have all issued contradictory statements about whether the government's aim is to achieve a face-saving withdrawal from Kargil as the world demands or continue fighting...."<sup>15</sup> According to an American commentator, "Nawaz was in such a hurry to see Clinton that he commandeered a regular Pakistani International Airways flight to New York and diverted it to Washington".<sup>16</sup>

The US President obliged the Pakistani Prime Minister and gave him time to discuss the Kargil issue on 4 July 1999-an American holiday. Even as the two leaders held discussions for about three hours, Clinton spoke to Prime Minister Vajpayee for about ten minutes during the break. Soon after the talks, a joint statement was issued which "amounted to a slap on Sharif's wrist".<sup>17</sup> According to the joint statement, it was "agreed between the President and the Prime Minister that concrete steps will be taken for the restoration of the LoC in accordance with the Shimla Agreement...."<sup>18</sup> The two leaders also agreed that "the bilateral dialogue begun in Lahore in February provides the best forum for resolving all issues dividing India and Pakistan, including Kashmir".<sup>19</sup> The joint statement made it evident that the



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United States did not agree with all the major contentions raised by Islamabad on the Kargil issue : (a) That the forces which crossed the LoC at Kargil were Kashmiri freedom fighters; (b) That Pakistani military had no role in the Kargil operation; (c) That Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had no control over the forces which crossed the LoC at Kargil; (d) That the LoC was not clearly defined. By signing the joint statement Nawaz Sharif did nothing but contradict his own earlier statements. Seen from the Indian perspective, Clinton got all major assurances from Nawaz on the Kargil issue which were nothing but the Indian demands.

In a way, Nawaz Sharif knew the outcome of the Washington summit before hand. When the Clinton Administration sent the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Command, General Anthony Zinni, to Islamabad in the last week of June and on his return announced Zinni's dialogue with the Pakistani Army Chief as “productive”, it was clear that Washington would not approve the Kargil expedition and would do nothing other than providing a face-saving device to Pakistan. In fact, the western, especially the American, media portrayed Sharif’s visit to Washington as an effort to gain “political cover” for the decision to pull out the invaders from across the LoC.

What could be the rationale behind the US position on the Kargil conflict? Was it a political tilt in favour of India by the Clinton Administration? Was Washington charting out a mediatory role for itself to ultimately resolve the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan? Did the US position on the Kargil conflict indicate a paradigm shift in the US policy towards South Asia? Was it a signal to Pakistan that a nuclear Pakistan would have to fend for itself and should no longer rely on an alliance relationship and unquestioned American support to its misguided expeditions?

There is no doubt that the US approach towards the Kargil conflict was based on post-Cold War and post-Pokharan / Chagai developments. This did not mean that the United States decided to move closer towards India and farther from Pakistan under post-

### *US APPROACH TO KARGIL CONFLICT*

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Cold War considerations. After the nuclearization of South Asia the United States could no longer treat South Asia as a low strategic priority area. The US analysts had often raised the possibility of a nuclear holocaust in South Asia arising out of a flashpoint in Kashmir. Pakistan's delinquent adventure into Kargil after the overt nuclearization, unless controlled in time, could have dangerous consequences in American perceptions. As a result, while refraining from making noises about the possibility of a nuclear inferno in South Asia arising out of the conflict in Kargil, Washington decided to call a spade a spade and made diplomatic moves to ensure Pakistani troops withdrawal and Indian restraint.

The US approach was not at all an indication that Washington had decided to play the role of a mediator in resolving the Kashmir crisis. In fact, when the Indian media reflected upon such an eventuality, policy makers in Washington on more than one occasion made it amply clear that they were not seeking a mediatory role.<sup>20</sup> The repeated emphasis on the Shimla Agreement in the Clinton-Sharif joint statement of 4 July 1999 set at rest the speculation that Washington was in quest of an active mediatory role in the South Asian dispute. Clinton's desire to "take a personal interest in encouraging an expeditious" effort to resolve the bilateral disputes between India and Pakistan did not alter the fundamental US policy towards Kashmir. Clinton's "personal interest" in resolving the Kashmir issue was conditional upon Pakistan's acceptance of the Lahore Process. While Pakistan interpreted it as Clinton's desire to play a mediatory role, the wording of the joint statement did not, indicate a "presidential interest." It was Clinton's "personal interest" and Clinton would be out of power from 20 January 2001! It appeared as if the Clinton Administration wanted to keep off the complex Kashmir issue and let India and Pakistan resolve the issue bilaterally. Washington's role would be more of a "facilitator" rather than a mediator.

The US position on the Kargil conflict, moreover, should not be construed as the one meant to be a political tilt in favour of India

or a strategic distance from Pakistan. There was absolutely no doubt that India was the victim of an aggression and that India was fighting on its own territory against an intruding force. Had India decided to go for a tit-for-tat response and the US would have backed India, then one could have perhaps made a case of an American tilt in favour of India. However, here the question arises whether there would have been a Kashmir dispute today if the international community, particularly the United States, had seen merit in India's efforts to push back the "intruders" into Kashmir in the first Kashmir War of 1947-48 and would have taken an appropriate position then! After all, Washington does not disapprove the Instrument of Accession even today. Only once Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel tried to question the legal validity of the Instrument of Accession and before long realised her folly and never repeated it again.

Finally, has there been a paradigm shift in the US perception and policy as far as South Asia's two biggest neighbours are concerned? A newspaper report, quoting Indian officials, in the midst of the Kargil crisis precipitated a brief debate in India on whether there had been a paradigm shift in the US policy. According to the report, the Indian foreign policy establishment believed that there had been a paradigm shift in US policy towards India, as manifested in the US support to India against the Pakistani misadventure in Kargil both individually and in G-8.<sup>21</sup> Compared to previous US positions on conflict over Kashmir, the US approach towards the Kargil issue is definitely unique, unconventional and uncommon. Moreover, the goodwill generated in the US for India due to its policy of restraint and the goodwill generated in India for the US due to its unusual position on Kargil conflict constituted a far cry from the tension-ridden climate of post-Pokhran period. Some diplomats characterised it as the "Kargil Spring" as compared to the "Nuclear Winter" of the recent past. However, it was an one-time affair and it would be difficult to see a paradigm shift in the US policy.

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Having said that, it may be pointed out that there have been significant changes in the US perception, policy and approach towards India over last one decade. The end of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, collapse of the Soviet Union, economic reforms in India, rise of China as an Asian giant, issues of proliferation concerns and last but not the least the nuclearization of the Indian sub-continent have contributed to changes in the American perception of India. It would be difficult to discern a new paradigm in the emerging Indo-US ties, but one can perhaps safely assume that the Cold War paradigm no longer exists. The "Kargil Spring" in this context constitutes a positive example in the changing contours of Indo-American relations.

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- 28 June 1999. Two days later the State Department spokesman hinted that such an action could be counter-productive in the long-run, as it could hurt the innocents. See, *Hindustan Times*, 30 June 1999.
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# CHINA'S RESPONSE TO THE KARGIL CONFLICT

*Swaran Singh*

By most estimates by high officials and experts the Indo-Pak conflict in Kargil sector that began during early May 1999 was not expected to be over before September. And the most convincing reason given for this prediction was not any military victory or defeat but the most inhospitable weather in this part of the Indo-Pak Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. With the coming of severe winter, it was said, the heavy snow would make it impossible to continue the fighting-on-the-ground. However, contrary to all these predictions, this Indo-Pak conflict in Kargil ended much earlier, as early as in the middle of July 1999. And as the heat and dust of Kargil begins to settle down, most assessments about India's performance in this latest of its national security challenges, the sheer guts and perseverance of Indian soldiers fighting-on-the-ground is believed to be the most critical input that ensured India's military victory. But having said this, one must also concede a second position to the more-than-positive international response especially the ones from Washington and Beijing that proved to be the other important factor in compelling the Pakistani power elite to order an earlier-than-expected retreat which has since resulted in Pakistan's fourth successful military coup where Pakistan's former Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf has since dismissed the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif and taken over as country's new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

However, given the expected patriotic fervour, at least the initial comments and analysis had failed to give this international response its due credit. Also, whatever few commentaries were written on international response to Kargil conflict clearly focussed only on the Clinton-Sharif deal of 4 July 1999. No doubt, that formally it was this Clinton-Sharif deal that may have finally facilitated an honourable retreat for the Pakistani armed forces yet, looking at the factors that

actually made this deal possible, it was China's continued posture of neutrality that seem to provide the most decisive input in convincing the Pakistani leadership on the futility of continuing to back-up its losing armed forces as also of seeking to internationalise Kashmir in the face of Pakistan's growing economic bankruptcy as also its increasing diplomatic isolation at the global scene. And, it is in this context that, as the post-Kargil commentaries unfold various known and unknown aspects of entire crisis, this article makes an attempt to specifically assess the character and contribution of China's response to this fourth Indo-Pak war for Kashmir.<sup>1</sup>

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINA'S RESPONSE**

Amongst various other external actors, what apparently seemed to place China at the center-stage amongst the international response to the Kargil conflict were the series of high-level visits from both India and Pakistan that made China's response appear as if the most critical in finding ways and means to seek an early termination of the Kargil conflict (**See Chart Indo-Pak Interactions with China**). Even if these visits by both Indian and Pakistani high officials were not really representative of the actual intensity of China's involvement in resolving Indo-Pak ties, China's continued commitment to its posture of neutrality over the Kargil conflict definitely made the leadership in Beijing so much more noticeable and so much more effective in facilitating restraint and resolution between Islamabad and New Delhi. But above all, what made China's response unique was its contrast with all its responses during the earlier Indo-Pak conflicts where China had openly supported and sided with the Pakistani policy on Kashmir.

Any objective assessment of China's response during the recent Kargil conflict, therefore, has to be first placed in the broader historical context of China's traditional 'special relationship' with the successive ruling regimes in Islamabad. It is in that broader perspective as well that one has to examine the possible compulsions and strengths of China's changed strategic behaviour this time and to fathom Beijing's commitment to its gradual shift towards this new

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policy of neutrality on the entire question of the Jammu and Kashmir province. On the other hand, China's neutrality has also to be viewed in the context of the continued suspicion amongst Indian intelligentsia as also the Indian leadership and masses. Given China's track-record during the last 50 years, there has been an element of continued skepticism in Indian minds which was partly responsible for the initial subdued response to Beijing's demonstration to neutrality over Indo-Pak military showdown in Kargil. This skepticism was especially strong in view of New Delhi's not-so-friendly ties with Beijing following India's nuclear explosions during May 1998. Besides, at the very core, these three countries share a rather complicated history and geography and their trilateral China-India-Pak security ties have to be kept in mind while trying to gauge the overall character of Beijing's neutrality over the recent Kargil conflict.

To recall, during all earlier Indo-Pak conflicts, Beijing has been known for following a standard pro-Pakistan policy which most Indian commentators have viewed as anti-India in its origins and motivations. To briefly look at the history, the Chinese communists were at the peak of their fight against the *Kuomintang* regime during the first Indo-Pak conflict of 1948 and, therefore, this conflict may not have really interested Mao who was nearly a year away from founding his People's Republic. Yet, going by his later criticism of Nehru's bourgeoisie liberal democracy, in which he described Nehru's government as only a transition stage towards heralding an era of communism, his views on India were neither sympathetic nor very positive. Later he was to describe Nehru as a stooge of the Western countries which clearly reflected his understanding of New Delhi's policies. However, a more thought-out and detailed response of Chairman Mao was provided during the second Indo-Pak war of 1965.

First of all, this Indo-Pak war of 1965 had come too soon after the Sino-Indian war of 1962. This interlude of three years had seen China and Pakistan building friendship against their perceived common enemy. Accordingly, following their border settlement agreement of March 1963 where Pakistan conceded over 5,000 sq. kms. of Indian



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territory to the Chinese, China had gradually come to be one of Pakistan's major supplier of military equipment and technologies.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, the Pakistani Generals were to pride themselves with this unusual reliability on the Chinese and they believed that Beijing had, in fact, issued New Delhi some sort of a dead-line for coming to cease-fire with Pakistani armed forces.<sup>3</sup> However, even if China did not take any military action against India, its veiled threats to physically intervene did constrain India to retain five of her seven mountain divisions on her northern borders. Even the other two divisions were kept only in reserve and were not put to the front-line until the Indo-Pak cease-fire was signed at Tashkent.

Similarly, during the Indo-Pak war of 1971, China had called India adventurist, expansionist and aggressor and both General Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had publicly declared that, if need be, China could militarily intervene in support of the Pakistani side. Once again, China may not have physically intervened yet, it provided Pakistan weapons and equipment and even allowed Pakistani Air Force flights eastwards to over-fly from its territory.<sup>4</sup> All this not only provided Pakistan a moral support but also facilitated its military operations making India's victory that much more difficult.

But above all, such Chinese behaviour provided weight to Pakistani statements about China's possible intervention which had to be viewed in the backdrop of the problematic Sino-Indian relations since late 1950s and their border war in 1962 which had since led to a freeze in their official interactions. Moreover, the Sino-American entente during the early 1970s and Pakistan's role in the historic trip by Henry Kissinger to Beijing had made things all the more complicated for New Delhi's policy-makers. It is in this situation that Mrs. Indira Gandhi had signed that historic Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation which, however, did have a role in making New Delhi stand these pressures from Beijing and Washington. But once again, this Indo-Soviet treaty and the resultant closeness made Beijing all the more suspicious of India's intentions and policies and this had only further strengthened China's commitment towards the successive

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regimes in Islamabad. This long-standing Sino-Pak 'special relationship' was to later emerge as the single most difficult issue for India's policy-makers as they tried to build *rapprochement* with slow-moving and reluctant Beijing.

Apart from China's policy posture during these specific Indo-Pak wars, China's growing indulgence in Pakistani military and later its suspected transfer of various nuclear and missile technologies and components to Pakistan were to emerge as the most central concern of India's national security thinking and policy planning. Starting from the early 1960s, China had since come to be the most dependable as also the largest supplier of military technologies to Pakistani armed forces. With such a complicated backdrop, skepticism in India's mind was perhaps fully understandable. No doubt, Sino-Indian ties since early 1970s have seen these two countries working together for nearly three decades yet, the fact that Beijing decided to rebuff both Pakistan's Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, who separately visited Beijing during the recent conflict in Kargil, was not all that expected by most observers of Sino-Pak ties. This is because, in spite of the Sino-Indian *rapprochement* from the early 1980s, China's commitment to Pakistan was viewed purely in terms of its continued supply of conventional military hardware to Pakistan and it was even suspected of passing on extremely sensitive nuclear and missile technologies. Amongst most experts, China's contributions are today widely recognised to be the single most important factor in making Pakistan a nuclear weapon country. It is this preoccupation with military perspective that has been perhaps partly responsible for the fact that foreign policy and diplomatic initiatives were not really seen as any more effective in improving the Sino-Indian ties.

### **CHINA'S CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS**

With the change in international equations in the post-Cold War world, Pakistan seems to have gradually lost its place of pride in Beijing's foreign policy calculations. Besides, India's continued diplomatic engagement may have also made a dent in Beijing's strategic

thinking on these and other issues. Being widely recognised as the next global power in-the-making, China has since begun to operate within its newly defined perimeters projecting itself as a responsible power. There may also be many other factors that explain China's gradual shift towards a more neutral posture on the Indo-Pak conflicts. Yet, the track-record of the Chinese has kept most Indians extremely cautious about the Chinese posture of neutrality, with many commentators even till recently describing China's neutrality as neutrality in favour of Pakistani intrusions in Kashmir.<sup>5</sup> Granted that in a scenario where it was the Indian side that was the loser, China's neutrality would have clearly favoured the winning side. But, by the same logic, compulsions for the Chinese leaders to rescue their losing ally (Pakistan) were certainly far more pressing this time. And the fact that, this time round, China did not even dither from its neutral position despite India being the one winning should make China's commitment to neutrality appear fairly authentic, if not necessarily a pro-New Delhi policy decision.

The more important question to explore is perhaps related to the depth and longevity of China's policy of neutrality. The answer to this lies in exploring into the very thinking of the Chinese power elite and China's other Indian/South Asian experts and their assessments. The core issue here is to see whether or not this policy of neutrality remains rooted in China's foreign policy concerns that will make China's neutrality both very firm and lasting. Accordingly, this Chinese position of neutrality has to be examined in the light of whether or not it is seen in China's own perceptions to suit the changed new reality as also whether or not in this changed new position for neutrality it is perceived in Beijing to better serve their national interests. And here, seen from Beijing's perspective, the following can perhaps be cited as Beijing's major current concerns that determined its posture of neutrality while dealing with the issue of Indian and Pakistani claims of sovereignty over the province of Jammu and Kashmir :

- (a) *Firstly*, following the end of the Cold War era, Pakistan has not only lost its place of pride in the global power equations, it has also repeatedly defied Beijing's advice on its foreign

and defence policies and initiatives. One vivid example of this was Islamabad's decision to conduct its nuclear tests during May 1998 despite the fact that Beijing had advised restraint, and even made an offer of a nuclear umbrella. Pakistan's successful nuclear and missile tests have since continued to occasionally embarrass China's leaders in their dealings with the United States (as also other concerned countries) who repeatedly ask Beijing to strengthen its export controls and to abide by its commitments to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Lately, the Cox Report of the US Congress has accused Beijing of stealing nuclear and missile technologies from US facilities which has also made Chinese all the more cautious about their foreign policy choices vis-à-vis Pakistan.

- (b) *Secondly*, Pakistan has also continuously failed to curb activities of Islamic fundamentalist groups who have been reportedly involved in ethnic problems in China's Xinjiang province. Pakistani-based Muslim fundamentalist group, *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, held a 300,000-strong rally near Lahore in November 1999 where 50,000 armed young men signed a document to take revenge from anti-Muslim governments in various parts of the world.<sup>6</sup> Reportedly, some of these Chinese Uighur Muslims have also been found amongst the intruders in Kargil. Besides, China has meanwhile evolved its own state-to-state ties with the Central Asian republics and its five summits of the 'Shanghai Five' since 1996 have evolved a series of CBMs thus blocking all other possibilities of Muslim fundamentalists operating in Xinjiang from these Central Asian Republics. This today leaves only Pakistan that has come to be projected as the main culprit. To China's surprise, the militants in the POK continue to be accessible to Chinese ethnic minorities whose activities have continued to provide justification for all anti-China human rights campaigns by various Western countries. Given its own

fragile internal ethnic fabric, China would not like to be seen as supporting any *jehad*-like activities by various fundamentalist forces, many of which have formed bases inside Pakistan.

- (c) *Thirdly*, at a larger context of global politics, Pakistan no longer plays the role of a frontline state for the United States that had aligned Islamabad in its scheme of bleeding the Soviets white. This means that Pakistan no longer enjoys the same special equation with Washington which could be most decisive in moulding Beijing's policies. Instead, Islamabad's continued involvement in Afghanistan has only further discredited its profile with more and more countries becoming increasingly worried about the menace of expanding Pak-controlled heavily-armed mercenaries which have repeatedly attacked various US officials and properties both inside and outside Pakistan. China, on the other hand, has built a new strategic partnership with both Moscow and Washington as also achieved greater acceptability amongst other neighbouring countries. All this has also further facilitated a greater balanced approach and understanding amongst the Chinese leadership which has come to play a more objective role in their dealing with problems between New Delhi and Islamabad.
- (d) *Fourthly*, amongst some of the more immediate factors, the fear of escalation with all three sides now possessing nuclear weapons and missiles was also very visible in all the Chinese descriptions and analyses of the Kargil conflict. This was closely followed by their emphasis on regional stability that was also repeatedly played up as the most central element in most of their official and media responses. It is not yet clear if this was borne out of Beijing's declining leverage in restraining Pakistan's adventurist policies or was it from the fear that any debate or controversies regarding Indo-Pak nuclear weapons could bring China's own nuclear arsenals

into scrutiny. This aspect, however, was never so much stressed by responses of other big powers like the United States who have generally been projecting Kashmir as one of potential flash-point. The fact that this visible restraint in India's military operations was widely appreciated was definitely a factor in moulding Beijing's policy of neutrality in the Indo-Pak conflict in Kargil.

- (e) *Fifthly*, given China's own recent diplomatic stand-off with the United States following Congressional allegations of Chinese stealing US nuclear and missile technologies, the growing Chinese suspicion of such a conflict leading to a possible Western intervention on its southern frontiers was also repeatedly highlighted by the Chinese commentaries and official policy statements. But the fact that it did not seek to force solutions made it clear that China was also not seeking to keep Western powers out of the picture simply to carve out its own sphere of influence in the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, there was definitely a shift from its Cold War mindset which revolved around playing 'China Card' to playing as the second most important country in the Asia-Pacific that is being watched for its behaviour. And this made many commentators feel that China was perhaps, for the first time, projecting its policies as an emerging global power of 21st century, and not simply responding to short-term gains in terms of either rescuing an old ally or reciprocating to its perceived adversaries.
- (f) And *finally*, trends in the general global response to the Indo-Pak military engagement in Kargil may have also influenced China's policy decisions. Going by those initial reports, what appears particularly remarkable about this international response is the fact that, for the first time, the world opinion seemed to be endorsing India's policy stance on the Kargil conflict. This was not only unprecedented but also largely unexpected, and even startling in some cases. These signals

were too strong to go unnoticed amongst Beijing's policy-makers. Therefore, as we begin to examine various dimensions and responses to the recent Kargil conflict, any objective assessment of Indian victory must duly endorse the contribution made by this positive international response both in maintaining restraint and in achieving an early termination of this fourth Indo-Pak conflict.

### **GLOBAL RESPONSE AND CHINA'S POLICY OPTIONS**

No doubt, considering the fact that this happened to be the first conflict in the post-Cold War era that involved nuclear weapon power on both the sides, any predictions about the possible international response were bound to have their own inherent limitations. Going by the conventional logic of the great powers, the given context should have made this conflict extremely unpredictable, sensitive and complicated, to say the least. But, contrary to this prevalent skepticism amongst most observers, both the restraint from the sides of India and Pakistan as also the unison international response in India's favour was simply far too definite and vivid. This could be seen in the whole range of strong and not-so-strong exhortations to Pakistan to restore the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir. Amongst others, the United States was one power that pushed Pakistan hard to withdraw its forces from the Indian side and to abide by the sanctity of the LoC in Kashmir. Especially, given China's recent diplomatic stand-off with Washington, this American interest perhaps made Beijing very conscious of its responsibilities as the next emerging global power responding to a conflict on its periphery which may have partly been responsible in China's more objective role in dealing with Kargil conflict. The concerns regarding the growing American interests in Kargil were vivid in China's repeated emphasis on threat of escalation, regional instability, and fears about Western intervention in its periphery. If anything, China seemed clearly more worried about the fact that such an eventuality like Kargil "runs the risk of involving Western intervention".<sup>7</sup>

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Various other factors may have also influenced China's foreign policy choices with regard to the Kargil conflict. It is, for example, a well-known fact that China remains worried about NATO's eastward expansion towards its borders as also of the rising anti-China sentiments in the United States which have been further fuelled by the controversies of China's alleged hand in stealing of nuclear and missile technologies from various US laboratories. These had incidentally preceded the timings of this Indo-Pak conflict in Kargil. Besides, seen along with the bombing of its embassy in Belgrade during May 1999 and the follow-up controversies especially those regarding Taiwan Relations Act 1979 being revised as Taiwan Restoration Act 1999 by the US Congress may have only further added to Beijing's reasons to see Kargil in the broader context of global politics. And here, China, as a principle, has been against encouraging any unilateralism in international relations and, for some years, has seriously been pushing for a multipolar post-Cold War world, though there are powerful sections in China which believe the world to become increasingly bipolar world with Washington and Beijing being the two most dominant players.<sup>8</sup> It is this gamut of China's compulsions as also its self-image of being the next global power that may have contributed to China's neutral posture in the Kargil conflict. Accordingly, Beijing actually seemed responding to larger issues like regional stability rather than trying to play for ad hoc gains like rescuing a time-tested ally or reciprocating to a perceived adversary's activities. For example, commenting on reports on the possibility of Indian forces crossing the LoC, editorial in *China Daily* had nothing more to say than stressing that "hope for a peaceful solution of the Kashmir issue has not died out and diplomatic means have not been exhausted."

Finally, while looking at various factors responsible for China's posture of neutrality over the recent conflict in Kargil, the due credit must also be given to the Indian diplomacy which has been able to put across its view of Kargil conflict at all available forums and places. And here, in addition to various other factors, India's continued engagement with both Washington and Beijing deserves to be credited



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for being perhaps one of the most important factors behind this slow yet steady shift in China's South Asia policy. The fact that both India and Pakistan now claim to be states with nuclear weapon may have also contributed to Beijing preaching restraint and early conclusion of the Kargil conflict rather than being seen as supporting either side. Any debate on nuclear weapon of these two countries can easily bring China's own nuclear arsenals into focus. And considering that China has not yet shown any inclination for nuclear disarmament it may have been one of the reasons for Beijing's decision to play a rather low-profile. These fears that both these South Asian countries possessed nuclear weapon and missiles was clearly visible in Chinese commentaries that emphasised on the threats to regional stability of the entire South Asian region of which China has always been an integral part.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the resultant diplomatic isolation of Pakistani elite was so noticeable may have contributed the most to the determination by the leadership in Beijing to continue with their policy of neutrality vis-a-vis the Kargil conflict.

#### **CHARACTER & CONTRIBUTION OF CHINA'S NEUTRALITY POSTURE**

With the advantage of hindsight, it appears now that amongst some of the more forceful responses from major world powers, it was perhaps the unprecedented rebuff and discouragement from its long-time ally China that seems to have particularly deepened Pakistan's diplomatic isolation this time. This was further reinforced by apparent reluctance and caution from the US administration and followed by a more outright condemnation by the US Congress.<sup>10</sup> Especially, considering that both the Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister of Pakistan paid visit to Beijing and that these were widely viewed as the last resort attempts by Pakistani leadership in trying to cope with their growing international isolation over their misadventure in Kargil made China's continued neutrality so much more deliberate as also so much more decisive in bringing about Pakistani earlier-than-expected retreat. More precisely, therefore, it was the Chinese decision to stand by their

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policy of neutrality even in the face of a visit to Beijing by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that can easily be identified as an important factor that may have compelled the Nawaz Sharif government to look for an honourable retreat. It is, therefore, important to understand the nature of this neutrality of the Chinese leadership that possibly was largely responsible for the conclusion of the Clinton-Sharif deal, which has been credited for bringing about Islamabad to order an early retreat.

Having established its credentials as also its contribution towards an earlier-than-expected conclusion of the Kargil conflict, it is perhaps equally important to outline the essential character of China's neutrality posture. At first look, of course, it still remains fairly difficult proposition to outline as to what actually constitutes the Chinese policy of neutrality towards the long-standing Indo-Pak dispute over sovereignty over the province of Jammu & Kashmir. Especially, to appreciate the long-term implications of the Chinese policy with regard to Kashmir, its neutrality during the recent Kargil conflict has to be examined in that larger context of trilateral Sino-Indo-Pak ties. Going by the available comments and analyses by the Chinese experts and leadership, this Chinese position was perhaps most aptly summarised by a statement by China's Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan which he reportedly made during his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Sartaj Aziz during latter's visit to Beijing on June 11, 1999. Tang said: "The Kashmir issue is a complicated affair with a long history and should be, and could only be, solved through peaceful means... China hopes Pakistan and India will find an effective approach to bringing about a political solution to the Kashmir issue through negotiations and consultations".<sup>11</sup> The same neutral approach was echoed by most other official statements by Chinese leaders and other expert analysis that preceded or followed it. Broadly, this only re-iterated what President Jiang Zemin had advised during his speech to the Pakistani Senate while on his last visit to that country in December 1996 where he had advised Pakistan to find "fair and reasonable solution through consultations and negotiations. If some issues can not be resolved, then they should be temporarily shelved so that they do not have a wrong effect on relations between countries".<sup>12</sup>

Also, glancing through other major events that brought the China's policy of neutrality into the limelight, the first most important event that brought China at the center stage of the Kargil conflict was the sudden air dash by Pakistani Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, who went to consult leaders in Beijing at the very eve of his visit to New Delhi. The fact that this visit was put up in a hurry as also the fact that this visit by Sartaj Aziz was soon to be followed by a pre-planned visit to Beijing by India's Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, may have been a major reason for restraint on the Chinese side. In contrast to this, the visit by Jaswant Singh was seen as a major event in China as the Indian Foreign Minister sought to make an important contribution to the tenor of Sino-Indian ties which had not been going very well following India's nuclear explosions during May 1998. Amongst his other major contributions towards normalising Sino-Indian ties, Jaswant Singh's visit led to a formal change in India's official posture towards Beijing. Before this visit by Jaswant Singh, India's China policy had been defined in the framework of speeches by India's Defence Minister George Fernandes as also in the context of now-famous letter by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to President Bill Clinton, both of which had described China as a perceived threat, at least potentially. But the fact that this negative projection of China had only further solidified the traditional Sino-Pak *entente cordiale* had begun to sink Indian minds for quite some time.<sup>13</sup>

From a Foreign Minister's standpoint, Jaswant Singh, during his visit to Beijing in mid-June 1999, sought to allay all fears and misunderstanding by underlining that New Delhi did not consider China as a threat, potentially or otherwise. And to gauge the effect he made on the Chinese, Premier Zhu Rongji described Jaswant Singh's visit as very successful in the Chinese eyes. Jaswant Singh was later quoted in the Chinese print media as having said that "India is not a threat to the People's Republic of China and we do not treat the People's Republic of China as the threat to India".<sup>14</sup> This was duly reciprocated by his Chinese counterpart who was also quoted as saying that "India is an important neighbour of China and the development of good neighbourly friendly co-operation with India is one of China's basic national

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policies".<sup>15</sup> This seemed to have put Sino-Indian ties back on the trails thus further facilitating continuation of Chinese neutrality in Kargil. Also, it was this changed tenor of Sino-Indian ties that may have also contributed to the lackluster performance of Pak Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who visited Beijing during 28 June- 3 July 1999. Continuing on these positive gains, Jaswant Singh had his second post-Kargil meeting with his Chinese counterpart on July 24 during the annual meeting of the Asean Region Forum (ARF) in Singapore where the two agreed on six joint initiatives in their bilateral cooperation and the Chinese side reportedly endorsed India's "stabilising role" in South Asia, thus reflecting the new tenor of Sino-Indian ties.<sup>16</sup> This seemed to have finally brought Sino-Indian ties back on the track of normalcy with India being at least indirectly recognised as the most important South Asian country.

### **LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA'S NEUTRALITY**

Considering that many experts still continue to suspect motives and are not yet fully convinced about the character and contribution of China's neutrality during the last Indo-Pak military showdown in Kargil, it may be too early to look for any long-term implications of China's policies. Yet, going by the way the Chinese conducted themselves, it would also be wrong to project their policy postures as either anti-Islamabad or pro-New Delhi. Chinese neutrality in the Kargil conflict was definitely far more subtle and sophisticated, almost trying to achieve a win-win situation from both the parties to the conflict. Nevertheless, it remains impossible to expect that both India and Pakistan are drawing similar conclusions about this Chinese posture of neutrality and, apart from their home-grown biases, the two sides may have actually received different signals from Beijing. But the single most important event that finally established the credibility of the Chinese posture of neutrality during the Kargil conflict remains the Chinese response to the visit by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. And, going by their traditional Pakistani dependence on Beijing, this single gesture was definitely very disappointing for the Pakistani power elite.

Despite the fact that it came on the heels of increasing US pressures to retreat and restore the LoC in the Kargil sector, this visit was officially described by both sides as a routine interaction and accordingly Kashmir was apparently not allowed to overshadow their meetings in Beijing. This low-profile was sought to be further projected through four trade agreements that were signed during this visit. But the manner in which Nawaz Sharif had to curtail his week-long planned 'working visit' to Beijing, Kunming and Hong Kong clearly showed its negative impact for the Sino-Pak ties. This seemed to be Islamabad's last hope to recover its lost ground in its aim to, at least, utilize this visit to internationalise the Kashmir dispute.<sup>17</sup> In addition to supporting Islamabad's versions of the Kargil conflict, Pakistan had expected China to push this issue at the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly or even to take up this issue at the UN Security Council. This was because, Pakistan by this time was losing its game both amongst international opinion-makers as also on the ground in Kargil. It is precisely for this reason that the Chinese simply refused to oblige.

In his meetings with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji was reported to have told Nawaz Sharif to seek political solutions by reviving the Lahore Declaration of February 1999. Providing expression to China's policy on Kargil, Premier Zhu Rongji described Kashmir as a "historical issue involving territorial, ethnic and religious elements" which require to "be solved only through peaceful means" and the initiatives for this were expected to come from Islamabad and New Delhi.<sup>18</sup> In view of the fact that China failed to oblige, Sharif had little time to spare in carrying out hectic diplomatic parleys with Pakistan's other most trusted ally in Washington where he finally agreed to "take concrete steps" towards restoring the LoC in Kashmir. All this clearly shows China's continuing role in setting the tenor of Indo-Pak ties, even if, in the long-run that role may not be decisive; definitely not so from the perspective of India's policy initiatives. Nevertheless, irrespective of whether one likes or not, this does establish the fact that China's continuing neutrality can have a definite positive impact on the process of resolving the knots of Indo-Pak ties.

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude, therefore, the debate on the nature of India's military and diplomatic victory during the Indo-Pak military showdown in Kargil as also on whether or not Pakistan succeeded in internationalising Kashmir will remain inconclusive for a long-time to come. However, going by what happened during Nawaz Sharif's meetings with China's leaders in Beijing, which occurred in the midst of this Indo-Pak military showdown, followed by his meeting with President Bill Clinton in Washington, all these clearly establish that China's neutrality played a decisive role in facilitating what has since come to be known as the Clinton-Sharif deal of June 4, 1999. This deal has been credited as the single most important external factor in hastening an earlier-than-expected conclusion of the Kargil conflict. At least during its initial period, this indeed appeared as having provided an honourable exit for the Pakistani armed forces and re-establish the principle of supremacy of civilian leadership which was able to have the final say on Pakistan army's misadventure. To reinforce that trend, the Clinton-Sharif deal stressed on Pakistan to take "concrete steps for the restoration of the Line of Control (LoC) in accordance with the Simla Agreement".<sup>19</sup> In return President Clinton also seemed to have promised to take "personal interest" in Kashmir dispute and is again planning to visit South Asia sometime before he lays down his office in early 2000.

But, the final outcome of the Kargil conflict was to come on October 12, 1999. Projecting their Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, as solely responsible for their defeat in the Kargil conflict, the Pakistani armed forces decided to take over the political power in Pakistan's fourth successful military coup that seemed to mark the beginning of the end of Nawaz Sharif. This anti-climax made a major dent in intentions and policies of both China and India and the follow-up period has witnessed both these countries far more cautious and concerned about the future of Pakistan. With Pakistan's total foreign debt all set to cross its Gross Domestic Product in next two years and various fundamentalist forces deeply entrenched and thriving on its new gun culture, many experts have since begun to talk in terms of moving from

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neutrality to an active engagement which is seen as the only way to ensure a stable Pakistan. And this assessment is not based on any charitable or high-moral principles but on hard facts and strategic analysis which believe that it is only a stable Pakistan that best serves India's national security interests. And the same perhaps is also true of Beijing.

**INDO-PAK INTERACTIONS WITH CHINA  
(During the Kargil Conflict)**

<b>12-14 May 1999</b>	<b>Pakistani Army Chief General Musharraf's visit to Beijing</b>
<b>11 June 1999</b>	<b>Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz's one-day visit to China</b>
<b>14-16 June 1999</b>	<b>Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh's three-day visit to China</b>
<b>25 June 1999</b>	<b>CPI(M) Gen. Secy. Harkishan Singh Surjeet's visit to China</b>
<b>28 June-3 July 1999</b>	<b>Prime Minister Nawaz Shrief's visit to China (was cut short)</b>
<b>25 July 1999</b>	<b>Jaswant Singh meeting Tang Jiaxuan during ARF Meet at Singapore</b>

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## KARGIL AND BEYOND

*A.K. Ray*

Kargil 1999 is our war of atonement - atonement for the sins we have committed against ourselves beginning with the decision to take Kashmir to the UN. A deadly sin - *peccato mortale*-was our acceptance of the UN-sponsored cease- fire effective 1 January 1949 when Pakistan was in dire straits and looked to UN for rescue from an impending military and political disaster. Time and again, we have frittered away the gains made on the battlefield with blood for nothing but empty words. It is said that in diplomacy, the last resort is the solemn word of a man of honour. Sadly, but perhaps inevitably, our experience with Pakistan has been that the solemn words they utter at the conference table are not solemn at all, and the men who utter them are not men of honour.

Shimla 1972 was not an exception. There is hardly any truth in the claim that it gave us 27 years of peace, i.e. until Kargil 1999. Those who make such a claim simply erase out of their memory the history of militancy in Punjab and the valley. Pakistan's involvement in both is beyond question. Have we then been in a state of war or of peace since 1971. To describe the pre-1999 conflict in the Kashmir valley as a low-intensity-conflict (LIC) is to look at the form and forget the substance. The fact is that Indo-Pak hostilities which commenced in 1947 never really ceased; they have continued in one form or another. How many of us care to recall that while Ayub Khan was signing the Tashkent document, agents of *Jamat- e- Islami*, infiltrated into the valley by Pakistan, had already commenced the setting up of subversive cells aided by quite a few of the local teachers of the *Quran* in the *madrassas*? Over 200 such cells were detected and smashed in 1970. Pakistan's involvement in militancy in the north-east is but another front in its ceaseless war against us.

We have to look at Kargil 1999 against this background. What is called "Operation Topac" was not the beginning of a story but the blueprint for its culmination. And this culmination was to see what Pakistan

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calls “the liberation of Kashmir”. There were three conditions precedent: first, inducting Afghan *Mujahideen*, mercenaries, trained POK personnel, and militants trained in POK and Pakistan, “insurgency” in the valley was to be raised to a level which will tie Indian forces down into a no-win situation; secondly, the administrative machinery of the state must collapse; and thirdly, there should be political chaos at the centre. The *coup de grace* was to be administered by the regular army with a feint in the Kargil sector while the main thrust would secure separation of Ladakh and debouch into the valley from north and north-east. Recently, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Hamid Gul (of the ISI fame) told a media person from India that “liberation” of Kashmir remained for Pakistan an unalterable aim, but to achieve it, it would be necessary to break up India first. That adds another dimension to the unending war that Pakistan has been waging against us. One hopes that in investigating what has led to Kargil 1999, the Subrahmanyam Committee will also probe how far, if at all, Pakistan was involved in bringing about the fall of the Vajpayee government.

What Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Hamid Gul said proceeds from the change in the substance of Pakistan’s confrontationist policy, which has taken place over the last 35 years or so, particularly after Zia-ul-Haq’s assumption of power, to which we have paid scant attention. It is the Islamisation of Pakistan’s India policy. This transformation is an integral part of the Islamisation of Pakistan deliberately initiated by Zia- ul-Haq. Pakistan originally claimed Kashmir on the basis of the religious affiliation of the majority of its people, but the issue was not religion as such. Zia-ul-Haq transformed the issue into one between Islam and the infidel. He was not wrong in calculating that such a transformation would create more zeal among vast masses of his people than anything else could. The use of this weapon in Afghanistan made it legitimate, and its success there became its justification.

Zia’s policy of Islamisation opened the field for the flowering of the ideology of radical Islamism as propounded by Hasan al-Bana in Egypt, Maulana Maudoodi in Pakistan and the expansionist Wahabis in Saudi Arabia. Maudoodi’s *Jamaat-e- Islami* which had been quietly

gathering adherents among the masses and the middle-class now emerged as a powerful force shaping and directing the mentality of the great majority of the people. Using this new found freedom a number of similar organisations, each one more radical than the other, appeared on the scene intensifying the process of Islamisation to the point of becoming at menace to the neighbourhood. That this process spawned the Taliban was a logical development.

Deliberate and intensive Islamisation of the civil population and the armed forces as a matter of state policy over the years produced exactly what was expected, viz; a jihadist mentality. Many of us would recall BBC recently interviewing a Pakistan Army officer just on the other side of the LoC in the battle zone. That middle level officer candidly stated that he considered himself engaged in a *jihad* and thus, a *mujahid*, and so did all the other officers and men. He added that because of the rewards promised in paradise (undoubtedly delectable ones), everyone engaged in fighting was more than ready to die-who would not? The Indian Army officers interviewed on the other side of the LoC said that he was fighting because as a soldier it was his duty to defend his country.

What the BBC interview revealed was not the individual zealotry of one, but a psychopathic state that has gripped Pakistan and will not let go. Radical Islamism postulates that Muslims are in a constant state of *jihad* against infidels. Its professed aim is to create a world wide Islamist empire in which everyone will have to be a Muslim or be killed. A secular, democratic, multi-religious India is a living refutation of the radical Islamist ideology. Hence India must be brought to its knees and absorbed into *Dar-ul-Islam*. Only then can Pakistan pursue its cherished dream of becoming the 'core state' in a radical Islamist empire and its most powerful component.

The central fact about Kargil 1999 is that the Pakistan armed forces consider themselves *mujahids* engaged in a continuous *jihad* against us until victory is achieved . Export of terrorism is but a tactic in this *jihad*. The radical Islamist clerics give all this religious sanction, and the civil authority sees no reason to disagree- it had better not.

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Thus Kargil is not an isolated eruption across the LoC; it is a resort to arms within the over all plan of an anti- Indian *jihad*. Once started, it cannot stop, particularly because *shahadat* (martyrdom) is guaranteed to bring mouth -watering rewards in the next world.

The fight in Kargil is not simply against an invader: it is the first ever armed conflict between a secular, democratic and multi-religious order, and the evil force of radical Islamist religious imperialism, i.e, it is a clash between two distinct and irreconcilable civilisations. While thinking about what lies beyond Kargil, we cannot and must not run away from this reality.

## II

The course of the Kargil conflict, how the government handled the entire affair and related matters are not parts of the theme of this paper; yet some observations are necessary because they have a bearing on what lies beyond Kargil.

Loud howls of “massive intelligence failure” and charges of “massive operational failure” are still fresh in our memory . Media-hype and instant wisdom purveyed by certain individuals succeeded in creating the impression that we were blissfully unaware of Pakistani aggression until a shepherd came and told an Army unit of the presence of infiltrators in the Kargil region. Is that the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth ? Let us not be too sure.

Word-of-mouth information indicates that selected individual reservists received their call-up notices as early as October last year. This implies that perhaps by September, the government was alerted by its intelligence agencies about Pakistan’s plan of aggression. Now, we must recognise a fundamental rule about defence preparations: the enemy must not know that one knows his plan. Therefore, we had to pretend to be ignorant while quietly and unobtrusively making our preparations. We simply could not have initiated our response by mid-May when the ground conditions were right if we had not prepared beforehand. Because we had prepared for war, able to

inflict a surprise to forestall the surprise which was to envelop us in August- September this year.

The government recognised that there were two aspects of the problem, military and diplomatic both of which required totally discreet handling. On the diplomatic front the government did something hardly ever done before. It recognised that in diplomacy secrecy was of essence, and so was selectivity. Military surprise had to be accompanied by a diplomatic one. It said nothing in public, but acted on the correct assessment - unprecedented it seems in our diplomatic history - that in the event of our suspicions becoming facts, only four or at best five powers will count. These were first, the USA, Russia, China and France, and then Britain. It refused to be lured by the ghost of the NAM. Five genuine powers far outweigh a hundred non-entities when the chips are really down. This is post-cold war reality.

It now appears to be fairly clear that somewhere along the series of Talbot-Jaswant Singh talks, the matter of obvious Pakistani intentions was delicately introduced as part of our "security concerns". Very much the same thing must have been done with the Kremlin in the context of talks on "strategic partnership". Later, but not too late in the day, common ground was found with China within the ambit of "security arrangements". A "strategic dialogue" with France had commenced last year. Britain was treated a little differently because of the pro-Pakistan lobby within the Labour Party and its dependence on "Mirpuri votes" (votes of people of Pakistani and POK origin) .

To build up a powerful diplomatic line - up against the adversary, it is essential to find a manifest common interest, and not depend simply on high moral principles and philosophical abstractions. What was the common interest which persuaded the USA, Russia , China and France to see things our way in this case? It was the threat to international peace and security posed by international terrorism and expansionism promoted by Islamic fundamentalism, or radical Islamism as some describe it. Pakistan has become a champion of this ideology of aggression. It condemned itself by training terrorists for operating in other countries, and by giving shelter to Osama Bin Laden to protect

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him against US missiles. We have, of course, been victims of Pakistan's Islamist terrorism for a long, long time .

It goes to the credit of the government to have recognised this threat, perceived it as a matter of common interest where four of the Big Five were evidently concerned, and given a new direction to our foreign policy more vitally integrated with our national interest than ever before. The professional competence in the Ministry of External Affairs was given its full scope with clear political directives guiding its moves. Professional advice was given its due recognition and value. Substantially, this was a departure from the past.

Kargil has also been the first test of the wisdom, maturity, and sense of responsibility of both Pakistan and India as possessors of the nuclear weapons . While Pakistan talked about exercising the "ultimate option," there was no nuclear sabre-rattling from our side, nor any nuclear rhetoric. This distinction was duly noticed by the Big Five. In addition, they had their own assessments of the potential of India as a nuclear- weapon power as compared to Pakistan. This is a vital long-term dimension that we must not ignore or forget. Thanks to Pakistan's espousal of radical Islamism, its nuclear weapon has really begun to be seen as the "Islamic bomb". The implication of this perception will have its effect on future power- relationships in our region and beyond.

### III

Now then, what after Kargil 1999? Before attempting to answer this question, it is necessary to ask if there is or will be an 'after', or is Kargil the opening scene in a long drama that may continue for several decades of the next century?

Answering these questions is not so simple as one may imagine. There is a strong temptation to say that it all will soon be over and so let us go for peace; but is peace with Pakistan possible? Or, even feasible? Stalin made a pledge at Yalta and then at Potsdam; he broke it soon after and the result was 40 year long Cold War. A pledge was made dishonestly to us at Lahore and broken with gunfire within three

months. Pakistan's ideology may sanctify such breach of faith with infidels, but the betrayed infidels are in no way bound to trust the words of the betrayer again. Peace is feasible only when both sides are of the same mind. There cannot be a shred of doubt about our desire for a lasting peace; can that be said about Pakistan? Driven by a "vaulting ambition that overleaps itself", a consuming revanchist passion that feeds upon its own delusions, and a sense of divine predestination to rule over the infidel, Pakistan sees its ultimate bliss in the destruction of the entity known as India. These are realities that ought to inform our *weltanschauung* for at least the next fifty years.

Some may harbour the illusion that like Christian fundamentalism of the 1920s and 30s, radical Islamism will also fade out after a brief spell of notoriety. It may not, and probably will not; for the social milieus and the intellectual ambiances in which they arose are so vastly different. Christian fundamentalism failed because it was rejected by the rational society it addressed. Radical Islamism, on the other hand, rejects contemporary society, glorifies the socio-religious order and the way of life in the wretchedness of 7th century Arabian desert, attributes all the wrongs in the world to distance from Islam, and substitutes blind faith for reason and rationality. It holds that spreading Islam by force where necessary is the duty of every Muslim, and preaches a kind of intolerance that the world had left behind long ago. The religious frenzy that it thus easily creates among vast masses of the illiterate and the poor provides for them the catharsis of their anger and frustration with their secular existence. The totalitarian control over such societies exercised by the triumvirate of the *ulama*, the civil authority and the armed forces ensures that all dissent is nipped in the bud. For such societies, aggression is the natural expression of their psyche.

It is this force that human civilization will have to face and vanquish in the next century. We, as a part of that civilization, cannot and must not be neutral in that conflict; for all that makes us what we are will be at stake. Huntington foresees that in the coming clash of civilisations, India would be isolated. It need not be and will not be if it looks ahead with a clear vision, knows where its vital interests lie, and has



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resoluteness of will and purpose. It must not be bashful about naming the real enemy: we are not fighting Pakistan but what it has come to stand for.

Kargil 1999 is then a watershed, the divide between the present century and the next. It is the *point de depart* not only for our foreign and defence policies, but also for our entire national effort to ensure for ourselves a secure existence within inviolable frontiers in circumstances conducive to progressive national well-being. We have to begin with accepting the prospect that no lasting peace with Pakistan is possible, that at best there can only be armed truce. Peace on our western frontier will probably come only when Pakistan's Islam has been totally de-radicalised, and that will take at least two generations of intellectual exorcism and re-education.

It goes without saying that even if some sort of *modus vivendi* can be worked out with Pakistan in the foreseeable future, we must on no account let down our guard; for there is no question of trusting Pakistan's words again. Our military power has to be so overwhelmingly superior to that of Pakistan that the riposte to any adventure by that country will be swift and devastating.

That brings in the question of nuclear weapons. The implications are not limited to the Indo-Pak confrontation; they extend far beyond. We have already asserted that our nuclear deterrent power is not country-specific; it is not CTBT-specific either. It is a long-term investment in our survival. We would have developed them even if Pakistan had not chosen to do the same. There is, therefore, the question where we fit in the so far exclusive club of the Nuclear Five - the N-5. After Kargil, and in the light of the stance of the N-5 regarding Pakistani aggression, the question of the future has become very sharp indeed.

Our relations with the N-5 in this regard will not be determined by abstract principles, but by the facts of power and the use of power. Over the phenomenon of Kargil our interests have converged with theirs. This is not a ground for euphoria; it is a reason for sober

reflection. Past differences must not be allowed to deter us from collaborating in efforts to face and to eliminate problems in regard to which we share a common interest and purpose. Convergence of interests may not be everlasting nor all-inclusive; yet, it may not be impossible to serve a common interest in security. It is above all a question of maturity, wisdom, restraint and statesmanship. It is possible to imagine that as new conflicts emerge in the next century, N-5 may well become N-6.

As far as one can see, the opening decades of the next century are not going to be free of conflicts, particularly in our region. It will, therefore, be necessary for us to explore discreetly and patiently the possibility of arriving at an understanding with the Big Five about shared security concerns, and drawing within its ambit others who have similar interests. Eventually, we could think about a series of interlocking security arrangements extending from the Far East to the Mediterranean. These should not necessarily exclude the potential troublemakers: if possible, they should also be included but in such a way as to make sure that each one has the majority and the weight of power against it.

From Kargil then we have to look beyond Pakistan to the wider sphere of human endeavour to provide for all a peaceful and secure existence. We have to recognise at the same time the uncomfortable fact that strange twists and turn in events have often set at nought the best that the human mind could devise. It is impossible wholly to predict what a nation will or will not do in a given set of circumstances. One must always be prepared to face the unexpected. The sad fact about the current century which has witnessed two of the costliest wars ever, is that the human race has failed to reach the ideal that it had set for itself. Still, if all human history is a tragedy of good intentions, the Fifth Act still remains unwritten.

# THE KARGIL CONFLICT

## *DIMENSIONS AND RESPONSES*

### SEMINAR REPORT

**The Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation** organised a day long seminar on the **Kargil Conflict : Dimensions and Responses**, at India International Centre on 2 August 1999. Among the key panelists participating in the Seminar were Lt. General (Rtd.) Hridaya Kaul, former Vice Chief of Army Staff, Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, Air Vice Marshal Kapil Kak, Brigadier Vinod Anand, Colonel Gurmeet Kanwal and Dr. Swaran Singh of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Maj. General (Rtd.) Afsir Karim, Maj. Genl. (Rtd.) Ashok Mehta, Prof. K. Warikoo, Prof. M.L. Sondhi, Prof. V.S. Mani, Prof. Kalim Bahadur, Prof. Riyaz Punjabi, Dr. Chintamani Mahapatra of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Prof. Vijay Kapoor of Seattle, P.N. Jalali and Maroof Raza from the media, former Ambassadors N.N. Jha, Arvind Deo and A.K. Ray, Masood Khalili, Ambassador of Afghanistan in Delhi and some representatives of several other foreign diplomatic missions in Delhi. There was general consensus among the noted defence analysts, strategic experts, diplomats, area specialists and media persons, who were participating in this seminar that India should draw appropriate lessons from the Kargil conflict and take urgent steps to increase the ratio of its defence expenditure upto at least 3.5 percent of GDP besides restructuring its defence forces so that there is little bureaucratic interference. The seminar stressed the need to keep army out of internal security duties, and to take adequate steps to contain terrorism which will continue to be sponsored by Pakistan. The Seminar called for good governance, formulation of national assessment based on coordinated information gathered by various agencies, upgradation of conventional weapon capability and equipping the defence forces with modern equipment required for mountain warfare, as essentials for combating any such misadventure in future.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Warikoo of JNU stated that India needs to take adequate measures to defend its strategic frontier in Jammu and Kashmir, and even look beyond to ensure that Kargil is not repeated in future. Prof. Warikoo reminded that the vital lifeline of the Ladakh area, i.e. Srinagar - Leh highway and other important communication links in Jammu and Kashmir were being subject to Pak shelling for more than two years now. The Kargil episode is merely one link in the sequence of events since 1947 when Pak raiders from NWFP alongwith regular troops launched an aggression against Kashmir. Prof. Warikoo pointed out that Skardo, presently the Brigade Headquarters of Pakistan has been an administrative, cultural and political part and parcel of Ladakh area for centuries, till it was occupied by Pakistan in 1948 and merged into "Northern Areas". Reflecting upon the overall Pak designs on Kashmir, Warikoo pointed out that several developments such as the appointment of former Director General of ISI, Genl. Javed Nasir as Head of Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee of Pakistan, renewed Pak attempts to revive the Khalistani movement in Indian Punjab, continued ethnic cleansing of minorities in J&K, suggestions for shared sovereignty over Kashmir and porous borders, Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz's proposals to have "referendum in J&K on district or sub-regional basis taking into account their ethnic-religious composition," need to be seen in totality. All these are devious attempts to alter the political and constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India.

Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, Director of IDSA, described Kargil as a post-modern war and not just a case of *Mujahideen* or proxy war in Kashmir. He stated that the Pak strategy combined the use of sub-conventional and conventional modern weapons, irregular and professional forces equipped with latest weapons, with initiative and surprise as a key element in its operations against India.

Maj. General Afsir Karim, a Member of National Security Advisory Council, stated that Pakistan having already made Kashmir the target of proxy war, now indulged in open conventional warfare in Ladakh due to its strategic importance. In Jammu region, which is

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contagious to the Indian plains, Pakistan has been trying to provoke communal passions by killing Hindu population. P.N. Jalali, a senior journalist from Kashmir noted that there was lack of popular response in Kashmir valley for a planned armed upheaval alongside the armed Pak incursion in Kargil-Dras sector. "Islamabad overestimated and grossly miscalculated the presence of anti-India sentiment in Kashmir, which would have changed the focus from Kargil to the valley proper, thus giving Pakistan a leverage to internationalise the issue," he added.

Ambassador Masood Khalili of Afghanistan referred to Pakistan's long term strategy in South and Central Asia of having direct political influence in Afghanistan, Central Asian countries and Kashmir. He disclosed that the Pakistan irregulars and Taliban captured by the forces of Northern Alliance, revealed their objective as getting trained in Afghanistan in guerrilla warfare and Islamic extremism for their further intrusion in Kashmir, Chechenya, Xinjiang, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and other regions. Masood informed about the capture of 200 Arab mercenaries by the Northern Alliance. He lamented that the Pak sponsored Taliban have turned Afghanistan into a centre of Islamist terrorism being funded by Osama Bin Laden's money and supported by Pakistan's muscle power.

Whereas Air Vice Marshal Kapil Kak stressed the importance of joint operational planning and implementation by the three services, Maroof Raza called for induction of ground attack aircraft by India, and effective satellite surveillance by India of its borders. Raza and other speakers wanted India to seriously review its relations with Pakistan which has remained obsessed with the idea of destructing India.

Lt. Genl. H.K. Kaul stated that the Kargil operation demonstrated the togetherness of India as all Indians representing various States of India and religions fought valiantly. Kaul wanted the Government of India to abandon its ad hoc and reactive policy on Kashmir. He also stressed the need to show correct defence budget estimates, which included salaries, pensions, debt repayment in case of purchase of foreign equipment. This was in sharp contrast to Pakistan's defence expenditure which includes billions of dollars of unaccounted drug money. In order to overcome the

existing problems, General Kaul pleaded for joint operations between army, air force and navy under a united command system, in any future conflict. “We need to have a combined structure of the three services and defence ministry”, Kaul added.



*Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, Director IDSA, speaking at the Seminar*



*A view of the Audience including Representatives from the Embassies of Denmark, Italy, Mongolia, New Zealand and Sweden*



*From left Prof. Vijay Kapoor (Seattle), Prof. K. Warikoo (JNU)  
Lt. General (Rtd.) Hridaya Kaul and Arvind Deo.*



*From left Mr. Masood Khalili, Ambassador of Afghanistan,  
Prof. K. Warikoo (JNU), Ms. Marie Sjolander, Charge'D Affairs,  
Embassy of Sweden, Lt. General (Rtd.) Hridaya Kaul and  
Mr. Simcock, High Commissioner of New Zealand.*

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The summary of statements made by various participants at the seminar is given below :

**Air Commodore Jasjit Singh :** This war at Kargil is a continuum and perhaps not the last one and that's why it is important to see it in different ways and different angles. But the similarity that can be noticed so clearly is between the 1948 UN resolution and Clinton-Nawaz Sharif joint statement. There are three central elements in that : (i) In 1948 as in 1999, Pakistan agreed to withdraw its forces. The difference was that in 1948 it had agreed to withdraw from the State of J&K, while this time they agreed only to withdraw from Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC), (ii) it was to ensure that normalcy returns in various ways and (iii) to look for a final solution. As regards the final solution, there was a different framework at that time and there is a different framework at this moment which is actually driven by the first factor. But it is very clear that Pakistan from the very beginning has been violating every single agreement it has entered into. Pakistan in 1947 partly but certainly in 1965 and then subsequently has carried out its action on certain set of assumptions. One assumption has been that the west particularly but the international community at large especially the United States and China will support Pakistan or intervene in a conflict with India. This was so in 1965 and in 1971 when it took a decision first in April and then in the middle of November to attack India. This was the assumption that this should be the only way out to get the international community into this. Second, which is very important for us in terms of what we do in future, is the assumption that India is militarily weak and unprepared. This was so in 1965. Bhutto argued to Ayub at that time that this is the only time otherwise we won't be able to take Kashmir. And this has been this time as well. The reason for this assumption is that our own defence expenditure has come down from 3.6% to 2.3% in the last 12 years. Secondly, for more than 15 years as much as 30% of the Indian army has been involved in internal security. Besides, the Indian army is short by about 20% of officers cadre and the Air Force by another 10% at least if not more. It is not surprising, therefore, that General Musharraf's early statement to his troops and men was that India is not prepared enough to fight a war.



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The Indian army is involved in internal security. It is a tired army and, therefore, it will not be able to fight a war. As regards our own defence expenditure we were spending at a certain level for nearly 25 years and then for variety of reasons we started to cut down our defence spending. There are some other assumptions of Pakistan. Firstly, the weak coalition government will overreact or underreact. Secondly, which is very deep in the psyche for nearly 30 years that nuclear weapons will finally allow offensive action by Pakistan without the risk of India punishing Pakistan. It is substantively true but not entirely true and that is where they went wrong. The next assumption was that the Indian military response will be limited. Now limited again is a matter of definition, how limited will it be in scope and in space. At the very minimum the Pakistani assumption is that it will raise the cost to India of defence of Kargil like it has done in the case of Siachin.

What is the strategy that Pakistan put into act here in Kargil? It can be called a post-modern war. This is no longer just a question of *Mujahideen*. It's also not a question of fighting irregular war, or a full fledged regular war. It has shades of both combined together into irregular-cum-regular which is sub-conventional as well as conventional with the nuclear weapons as the over hand. So, Kargil witnessed a new phase of type of war for which the contours are available. What happened in the mid - 1990s in Afghanistan, we did not learn the right lesson. It is now much more clear that through the *madrassa* process the Taliban were created as the militia force of irregulars who were highly motivated and radical in their view but supported extensively by the regular forces of Pakistan. A Taliban brigade was created inside Pakistan and was further expanded to take Kandahar and Kabul. Now try and apply the same thing to bridge ahead on the heights and then Kargil and then Ladakh. It is the reality of irregular which is highly professionalised with all the best of weapons and everything else that is available to any modern army which often is not available to the Indian army incidently. This was extremely well planned operation. This operation or the war that Pakistan has fought, is a coherent composite strategy of Pakistan itself like they did in 1965 and 1971. This is the part of that whole process.

However, it is highly unlikely that Kargil will be the last attempt of Pakistan to finally satisfy its psychological hang ups, its other ambitions and its ideological goals. The fact is that we have been able to respond far more positively and actively and defeated Pakistan on the ground, on time, on weapons and on a situation of Pakistan's choice. If the Indian army can do that, the message has gone across Pakistan that the Indian army can beat the Pakistan army anywhere with or without the *Mujahideen*. National assessments should be based on coordinated information from all intelligence agencies, as well as from all possible technological, human and other ones. The conventional defence has been going down since the mid 1980s, which has had some serious impact on India's conventional military preparedness. That has to be made up. There are nuclear weapons in the whole region. China, India and Pakistan are in possession and the US has them deployed very close by. Because of nuclearisation of weapons we need to have a conventional capability higher than that what we used to have. It is for the simple reason that we don't want the nuclear weapon factor to come into an equation too early. The third element is that militancy or terrorism is going to go on. For at least 10 to 15 years or even for 20 to 30 years if we don't manage it correctly. It is thus linked to the question of good governance. As regards militancy the army should be kept out of that. The last point is that the time has come to do some serious thinking about restructuring of defence forces. For a long time it is being thought that if a war takes place, it's going to be a limited local war only on the border. We will have to take into account the reality of nuclear weapons and say how shall we fight that war and how shall we win that war. We won the Kargil war but that is not the guarantee that next one automatically will be won unless we have a thinking geared to that process and we have structured our forces. India has to seriously look at how we are going to deal with Pakistan on a long term as well as a short term basis.

**Major General (Rtd.) Afsir Karim** : Kashmir valley is only a small part of J&K State. If we recall Pakistan's attack on Kargil, Zoji La and Dras in 1947-48, it is to be pointed out that the strategic

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interest of Pakistan has been Ladakh and not really the Kashmir valley. The next portion which is strategically important is Jammu because that is contiguous to Indian Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. Kashmir valley itself has got certain amount of sentimental value and a great amount of political importance. Pakistan is following different kind of aggressions in three different areas. In Ladakh, they can fight what is called sub-conventional war or the type of war we saw in Kargil. In Kashmir valley, they cannot do that because neither their gun can reach there nor they can bring their heavier weapons inside, therefore, they have resorted to insurgency and terrorism there. In Jammu, they are using another strategy, i.e. to create a communal problem between the population composed of Hindus and Muslims especially in Doda, Jammu belt, Rajauri and Poonch area. As regards the proxy war, it can take many shapes and there are many ways of doing it. But actually it has not succeeded because the people of Kashmir valley in particular and Jammu and Kashmir as a whole have not responded to the Pakistani initiative. If we want Pakistan to stay in place, we can't possibly talk of making the Line of Control as permanent border for bringing peace for sometime. There is also no reason to believe that Pakistan wants to either accept or respect a border which is permanent and, therefore, the problem will continue till Pakistan is brought to a level where it is unable to act in Jammu and Kashmir and unable to continue the type of warfare it has been doing.

**P.N. Jalali:** Pakistan's expectations in Kargil failed because Islamabad overestimated and consequently grossly miscalculated the anti-India sentiment prevalent in the valley coming to its aid in the form of an armed uprising backed by a popular upheaval which would have changed the focus of world attention from Kargil to the valley proper and thus giving Pakistan a decisive leverage to internationalise the Kashmir issue. Another important factor that accounted for Pakistan's defeat in Kargil was also Islamabad's gross underestimation of India's economic and political prowess including its military capability. In fact, Islamabad's trump card of drawing instant support from Washington and Beijing failed to work this time leaving it with no option but to

capitulate. The Kargil crisis also brought out to the fore the stunts and weaknesses of the two systems (a) a democratic secular and (b) theocratic and semi-democratic dominated by the army brass and the Mullahs. India's democratic system possessing secular edifice brought all sections of people including Muslims together. While planning its armed intrusion in Kargil, Pakistan had apparently been guided by its traditional assessments. With turbulence in its north-east and north-west, and a weak centre plagued by regional pulls and pressures, Pakistan believed that India was on the verge of disintegration. Given this background Pakistani leaders assumed that an armed attack would immobilise India. But Islamabad faced an awakened India fully geared to meet the challenge. In fact, Pakistan wanted to cut off 300 kms. long Srinagar-Leh national highway at its most strategic juncture along Dras - Kargil sector and thereby provide leverage to Pakistan against Siachen. Its major goal was to push into the valley via Baltal range across to Wadhwan and the foot hills of Doda district where Afghan mercenaries are operating in strength. The occupation of Baltal ridge would have been used as the jumping ground for massive infiltration of mercenaries in the valley. A similar threat was in readiness in the Rajouri-Poonch sector of Jammu where attempts to capture three vital LoC positions were foiled by Indian army. Press reports say that hundreds of Afghan mercenaries and Mujahids of Lashkar-e-Toiba were ready behind the Pakistani army along the LoC in Jammu to begin to infiltrate into the Indian side. But the Pak game was foiled by the strong counter action and most importantly the chilly response it received from the west.

**K. N. Daruwala :** Whenever Pakistan was confronted with her foreign policy problem or a problem with its neighbours, it normally reacted with a military or a quasi-military or a military guerilla fundamentalist option. For the last two decades we have been familiar with an Islamised military and a militarized Islamic fringe in Pakistan. At present we are dealing with both these phenomena in the valley and both need a doctrine and a considerable rhetoric to keep them going. It is well known that during Ayub's time or Yahya's time there

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was no clear cut Islamisation except that Ayub had appropriated as President of the Auqaf of Pakistan. Under Yahya Khan too there was no such problem. But once Zia-ul-Haq came in, the problem started. He was the nephew of the Amir of the *Jamat-e-Islami*, Faiz Gafoor Ahmed and the first thing he did was to start arming the *Islami Jamat-e-Tulaba* (IJT) in Karachi in order to face or to suppress the People's Students Federation of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. That was the first time when arming of a political wing started in Pakistan. After taking over as the Army Chief while Bhutto was still there Zia introduced Quran and religious texts as a part of the army course. Even today at Kargil, the Indian army has discovered manuals where each rank has to study religious instructions before they can go to the next rank. Islamic instructions also became a part of the training both in the other ranks and sometimes in the officer cadre. Incidentally, Islamisation literally starts with recruitment itself, i.e. the day the recruit takes the oath on the *Shariat*. After that there are doses of religion mostly as perceived by the Sunnis and so there is a big Shia-Sunni divide within the army. The Afghan *Jehad* brought at least one wing of the army, i.e. ISI in very close link with all the Islamist parties. With the preaching of religious revivalism the intra-sectional rivalry always increases. While coming to Kargil, not many cases of Islamisation have been noticed. Diaries have been found which start with Ghalib's quote rather than religious instructions. The only thing that had been found was the interior office notes where everything started with Allah-o-Akbar. Otherwise, no slogans, no leaflets, nothing was found. That proves that it were not the *Jehadis* or the *Harkat-ul-Islam* or the *Harkat-ul-Ansar* or the *Jamat-e-Islami* who were there, but it was actually the Pakistan army involved in Kargil.

**Prof. Kalim Bahadur :** In the Pakistani press there is so much talk of *Jehad-e-Kashmir*, that Nawaz Sharif has betrayed the *Jehad*, which is portrayed as the duty of every Muslim. The point is that there is so much distortion, misinterpretation and overuse of the word *Jehad* that it appears as if *Jehad* means murder and since it is the duty of every Muslim to go to *Jehad* it will not be possible for Muslims to live

at peace with their non-Muslim neighbours particularly. They will always be at loggerhead with all the non-Muslims around the world.

There was an incident in 1948 when the Kashmir war also called *Jehad-e-Kashmir* was going on. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan had asked the founder of the *Jamat-e-Islami* of Pakistan, Maulana Maududi to ask the members of the *Jamat* to go to fight in Kashmir. Maulana Maududi refused saying it was not a *jehad*. “How can it be a *jehad* when Pakistan is not an Islamic State (in 1948) and then how can you have a *jehad* when in half of the border you are having *jehad* and in the remaining half of the border you are not having *jehad*, you are having good economic relations because the *jehad* was only in Kashmir and *jehad* was not across the international border between India and Pakistan”. Liaquat Ali Khan got angry and Maulana Maududi and his second in command Maulana Tukai Muhammed and others were put behind the bars. Two years later Pakistan passed the famous resolution after which Maulana Maududi came back and said, “now Pakistan has become an Islamic State and, therefore, now Pakistan’s efforts while in Kashmir will be a *jehad*”.

The craze of militancy in the sub-continent, in Kashmir, Pakistan and Afghanistan can be dated to the so called Afghan *jehad* which was called by Qazi Hussain Ahmedi, the head of the *Jamat-e-Islami* as mother of all *jehads*. Although the fundamentalist movement was already there in 1973 when the Arab-Israeli war began, the militant movement can be dated from the Afghan war itself. It provided a framework for liberating real and imaginary problems of the Muslim youth in the Islamic world and so there was a lot of attraction for militancy in Algeria, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kashmir and Pakistan also. By late 1980s, most of the religious parties in Pakistan were involved in Afghanistan, through which they got money, training and weapons. On the other hand, the militants in Afghanistan got the money, weapon and support through the parties in Pakistan. There are about 2300 seminaries or *madrassa* in Pakistan, which are getting huge amount of money. Most of the Afghans, Taliban and militants were trained in these seminaries. Interestingly most of these schools are run

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by the former Deobandis. So militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan claim credit for the defeat of Soviet Union in Afghanistan. After the end of war in Afghanistan, the Pakistan militant outfits could not find anything but *jihad* to define themselves. So, they moved to Kashmir. This is how these militants came to move to Kashmir.

The *Jamat-e-Islami* of Pakistan claims that several thousand Kashmiris reached Afghanistan in 1990 for training. Their slogan was “*Hum Jashna-e-Kabul Mana Chukey, Ab Chalo Kashmir Chalein*”. The first group of militants was sent by *Hizb-e-Islami* by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in 1990 and was attached to *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*. The militant movement grew further and in 1997 *Harkat-ul-Ansar* was declared by the United States a terrorist outfit and it was their camp that was struck in 1998 by the U.S. cruise missile. They changed their name later on to *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen*. The *Jehadi* organisations are in fact more powerful now than they were in Afghanistan. In Pakistan, these *Mujahideen* organizations are so powerful that they can even confront the state. In 1994, the organisation in Malakand fought against the Pakistan army and about 50 people were killed in order to fulfill their demand of implementing the *Shariat* in the Malakand area. *Lashkar-e-Jamhuriat* is known to have been responsible for the attack on Nawaz Sharif in January 1999 and Pakistan government has not been able to do anything against it.

Among various militant organisations which are involved in Kashmir are the *Taliban*, *Harkat-ul-Ansar*, *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Hizbul Mujahideen* etc. The Taliban are Deobandis. Deobandi has a particular ideology. It is interesting that no militant organisation claims any attachment with Barelvi school. Most of the militant organisations are Deobandi and Wahabi. Deobandis and Wahabis are under the influence of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq who is the extremist militant leader in Pakistan. He is also involved with the *Sipah-e-Sahaba* in Pakistan which is a Sunni militant organisation, which is also called Pakistan's Taliban. *Lashkar-e-Toiba* is a very recent organisation created by *Dawat-ul-Irshad* and led by Prof. Hafiz Syed. They are mainly sending people and volunteers to Kashmir. But they

were created after the Afghan war was over. Now *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* which has links with *Jamat-e-Islami*, operates in Kashmir. *Hizb-e-Wahadat* is a Shia organisation mainly centred in the Bamiyan area in Afghanistan. *Sipah-e-Sahaba* is close to *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen*. Lastly, *Lashkar-e-Jhangri* is an organisation created by *Sipah-e-Sahaba* which has committed several massacres of the Shias. So, this is how Islamic organisations are involved.

**Masood Khalili (Ambassador of Afghanistan in India) :** I will elaborate the Kabul- Kargil linkage. First of all about *Jehad* and *Mujahideen* of Afghanistan. I was a fighter myself in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. We were involved in the fight against the Soviets as we had fought against the British and Alexander the great long time before. Later we understood that Pakistan had its own ambitions in Afghanistan. We entered Kabul on 28 April 1992 and declared that *Jehad* was over. Now we want to reconstruct our country. But we found that when we were holding a press conference in Kabul on 29 April 1992, the building was being shaken by the rockets sent by Hekmatyar helped by Pakistan. Then we found that ISI had another policy of creating a greater map-Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia, parts of India and then reaching to the walls of Moscow. Then President Rabbani's government started fighting back. When Hekmatyar was about to collapse, then Pakistan helped, nourished and armed Taliban.

When Taliban entered Kabul on 26 September 1996, I held a press conference warning that the Taliban will not stop. Taliban are helped by Pakistan, encouraged by another country, financed by Saudis and Osama Bin Laden is there and their first target will be Kashmir. When we captured Pakistanis from Taliban's forces, they told us very clearly that "we have not come here to fight against you, but we have come here to get trained and go back to Kashmir, Chechnya, Termez of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan". In both Kabul and Kashmir, Pakistan has a very direct hand. In both, religious fanaticism and religious fundamentalism are important factors. In both cases, Osama Bin Laden is the financier. Yesterday we captured an area along with 200 Arabs from Algeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Pakistan



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has indeed a strategic goal and that is to reach to Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan through Afghanistan. The slogan of *jihad* has been used as tool of terrorism. Kabul has become a sanctuary, a safe haven for all those who want to fight somewhere. In both Kabul and Kargil, the regular army of Pakistan is involved. In Kabul, there are more than 3000 Pakistani regulars and about a week before, four people including Colonel Muhammad Salim of Pakistan were killed.

**Air Vice Marshal Kapil Kak :** The question that may be raised is how has air power been employed in Kargil and how has it achieved objectives that had been set for it? My own belief is that the operation would not have attained the success had it not been for operation *Safed Sagar* which was conducted almost simultaneously. On 26 May 1999, the army was in a grim situation. So, the induction of the air force in a virtual emergency situation went a long way in stabilising this terrible mess and eventually helping evict the intruders from four dozen positions that they had occupied along the icy heights of Kargil. The application of combat air power at these altitudes does not exist in the rule book of the Indian Air Force as it is not operationally viable. The pilots were also not familiar with the terrain except in a very general navigational sense. So a high degree of professionalism and most importantly willingness and ability to innovate as the air campaign went along, got the air power the success achieved in Kargil. The operation unfolded the kind of capability the air power can sustain in a limited, deescalated, controlled border war which is going to be the paradigm of warfare in the future in which India will be involved. Of course from the point of our strategic airpower doctrine, employing this important strategic instrument of the nation in a 140 kms. x 10 kms. area to evict intruders is unprecedented as it is very unique. As a proportion of the overall capability of the air force, this was just a minuscule operation. By way of battle spaces, the terrain and topography of this area is a nightmare to a combat navigator. But they used innovative tactics like employing low cost highly accurate navigation aids and employing them in bunker bursting without any compromise with accuracy. The problem

has been lack of actionable information and intelligence of the accurate positions of the intruders and it was for this reason the air force carried out a 12-day long campaign not relying on any agencies for the position that they were to attack and only then brought about a sea change in the success of these operations.

In conceptual terms, the role of the air power in this post-modern low intensity war, mixed of regulars and irregulars, combination of air operation and surface operation especially in a nuclear environment will have to be seen in a much more comprehensive manner. And if deterrence is going to operate through denial, we have no alternative but to step up our capability in techno-operational terms. The capabilities in terms of punitive action will have to necessarily be with the air force in combination with the army. The whole packaging has to be overhauled. It is time that the joint operations should be looked at very carefully particularly in the context of the need for joint operational planning, besides looking at joint communications between the army and the air force. Some lessons have come out in this campaign and the inadequacies identified have also been brought forth. This country brought down in 1987-88 the defence expenditure from an average figure of 3.51% of GDP with no accountability as to what is the paradigm of military operations in the future. This was a breakdown of conventional deterrance but it certainly helped Pakistan colour its judgement in believing that the armed forces capabilities of India had been eroded. Therefore, the defence expenditure should be raised from 2.5% to about 3% at the minimum and we commit our resources in a holistic manner to conform to a scenario of a joint operation between the three services for a limited border war of the kind that Pakistan has thrust on us and it is going to thrust perhaps in the future too, may be not in Kargil, but elsewhere. That is what we have to look at and only then we can make sure that Kargil does not repeat.

**Maroof Raza :** When the Kargil operation took place, the Indian armed forces were able to contain the infiltration by launching the entire effort to evict the intruders and they were able to achieve what a lot of people thought was impossible. The recent operation is an extension

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of Pakistan's failed rebellion in the Kashmir valley and also an extension of Pakistan's larger designs in what it conceives as the Islamic belt, stretching from Kashmir going on to Central Asia and beyond.

There are several opinions about how Pakistan intruded into the territory. We must remember as what the Army Chief told me just a few days ago that we had not vacated any post on the LoC even in the Kargil region. The intrusion perhaps took place from large gaps that are there in the Kargil sector itself. There is a 150 kms. stretch of the Kargil battle field in which there are gaps. For example, the Mushkoh valley gap is 30 to 35 kms. wide and in the gaps there was no force. So the posts were occupied not just by Indian troops but even by the Pakistan army. The intrusion took place by helicopters, by snow mobiles and by foot patrols. Once they came in, they consolidated but their plans went wrong because the snow melted earlier. We detected their presence earlier than anticipated and then everything beyond that started going wrong for them.

Now from the military point of view, there were certain advantages by virtue of certain decisions taken at the strategic level which made the operation go favourably for the Indian armed forces. One was the fact that we made movements in other parts of the Indo-Pak borders which shifted Pakistani attention from the Kargil area thereby not allowing them to concentrate all their forces there. Secondly, the Indian talks with the Chinese from the 1990s and the joint working group have led to a situation whereby in this particular incidence there were no unusual movements by the Chinese to distract the attention of the Indian armed forces. Thirdly, the conflict itself though argued as the conventional war or a post-modern war, also had ingredients of a low-intensity conflict because (a) we were the only ones that were using the Air force (b) the conflict was localised and (c) Pakistan apart from regular troops was also using irregulars. Apart from regular officers who were very motivated to do and die, there were also mercenaries that were hired from everywhere and were given a cheque of thousand or two thousand dollars and even if they die they didn't have to bring back the body back home. India was paying an emotional cost which

was not so high in Pakistan. The mercenaries and the regulars were equipped with the Klashnikov pipeline. So, to arm the guerillas or the regulars who had infiltrated was not such an expensive exercise. Pakistan's Finance Minister has gone on record to say that 700 million dollars were spent on the conflict.

As regards shortcomings as far as our troops were involved, there was virtually little or known surveillance, satellite and other surveillance of that region. Besides, there has been a gross error of assessment as we have not really assessed where all the threat perceptions lie. The army was deficient in winter equipment, in night vision devices, light portable radio sets and whole range of other weapon systems. The fault also lies in the fact that we never anticipated fighting on such heights. Future conflicts are going to be of a different kind, Kargil is just a symptom of that. Kargil shows the repeat of history as Pakistan has repeatedly got involved in India when India has been politically weak and unstable. So, the fact of the matter is that if Indian remains politically weak and shaky, Pakistan would see it as an opportunity to get involved somewhere because Kashmir is an obsession for Pakistan.

There are few questions that have emerged from Kargil. The first question is, did we achieve our military aim? If we go by word what the Army Chief has said, it was one point agenda, i.e. to evict the intruders from our side of the LoC. That we have done successfully. What should be the post - Kargil response of the Indian government, Indian armed forces and the Indian people? The Indian government should really examine seriously its relations with Pakistan. The Indian Army has to seriously look at such conflicts in the future and as regards, Indian people, there has been a considerable enthusiasm at the national level about the Kargil martyrs, their families and donations have come in. But where do we go from here? Economists have argued that India can sustain upto 3.5% of the GDP in defence expenditure and this has to come from what money is available. Finally, should India have future talks with Pakistan if it continues to support terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of India and if it has talks, should we leave it just to the bureaucrats and the diplomats to handle talks when

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Pakistan's army has clearly emerged once again as an autonomous force. To what extent should we involve the armed forces in future talks with Pakistan? We need to re-address the issue.

**Mej. Gen. (Rtd.) Ashok Mehta :** When it comes to choice between victory and defeat, Shias in the Kargil area are going to go with the people who are going to win. In every situation in J&K we have seen since 1948, the people have been with the winning side. Reports came in November 1993 that Mushkoh valley route was being favoured for sending in infiltrators because of the conventional belief that the local people being Ladakhis, Buddhists and Shias would not support any infiltration. Other point is about the strategic objective of the Kargil operation. There was no grandeur military objective because Pakistan did not want a war, it wanted to break the stalemate on Jammu and Kashmir and internationalise the Kashmir issue. On the question of intelligence, the question of the transfer of Taliban to Afghanistan, to Kashmir and vice-versa for seeking strategic depth for Pakistan was well known in India. There was a failure of interpretation. I think where we failed was tactical intelligence. The failure was we knew that this is going to happen but we didn't know where it is going to happen.

**Col. Gurmeet Kanwal :** Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir had failed over the last ten years and Kargil was essentially a measure to kick start that flagging proxy war or *jehad* as they like to call it. The Pakistan army went in for the Kargil operation at the same time when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was making overtures towards India for peace and that was something that the Pakistan military establishment could not accept. It is very clear that there is an autonomous power centre in Pakistan, i.e. the Army-ISI combine and it doesn't matter whether the army is in power or not, even for the civilian government the power sharing is very clear. The army calls the shots and that's exactly what they have done. So, we need to look beyond Kargil towards our relations with Pakistan and see whether we can really negotiate with them. We have been talking in India for the last 10 to 15 years that a strong and stable Pakistan is in India's interest. A national debate on this aspect is called for.

**Prof. Vijay Kapoor :** Peace can not be one way traffic. There has to be some kind of reciprocal understanding on either side. However, in Pakistan both within the Defence as well as intellectual establishment, there was an urge to enter into some kind of a confrontation which basically crystallized into the Kargil situation. Now there are divisions within the Pakistani establishment as well. Perhaps it is time for us to challenge and rethink the basic assumption of how we conceive Pakistan as a nation state. Since we are more like a democratic oligarchy and if we change our paradigm and think that Pakistan is a state which has a different value system, the policy imperatives which are derived will be more realistic and will have more chances of success instead of trying to extrapolate our own democratic values. The other thing is the western perception or perception of the developed world. During the Kargil conflict one thing which came out clearly is that the way our story was projected in the western media was very positive. There was a tremendous amount of access and transparency which led to some kind of relationship being established with the reader, i.e. the human interest linkage. During the Kargil conflict the Seattle newspapers carried just a photograph of the funeral of Squadron Leader Ashok Ahuja which created an impression in the western mind that there are these kinds of atrocities which are being committed on soldiers who are normally not subjected to this thing. Besides, nuclear proliferation is a major issue of concern for most western powers largely because it is a destabilising factor in the goal of wealth creation. India can use that as an opportunity to push its own foreign policy agenda.

**Arvind Deo :** I will recount as to how the Pakistan press looked at the Lahore process, Kargil fighting, G-8 and Washington statements and its consequences for the future stability of government in Pakistan and implications for Indo-Pak relations.

The Lahore process was interpreted as India's commitment to negotiate Kashmir with Pakistan. The Pak Kashmiris were clearly unhappy because they thought they had been compromised without taking them into account. The Lahore process was also opposed by

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*Jamat-e-Islami*. And when the Prime Minister of India was in Lahore, at the banquet certain ambassadors who had been invited to attend their vehicles were attacked and they had a very rough time. The impression that was given to the press was, the government of Punjab in Lahore under Shahbaz Sharif had been a willing partner in *Jamat-e-Islami's* protest. One must understand the Pakistani mindset. Also around the same time after the Lahore process Nawaz Sharif while addressing a meeting at Shaukatpur and according to *Dawn*, stated that "by the Pakistani nuclear test in Chaghai, Pakistan has set Indian mental faculties right". Khalil Malik writing in *The News* on 26 March 1999, questioned the rights of *Jamat-e-Islami* to arrogate to itself all claims to patriotism. On the other hand Hamid Gul called the Lahore Declaration a betrayal of Kashmiris' struggle. A commentator, Suzat Ahmed on 13 May 1999 in *The News* said, "Lahore Declaration like the Shimla agreement has been consigned to the dustbin of history." Mark these words because one of the participants who contributed to the formulation of Lahore Declaration, Abdur Sattar who was Joint Secretary in the Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was a member of Bhutto's delegation for Shimla conference had in a subsequent article after having served twice as High Commissioner in India written that the Shimla agreement was signed under duress and Pakistan would be justified in repudiating it. Lt. General Asad Durrani who was the Director General of ISI and Ambassador in Germany and also partly responsible for the nuclear programme of Pakistan in early 1990s has been quoted as saying that there are no boundaries that can not be violated with impunity or without attribution unless of course they are allowed to be violated by all those interested in preserving them.

The Pakistani media uniformly presented Nawaz Sharif's offer to send Sartaj Aziz for negotiations to India as demonstrating that Nawaz Sharif was a man of peace. The press did not admit that Sartaj Aziz's visit to China was not productive or for that matter any more than his visit to Delhi. The motive behind Sartaj Aziz's visit to Delhi was based on the Pakistani assessment at that stage that it had gained

an upperhand on the LoC situation in Kargil, and it wanted to freeze the status quo. What came as a surprise to Pakistan was the determination shown by India in saying that there will be no dialogue unless and until the infiltration was cleared either by the infiltrators going back or by the Indian armed forces pushing them back. There has been much reference about General Zini's visit to Pakistan later when he is reported to have put pressure on the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan for a withdrawal. But people may not remember that General Zini had visited for negotiations with the Pakistani Army Chief on 19 April 1999 and what exactly transpired has never been revealed in the press. But every indication is that he made a first hand assessment of what was actually happening. During this visit the Americans suggested that the Pakistanis must return to restoring the Lahore process. General Zini visited for the second time, a few days before Nawaz Sharif's departure for China and before he announced his departure for Washington. But a couple of shocks were in store for the Pakistani government. The G-8 preparatory meeting of foreign ministers categorically said that the sanctity of the Line of Control must be respected and there should be withdrawal of infiltrators behind the LoC. This came both as a surprise and as a shock. The G-8 summit call was less unambiguous and the first public reaction in Pakistan was how could they do this to us.

Then came Nawaz Sharif's planned visit to China which was scheduled to be for five days. It was cut short and he returned. Again he did not get any concrete support as was expected. But this was not a surprise. Because when Li Peng visited Pakistan in April 1999, Nawaz Sharif publicly called for strategic relationship with China and like a good Chinese tactician Li Peng gave no positive response. He only spoke of enlarging the area of peace in South Asia and peace and tranquility in the region. Yet there was no word in the Pak press that China had let down Pakistan. Then came the visit to Washington. The Washington statement was sought to be presented by the Pakistan foreign office as a support to the Pakistani contention that all issues must be resolved peacefully through dialogue. It was left to the spokesman of the American government to point out that USA was for the



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withdrawal of the infiltrators from behind the LoC. This was now when questions began to be asked in Pakistan, as to why did Pakistan back out after having held a winning hand? Then it was suggested that may be the government of Pakistan may have committed but the *Mujahideen* may not abide by. The White House spokesman made it very clear that Nawaz Sharif has undertaken that the *Mujahideen* also will abide by this.

The Pakistani press thereafter started speaking with more than one voice. A news item stated that in a meeting held at General's headquarters on 24 June 1999, Nawaz Sharif and the JHQ (Chief of Army Staff and his immediate Deputy) had agreed to support and back up a *Mujahideen* victory. One Abdul Majid Zafari wrote two days after the Washington statement, "negotiations are of no use when the subject is liberating lands like Kashmir and other Muslim lands occupied in other parts of the world, we need to take up this as a whole." With this kind of mindset we would be justified in speculating on the future course of Indo-Pak relations. The press agreed that after the Washington agreement Pakistan's foreign policy lay in ruins. To quote Assad Durrani, "Nor do I believe that by agreeing to observe the sanctity of the Line of Control we have granted it inviolable status. In a world where international borders can be violated without remorse or retribution, only such arrangements will last which can not and will not be changed by those who mattered. Intractable issues can not be resolved without favourable ground reality." Roda Khan, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior and a man of great confidence of Ghulam Ishaq Khan, wrote that "for him, the 4th of July 1999 was the day of shame as bad as the fall of Dhaka".

**N.N. Jha :** When we explore the avenue of diplomacy or what challenges exactly await us in the field, it would be useful to keep in mind some basic points in the context of our future diplomatic postures or policies. First and foremost thing to be kept in mind is that post-Kargil India is now a frontline state of Pakistani sponsored Islamic terrorism which will now take several forms. As a matter of fact, Pakistan is the consistent violator of agreements arrived at. The very

first violation was done by Pakistan in 1947 of the Standstill Agreement. So, from that point onwards whether it was Tashkent Shimla or now Lahore, it's all the same they will keep on violating whatever agreement we may sign with them.

The Pakistani mindset now talks only in terms of destroying India. This means we have to give up the notion of a strong stable Pakistan as being in our interest. As far as the US is concerned the plus points that have now emerged are obviously no automatic support for Pakistan as before. The US is also likely to seek India's cooperation in combating terrorism globally. The Indo - American community is now very actively involved in the US on behalf of India. From the Chinese point of view, they are obsessed with the year 2010 by which date they really expect to become something of a super power whether economic, political or military. They would have seen at this point of time that almost all the NATO countries starting with America have come around on the side of India. Consequently they are thinking that there is no reason to push India more on to the American side and thereby this could have also been a factor contributing to their neutrality during the Pakistani Prime Minister's visit and the stand they had taken on Kargil. It is not in their interest to see India thrown completely into the American arms. Similarly, it is also not in our interest to be toasted either side. If we want to create a proper space for ourselves and make maximum benefit of this, then we must ensure that we are not seen by either China or America to be toasted to the other. The other countries like Islamic countries we need not worry too much because the OIC is totally dominated by Pakistanis. As far as European countries are concerned, France has been very positive and Germany has been little less but still not bad. Britain has come around. So, to sum up, the time has now come for us to have a fresh look at our policies in the light of Kargil.

**A.K. Ray :** The Kargil 1999 is our war of atonement like the Israeli war of atonement. It is atonement for the sins we have committed against ourselves beginning with the decision to take the Kashmir problem to the UN. A deadly sin was our acceptance of

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ceasefire effective 1st January 1949 when Pakistan by the admission of its topmost public servant was in a dire straight and Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was sitting next to his telephone for a call from the United Nations to hear the news of a ceasefire. Our experience with Pakistan has been that the solemn words they uttered at the conference table are not solemn at all and the men who uttered them are not men of honour. Shimla 1972 was not an exception. To describe the pre-1999 conflict in the Kashmir valley as a low-intensity conflict is to look at the form not on the substance. The fact is that the Indo-Pakistan hostilities which commenced in 1947 never really ceased. They have continued in one form or another. While Ayub Khan was signing the Tashkent document, agents of *Jamat-e-Islami* were inducted into the valley by Pakistan and they commenced the setting up of subversive cells aided by quite a few local teachers of Quran in the *Madrasas*. Over 200 such cells were detected and smashed in 1970. Pakistan's involvement in the militancy in the north-east is another front of the same war. Now we have to look at Kargil against this background. There were three precedents for what Pakistan calls the liberation of Kashmir. Firstly, Afghan *Mujahideen*, mercenaries, militants trained in POK and Pakistan proper, would raise the insurgency in the valley to a level which will tie down the Indian forces. Secondly, the administrative machinery of the State must collapse and thirdly, there should be political chaos at the centre. Lt. General Hamid Gul told a media person very recently that liberation of Kashmir remains for Pakistan an unalterable aim but to achieve it, it would be necessary to break up India first. That adds another dimension to the war that Pakistan has been waging against us. Pakistan originally claimed Kashmir on the basis of the religious affiliation of the majority of the population but the issue was not religion as such. Zia-ul-Haq transformed it into one between Islam and the infidel. The use of this weapon in Afghanistan made it legitimate and its success became its justification there. Zia's policy of Islamisation opened the field for the full flowering of the ideology of radical Islamism as propounded by Hasan Al-Tamah in Egypt, Maulana Maududi in Pakistan and the expansionist Wahabis in Saudi Arabia. Radical Islamism now postulates that Muslims are in a

constant state of *jihad* against infidels, not just Pakistanis but Muslims. Its aim is to create a worldwide Islamist empire in which everyone will have to be a Muslim. A secular democratic multi-religious India is a living refutation of the radical Islamist ideology. Hence, India must be absorbed in *Dar-ul-Islam*. Only then can Pakistan pursue its dream of becoming the core state in a radical Islamist empire and its most powerful component. The central factor about the Kargil 1999 is that Pakistani armed forces considered themselves *Mujahideen* engaged in a continuous *jihad* against India. Export of terrorism is but a tactic in this *jihad*. Kargil is the first ever armed conflict between a secular democratic and multi-religious soldier and the evil force of radical Islamists, i.e. a clash between two distinct and irreconcilable civilizations.

Kargil has also been the first test of the wisdom, maturity and sense of responsibility of both Pakistan and India as possessors of the nuclear weapon. While Pakistan talked about exercising the ultimate option, there was no nuclear sabre rattling from our side. Due to Pakistan's policy of radical Islamism, its nuclear weapon has really begun to be seen as the Islamic bomb. The implication of this perception will have its effects on future power relationships in our region and beyond. But whether peace with Pakistan is possible or even feasible? Peace is feasible only when both sides are of the same mind. There can be no doubt about our desire for a lasting peace but Pakistan seems to see its ultimate bliss in the destruction of the entity known as India. Kargil 1999 is a watershed which divides between the present century and the next. It is a challenge for our foreign and defence policies but also for our entire national effort to ensure for ourselves a secured existence within inviolable frontiers in circumstances conducive to progressive national well being. We have to begin with accepting the prospects that no lasting peace with Pakistan is possible, at best there can be only an armed truce. Peace on our western frontier will probably come only when Pakistan's Islam has been totally deradicalised and that will take at least two generations of intellectual stimulation and reeducation.

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**Lt. Genl. (Rtd.) H.K. Kaul :** We paid tributes to over 400 officers and Jawans of our army and a few officers and men of our Air Force who died in the flower of their youth fighting gallantly for our country and over 600 were wounded. The nation owes these gallant soldiers, their widows, orphans and parents a huge debt which no amount of money can repay. What needs to be done by the nation is to honour this debt. As regards the pre-Kargil era, ever since 1947 Pakistan has proved its un-reliability and duplicity from the very foundation of Pakistan. After the cease fire agreement in 1949 and the United Nations resolution, they violated both. They refused to get out of J&K which was clause 2 of the UN resolution and immediately after cease fire started violating the cease fire line everywhere. They again went into war with India in 1965, but were defeated and then there was the Tashkent agreement. They violated this agreement and again went into war in 1971. There was the Shimla agreement after that and some people thought it might be different this time. But it was not and the violations continued. However, after the defeat in 1971, Pakistan Army realised that a military confrontation in terms of a total war with India would only lead to their further destruction and may even lead to further division, so they changed the strategy.

Now while all this was being done, what was happening in India? In 1965 war our army was starved of equipment. This happened again in 1971 war. Both armour, artillery, infantry had inferior weapons compared with those of enemy. Then started the proxy war and the very violent phase of the proxy in Kashmir started in the winter of 1989. It's still continuing. There was Lahore Declaration in February 1999 and now it is known that at that very time Pakistan had already started making their preparations. While the talks were going on, these preparations for the operations in Kargil and Dras were on in full force. The Pakistan army was shopping abroad for boots and equipment which can only be used for operation in high altitude and cold climate. Also in July -August 1998 additional artillery had been moved into the sector opposite Kargil - Dras and this was known to the Indian Army.

Now other factor that has happened in pre-Kargil is that our nation, till this war was brought into every household by the media, did not wake up to its duty towards national security and towards armed forces. However, way back in 1979-80, we anticipated that Pakistan would try to agress in the Siachen area into our region following which the entire operation plans of the Indian army were remade including this sector. We made plans to defeat them and succeeded. It was then assessed that Pakistan would certainly agress between Siachen and Zoji La or Sonamarg. And again plans were made to defeat these aims and for that matter certain things were planned to be done in Ladakh which has been done now only after the Kargil has happened. In 1947-48 we used our tanks at that altitude in Zoji La which is the first and last time ever in world military history. In 1842, General Zorawar Singh did not have any modern gadgets like oxygen, yet he fought a successful war. In the last ten years the expenditure on defence has been gradually coming down. In 1987-88, the expenditure as a percentage of the total government expenditure was 17.02. In Pakistan it was 34.53. In 1997-98, our defence expenditure had come down to 13.76 while the Pakistani figure was 29.02. In terms of the percentage of GDP, from 1987-88 till 1997-98, the figure came down from 3.59 to 2.20 in India, while Pakistani figure came down from 7.82 to 5.13. Besides, all Defence expenditure as published is a wrong figure. There are a number of expenditures which have no business to be paid from the defence budget. For example, the pension of every government servant is paid from the central head and not from the Ministry concerned. Yet, defence personnel pension has always been paid from the defence budget. There are nine other expenditures which continue to be paid from the defence budget. It's high time, people take interest in these matters and show the correct budget.

There are other factors as well. While our expenditure has decreased proportionally, the value of the rupee has fallen down. Therefore, we pay much more for our purchases from abroad. Similarly our debt repayments, as far as defence side is concerned, have also gone up because of this fall in rupee value. The result is that for the

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last ten years the armed forces have been literally starved of modern equipment, including all sorts of weaponry, and their living conditions have also not improved. So we pay heavy price in the lives of our youngmen. The society at large and the bureaucrats and the politicians should wake up to this. Another problem is that at a time like the Kargil war we had to spend 20 million rupees on a thing which we would have got for one million rupees if we had bought it in time. The time has come to examine all this. Significantly, today in any war whether it is Kargil or whether it is in plains or mountains, it is the joint operation between the air force and the navy in the coastal region and army and the air force in other areas that is required. We need to have a combined structure of the three services and the Defence Ministry and for the unity of command, there is no getting away. It must be the man with merit and brilliance whether he is from navy, air force or army who should be appointed. But the biggest lesson which Kargil operations have taught is again a demonstration that when Indians stand together whether they are from Assam, Nagaland, Kashmir, Tamil Nadu or Gujarat and whether they are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Buddhists as seen in Kargil fighting, there is no difficulty that we cannot overcome, whether it's Pakistan or any other country or any combination of countries.

**Prof. Riyaz Punjabi :** The basic hypothesis is that Kargil is not a something new and should not be seen as a new development. It is the part of agenda in continuum since 1947 when it became a reality that Jammu and Kashmir State acceded to the Union of India. Then in September 1947 Pakistan started doing the same as it did in Kargil. It was the same pattern of sending *Mujahideen* across the borders creating disturbances and claiming that they were driven by a religious zeal and they were groomed to liberate their brothers. These arguments were used in 1947, 1948 and now in Kargil. In 1948, we perhaps fell to a diplomatic trap and that set a course for Pakistan at the diplomatic level. When we agreed to the resolution of 27 January 1948 to hold plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir State, Pakistan immediately ignored this resolution because they had to vacate the aggression and territory

and India had to keep its forces there and plebiscite was to be organised. Pakistan very intelligently ignored the implementation of the part of the resolution but in this process a new term came into existence, i.e. Kashmir dispute. In 1965 there was another attempt of sending *Mujahideen* to liberate the brethren but on both the occasions, i.e. in 1947 and in 1965 there was no cooperation and Pakistan suffered reverses. In 1971, they took another route and adopted another strategy to deal with Kashmir. If we see the discussions at the Strategic Institute of Pakistan, particularly the one by Niaz Naik we will be amazed to know that finally they came around the view that involvement of third party or UN intervention lies not through UN directly but invoking the jurisdiction of the UN using the human rights card. In 1988 Pak think tanks concluded that if they have to raise the issue of Kashmir then they have to go through this means.

From 1989 the insurgency and militancy in Kashmir started and the kind of responses they evoked from the security forces allowed Pakistan to raise the hype of human rights and this reached a peak in 1994 when Pakistan tried to introduce a resolution in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to censure India on the violation of human rights. However, this resolution could not come through. By March-April 1999, things were fast changing in Kashmir and suddenly we had this Kargil and the international fall out. The point to be made is that the violation of LoC and invoking the international (UN or US) intervention is a policy continuum of Pakistan. We have also to see that how America is dealing with the issue of fundamentalism and extremism. The United States has on its right side Saudi Arabia and most of the West Asian countries who are responsible in a way of exporting, financing, aiding and abetting Islamic terrorism in different parts of the world. But at the same time United States has capacity to deal with Osama Bin Laden and other extremist groups whenever and wherever it wants. But we in South Asia are not able to project it that how do we deal with it. The newly independent Central Asian States which are trying to build secular plural democratic societies, are also facing the same threat. Our greatest concern is that Pakistan will continue to



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export this Islamic terrorism to our side and in other parts of South Asia in future also. Whether it is Lahore diplomacy or Shimla agreement or any other bilateral engagement, Pakistan is not going to stop trans-border and cross-border terrorism in the name of Islam or in the name of Muslims.

Besides, we have to be proactive rather than being defensive and reactive. Those who have been watching Kargil should know that it not only happened in March but for last two years the shells have been coming from the road side and there were enough indications that something is going to take place there. May be we have more trouble now in Rajauri, Poonch and in that whole belt because they have been coming and going and staying conveniently in these areas. The point is that it is not a short term affair, but a very long term affair and we have to come out of this that we strengthened Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and were trying to help Nawaz Sharif. The last point is that there are more than three lakh Kashmiri Pandit refugees and Muslims etc. We have now 30,000 refugees in Kargil and their condition is pitiable. We don't have money within the State, as well as at the centre to feed these people. We need to devise a coherent strategy to deal with these problems.

**Prof. V.S. Mani :** The Kargil conflict throws at least six different dimensions of international law. (i) The status of the LoC (ii) Acts and laws for use of force (iii) The right of self-defence (iv) Deployment of Mercenaries into the Indian territory (v) Violations of International Humanitarian Law applicable in armed conflict and (vi) The role of ICRC. It is easy to argue that LoC established under the Shimla agreement is a boundary. In fact Article 4 of the Shimla agreement almost says so and LoC is entitled to be respected by both the parties and by and large both the parties respected. Only recently just before the Kargil conflict the Pakistanis found that LoC was not all that clear inspite of the fact that it was established on the basis of some 19 mosaic maps way back in Shimla. Under international law, LoC is very much like a cease fire line. Now the LoC has been definitiely broken by Pakistan. Under the law of treaties India is entitled

to regard the Shimla agreement as non-existent. But under Article 60 of Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties 1970, if one of the parties to a treaty commits a fundamental breach of the treaty, the other party has an option to get out of the treatys. What happened in Kargil was in fact not a series of border incidence, but it amounted to armed attacks and India was entitled to invoke their right of self-defence. However, India did much less than exercising its full right of self-defence. In terms of international law, India could certainly have gone across to destroy supply bases on the Pakistani occupied side of Kashmir.

A word for despatch of mercenaries. Ever since the war controversy in Angola, international law relating to control of mercenaries has developed. There is a convention on banning recruitment, training and using mercenaries in cross-border activities. This convention came into being since 1969. Although India and Pakistan have not become parties to this convention, the basic principle of the convention has become part of international customary law. And what Pakistan did in engaging these mercenaries and sending them across the border into the Indian territory was clearly illegal. Added to this are mounting an act of aggression and using mercenaries which are also international crimes. As regards, violations of international humanitarian law, there are various instances of international humanitarian law violations committed by Pakistan. On the other hand, India's conduct in giving a decent burial to the dead bodies of the infiltrators who were either left behind or refused an acceptance by Pakistan, has been very widely appreciated. There had been another problem left behind due to the Kargil conflict, the mines. There are provisions in the International Humanitarian Law Conventions prohibiting use of anti-personnel mines. So, there should be some mechanism whereby we could control the activation or deactivation of the mines, until then use of mines would be illegal. As far as the role of ICRC is concerned, India could have utilized the services of ICRC more than what it has. But it utilised the services of ICRC for a limited extent as the conflict was coming to an end.

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**Dr. Chintamani Mahapatra :** While dealing with the “US and the Kargil conflict”, it is to be noted that there is an impression in this country that US approach to Kargil is different from earlier American policy on Kashmir. Is it so and how? There is an impression that Washington’s policy is a tilt in favour of India against Pakistan. Is it so and how? There are people who are at least raising a point that there could be a paradigm shift in the US foreign policy towards South Asia in the wake of the Kargil. Is that so? Finally, Kashmir has already been internationalized. Has it been? So, these are the questions that have been raised.

The US policy on Kashmir is different from its past approach: (a) In 1947-48 and in 1965 Washington imposed limited sanctions such as arms embargo against India and Pakistan. In 1999, the American Senate lifted the sanctions already imposed in the wake of Chaghai and Pokhran II. (b) In 1947-48 and in 1965 , the Indian complaint against the US was that by imposing arms embargo against both Pakistan and India it was equating the victim as aggressor and by implications going against India. But this time Washington confronted Pakistan with the actual position. Pakistan said, we have no control over the intruders. Clinton said, no, you have. Pakistan said, regular Pakistani forces are not involved. The State Department officers said, no, they are involved. Pakistan said, Line of Control is not defined properly. Washington said, no, it is defined and you must observe the sanctity of the Line of Control. In fact, as in the past Washington did not want to annoy either New Delhi or Islamabad by imposing arms embargo and apparently giving a position of neutrality. This time also they did not want to really corner the Pakistanis. Actually, Washington has taken a position which is in the best interest of Washington. The Kargil situation took place at a time when the Pakistani economy was in a very bad shape and Pakistan was requesting the Americans to bail them out. There were two phases of the Kargil conflict. In the first phase, Clinton was happy with the telephonic conversation and writing letters to the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers.

For a long time Washington and Pakistan together linked up the Kashmir issue with the nuclear issue for a different set of reasons. It served Pakistani and American purpose, it did not serve Indian purpose. That time Indian analysts were arguing that if the nuclear weapons are safe in the hands of the Super Powers, those weapons could be safe in our hands also. "If three rounds of India - Pakistan war were limited, now that India and Pakistan have the ultimate weapons, on what basis you are saying that now Indians and Pakistanis are going to blow up each other. But the moment the nuclear sovereignty started with Pakistan, we may be happy that we are a very responsible country as a nuclear India and a democratic India. But can we be more careful and more so about our neighbour"? In fact, the Americans, the Chinese and others are now going to say that there is a possibility of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan much more because of Pakistan than between China and India. So, they should better do something about Pakistan's nuclear restraint regime.

As regards Kashmir, USA does not want to get into this kind of problem between India and Pakistan because it is a very complicated issue. That is why in the joint communique one may find mention of Shimla Pact twice and Lahore process once. They are still saying that India and Pakistan will have to resolve the problem bilaterally. So, in that sense of the term it has not yet internationalised. But when the Kashmir issue is linked up with the nuclear issue and then with the future agenda of the nuclear restraint regime in South Asia, then Kashmir issue may be internationalised in that sense of the term.

From the American perspective Pakistan, an Islamic and an unstable country has gone nuclear. Clinton is talking about constructive engagement. United States wants to engage a Pakistan of the kind of an Islamic state and a nuclear weapon state and an unstable state. The US policy towards Pakistan, China and on the nuclear issue are going to complicate the matter in the foreseeable future.

**Dr. Swaran Singh :** Kargil was the first post-cold war conflict between two nuclear weapon states. The Kargil conflict saw the response from international powers very vivid, clear and decisive, and

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also in a way very uniform which was generally in favour of India. What was Pakistan's expectation from two major international players in this game - United States and China? Going by tradition on all earlier occasions it was the United States which decided to put embargo on earlier Indo-Pak conflicts. In all the conflicts it was China which came and supported Pakistan by supplying weapons, allowing them to fly over their territory and to go across to the east which made China a definitely much more dependable ally for Pakistan than the United States could ever be. The US was supposed to be a liberal democratic country which will be sort of listening to international opinion and domestic opinion which the Chinese will not be. And also looking at the history of last three decades starting from the 1963 agreement in which Pakistan actually conceded Indian territory in Pak occupied Kashmir to China, China became actually the most dependable ally for Pakistan. So, expectation from China was much more in case of Pakistan but what happened was just the opposite.

The first reason is that the problem started when Pakistan actually exploded the nuclear bomb much against the advice from Beijing. Besides, for the last one year all the western countries especially the US have been pushing Beijing asking China to do more to establish a credibility as not being the power behind Pakistani and Iranian nuclear weapons programmes. So, this put China in a little defensive position. Secondly, China's intention was to keep Pakistan dependent on them for nuclear weapons. So, this dependency factor is now broken which has not really been appreciated by Beijing. China also tended towards neutrality because of the Islamic fundamentalist factor. China is known to have objected to Islamabad about various Islamist groups of Xinjiang operating from Pak occupied Kashmir. That China has good state to state relations with the Central Asian Republics and they have been able to a great extent to stop bases in those areas across the Xinjiang border, makes Pakistan as the only base for export of Islamic extremism into Xinjiang. The third reason is that there has been a decrease in Pakistan's role of a frontline state which was there during the cold war era. Now Beijing is building important relations with the

Russian Federation, and with India during the last one decade or more. Besides Washington, Moscow and Beijing are now able to talk to each other directly and in much better terms. So, Pakistan's role is not as crucial now as frontline state as it was during the typical height of cold war era which also makes Pakistan not a very critical factor in either Beijing's or Washington's foreign policy. Therefore, this factor allowed Beijing to continue with the neutrality in the Kargil conflict. Fourthly, China never expected or accepted any argument related to talk of disarmament deals with China's nuclear weapons. They had earlier put the limitations that until 50 per cent of the super power weapons are reduced they will not talk of disarmament and when they saw treaties like START-I and START-II coming, they further raised the limit to 95 per cent of the super powers level. They are not interested in reducing the nuclear weapons and in this context they were scared that if the debate shifts to nuclear weapons of these two countries because of Kargil, Chinese weapons programme will always come into focus as India insists on China being considered as part of the South Asian nuclear framework. So, being very sensitive to it, Chinese press talked of escalations. Escalation also leads to another phrase which is repeatedly used in the media and comments as what is called regional instability and they were saying that Kargil could lead to instability in South Asian region and will affect the larger area in that case. The fifth reason for China's neutrality is their fear of Western intervention. There was a fear in Chinese mind that US might seek an important role in the neighbourhood of China and, therefore, they wanted to make sure that they purely stay neutral which will help in keeping the restraint and seeking a resolution locally and not let it be internationalised beyond their borders. Finally, international response was very important for the Chinese because most of the powers termed it a clear aggression on the part of Pakistan crossing LoC and coming over to Indian territory which was a clear breach of international law. So China couldn't really go against the international opinion. Basically the reason was that China lately has been perceiving itself as a next global power in the making and, therefore, they were not this time really seeking to behave as a country which is on adhoc basis trying to rescue their ally or reprimand

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a country with which they are not very comfortable but they were seeking to behave like a power which has an international responsibility and which is recognised as an international power. So they wanted to stick to the neutrality policy. But this was not definitely pro-India and anti-Pakistan neutrality and that has to be understood. This was a neutrality perceived in their national interest.

**Brigadier Vinod Anand :** The nuclear deterrence in the case of the Kargil operations did work, though it has not been played very much in the media and the newspapers. There was lot of warning across Pakistan that they will use nuclear weapons and there was hardly any reaction from India. But when Nawaz Sharif went to China, the Chinese advice about the state of readiness of the Indian arsenal had a very sobering effect on him. Thereafter he came back and advised his generals preventing further escalation of the issue.

**Prof. M.L. Sondhi :** What the Indians succeeded in doing Pokhran - II was like challenging the imperial regime in 1947 and succeeding in challenging it. In fact we challenged the non-proliferation regime so there is a perception that we are now in the era beyond non-proliferation. This has worked most in the Chinese mind. China's designs have been frustrated by us and China is recovering from that shock. China thought it would be the only nuclear power in Asia with all the domination that it created but they have literally been frustrated by what we have done at Pokharan-II. From this follows the opportunities for India to practice conflict resolution. India which is against fundamentalism, is in a very strong position for tolerance and for pluralism.

## UNDER COVER OF NIGHT

*Ghulam Hasnain*

Dragging deeply on a cigarette, Major Nadeem Ahmed contemplates his map, which shows more than a dozen Indian gun positions on a 17sq. kms. target grid. Each position, marked in blue, has a name laced with hatred: Devil Gun, Kafir (non-believer) Gun, Hindu Gun, Gandhi Gun and so on. The Pakistani officer and his men have just fired 10 shells from their single artillery piece at the Indian positions a few kilometers away across the Line of Control. It is 10 p.m. and Ahmed is surprised that the Indians have not responded. Usually they fire back immediately.

The major turns on a cassette recorder and plays Western pop music, trying to break the tension in his dingy bunker. "I don't think the Indians will fire tonight," he says. "They may fire around 5.30 a.m., and there could be some air sorties". Ahmed asks his batman for his rifle and places it beside his cot; he has been warned by headquarters that the Indians might make a commando assault on his position during the night. He goes outside and in the darkness has a quiet word with his men: "Your eyes and ears should work like a snow leopard's. Do not ignore even the slightest sound of a rolling stone".

The men sleep in a simple bunker with a mud-and-thatch roof; rats rummage freely inside. In the wee hours, an explosion shakes the night. A soldier runs in. "Hurry, the Indians have started firing," he says. It is 1 a.m. Everyone moves to a shell-proof bunker. Fifteen minutes later the barrage stops. After another 15 minutes, some men return to their cots. At 4 a.m., as the major begins his morning prayers, the Indians start another barrage. The major is furious. He orders his men to target each Indian gun on the grid: "Hit all of them, especially Gandhi. Teach them a lesson". This is the routine of the mock war that has been going on for the past 10 years along the LoC. Until recently, the Indians and Pakistanis lobbed shells across the mountains mainly to remind each other of their presence. But now there's much more at stake. This is



no shadow war : soldiers are fighting and dying in one of world's most inhospitable terrains.

**As far back as last November, the first batch of Pakistani troops from the Northern Light Infantry Regiment—a unit experienced in mountain warfare—crept over the 3,500 m. high passes along the LoC to occupy the high ridges that the Indian army held in the summer. To avoid raising suspicion, even among local Pakistanis, they went without weapons. Their task was to build new bunkers on the ridges but as far as possible from the empty Indian positions that would be unsafe because they are marked on Indian army maps. Pakistan was “stretching” the LoC to its advantage, to be able to block at will India’s strategic road from the Kashmir Valley to distant Ladakh—the military base for that other source of conflict between India and Pakistan, the 6,600 m. high Siachen Glacier.**

Near the town of Kargil in Indian-held Kashmir, Pakistani soldiers have assembled a Chinese-made 57 mm. anti-aircraft gun inside a man-made cave protected by steel girders and concrete. It sits on top of a 3,000 m. high ridge that overlooks a 500 m. stretch of the Kargil road. When a lookout spots a vehicle, he shouts “Allahu Akbar” (God is great), and the gunner pulls the trigger. The soldiers cheer each hit. The weapon has scattered convoys and made Indian troop deployments hazardous. Bombs and artillery shells fired by the Indians have failed to penetrate the cave.

Islamabad insists that the soldiers on the Indian ridges are Islamic mujahedin, or holy warriors, fighting for the freedom of Kashmir. That was the alibi Pakistan used for its military advance. Men from the Northern Light Infantry Regiment and later the Khyber Rifles were used because of their high-altitude experience and because they are from the region. They were encouraged to look like mujahedin, and they discarded their uniforms for traditional shalwar kameez, or tracksuits, grew beards and wore traditional white religious skullcaps. The soldiers say that when they reached the heights in February, some genuine

mujahedin were at the abandoned Indian positions. But these men left after a few days because they could not survive in the high altitudes. They are now used for reconnaissance and as porters.

Morale is high among the gunners. But ask Pakistani soldiers why they are on India's side of the Line of Control ducking shells, bombs and bullets, and you're unlikely to get a clear answer. Some officers talk of the futility and danger of a war that their government denies they are taking part in. There is also the hint of a divide between the men at the front and the government. "None of us wants war with India," says one officer. "It is very damaging for Pakistan's economy, and we feel it will be difficult to sustain". A soldier adds: "The capture of these mountains has given us extra advantage, but I doubt that the Indians will forget this".

**Not many of the men expect to come down from the mountains alive. At base camp in Skardu, 150 kms. from the frontline, phone-booth attendant Yawar Shah says the men weep when they call home to bid good-bye to their families. "You can see them crying in the cubicles," he says. "It is very sad".**

#### **IN ENEMY TERRITORY : A SOLDIER'S STORY**

*He spent 77 days on Indian territory, fighting and suffering at elevations of up to 5,400 m. on one of the highest battlefields in the world. He is a Pakistani soldier, and this is his own account of the combat near Kargil. His story contradicts Islamabad's official claim that it has never sent troops across the Line of Control that divides Kashmir. The 30-year-old soldier returned to Pakistan in mid-June for reasons he wouldn't specify. Thin, bearded and badly sunburned from exposure in the mountains, he spoke to TIME on the condition of anonymity, for fear of being court-martialed. In February, I was ordered to cross the Line of Control and climb some mountains that the Indians controlled. My commanding officers would not allow me to take my AK-47 rifle. I was*

*Ghulam Hasnain*

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against going to an Indian hill without a weapon, but I saw that everybody who was being sent across the LoC was going there empty-handed. We were told it was for the sake of secrecy. It took us three days of walking and climbing to reach the Indian posts near Kargil. We found they were empty, and our job was to prepare some makeshift bunkers. All we had were tents. The first five days were hell. The M-17 military helicopter did not come with our food supplies. We just had Energile [a protein-enriched food pack used in high-altitude warfare] and ice. Sometimes we ate ice with sugar. There was jubilation when the helicopter came with real food.

The skirmishes with the Indians started in May. In the early days we mowed down many of them. Those Indians were crazy. They came like ants. First you see four, and you kill them. Then there are 10, then 50, then 100 and then 400. Our fingers got tired of shooting at them. We felt sorry for them. Sometimes they came in such large numbers we were afraid of using up all our ammunition. There is no instant resupply, so you have to be very careful. We were always worried that we would use up all our ammunition on one attacking Indian party and would have none left when a new group came. But God was always with us. You could see lots of bodies strewn down below or in the gorges. They were just rotting there. We also suffered a lot of casualties, many more than officials in Pakistan are claiming. During my stay up there, 17 of my friends died while fighting the Indians.

There is so much exchange of fire that you cannot eat the ice now or drink the water, which is laced with cordite. Even the streams down below the mountains are contaminated. Lots of soldiers are facing stomach problems because of this. We had no proper bunkers, so we dug a 5 m. tunnel into the snow. When the Indian shells started landing on us, we would crawl into this tunnel for safety. You don't get enough space to spread your legs in the tents. You always sleep sitting up. Sometimes there is so much firing, you cannot relieve yourself even if you want to.

*UNDER COVER OF NIGHT*

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**On the ridges now we have disposable rocket launchers, surface-to-air missiles and machine-guns, including anti-aircraft guns. On one occasion I was positioned on a mountain facing the Drass-Kargil highway. It's fun to target the Indian convoys.**

Our officers are very strict. A young soldier from Punjab died in front of me because of altitude sickness. The soldier came from the plains. He fell sick soon after coming up. He offered our commanding officer 200,000 rupees [about \$4,000] to let him go down, but the offer was refused. He died four days later. We didn't know his name. I tried to find out, but they refused to tell me. If you die up in the mountains, there is no way to lift your body and take it down. Most of the time we slide the bodies downward. All the men who are fighting on those ridges know that they are in a hole from which they cannot come out alive. You can only return dead. There are a rare few like me, who somehow by fate got the chance to leave the mountains.

[Courtesy : *Time*, 12 July 1999]

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