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Vivek Chadha

Introduction

The Kargil conflict was a significant milestone as its relevance goes beyond India's military and diplomatic victory. It showcased the most striking factor that the common man was made aware of during the conflict—The gritty resolve and selfless devotion to duty of an average soldier. The acts of bravery witnessed during those few days, brought back the reality of war. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise, when Naresh Chandra, quoted a US General's impressions of the war in Kargil:

> Mr Ambassador, what I have heard and read about the operation. I don't mind admitting that my marine officer will not do what your boys have done, which is a terrific confession. Scaling heights only to be shot. Seeing their colleagues fall and still going by rope and climbing, knowing that 80 per cent 75 per cent, you are going to be shot. And if you reach on top, you have to be ready for hand to hand combat. What these boys did, I don't think the ordinary public realises.[1]

Few people indeed do. Yet, despite perhaps not understanding the nitty-gritties of combat, the common man and woman did get invigorated by the stories they saw on their televisions. By 1999, the 1971 Indo-Pak war had become a somewhat distant memory for the youth. The conflict in Kargil provided a focal point that reinforced the admiration for the men in uniform.

Not only did it capture the imagination of people in India, the conflict also raised the morale of the armed forces like little else had in the recent past. The dogged persistence of fighting terrorism produced only occasional successes. However, the sense

of accomplishment that Kargil brought fired an entire generation of soldiers. It also reinforced the latent self-belief that soldiers were often fed with and for once, it was well and truly on display. Kargil became that agent of reinforcement. The stories of heroism on the battlefield were no longer second hand, passing through multiple exaggerations. Instead, these were first person accounts that were told in all its reality to friends, family members and brothers-in-arms alike. In that sense, as a management guru would put it: Kargil was a game changer!

This bravery has been captured well by select authors, at least on the Indian side of the LoC.[2] The contrasting reasons for failing to document heroism on the other side is perhaps one element for which Musharraf is unlikely to be forgiven by history. The refusal to accept the direct involvement of the Pakistan regular forces, robbed its soldiers of the honour and respect their countrymen owed them. While the cause can be debated, as can the rationality of the decision to bring war to the doorsteps of Pakistan, there cannot be a debate on the sacrifices made by soldiers on both sides of the LoC. On the Indian side, Kargil united the country and brought the collective strength of the people to the fore. In contrast, predictably, its aftermath reflected a mix of frustration, betrayal and helplessness across the border. For once, this feeling was also palpable within the armed forces. A keen observer captured this mood in Pakistan, when he said:

> I think it was one of despondency and one of blame game. The civilian leadership blamed the military and military blamed the civilian leadership. And when General Musharraf went to visit units, he found morale low and young officers questioning him which was unthinkable.[3]

As important as it is to underline the military dimension of the Kargil conflict, this book is not about the physical conduct of operations. Nor does it document cases of individual bravery.

Yet, it is relevant to commence this introductory assessment with these observations for two reasons. One, despite this book not delving into tactical operations, it was important to underline their relevance. Had it not been for the steadfast success of these superhuman endeavours, nothing else that the book goes on to analyse would have yielded meaningful results. All other factors catalysed by the principal element of bravery displayed by each soldier who willingly faced enemy fire.

Two, the contradiction noted in the attitude of the two countries towards their soldiers and the conduct of war, reflected in equal measure in all other elements of statecraft during and after the Kargil conflict. It was symptomatic of the larger contrast that repeatedly came to the fore and continues into the present. In fact, unless this anomaly is corrected, there is a reasonable possibility of it remaining a perennial element of Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy. And this contradiction emerges from two factors. First, the civil-military relations within the state have been marred by a constant jockeying for power.[4] Second, the employment of subterfuge and deceit have become inherent to Pakistan's foreign policy.[5]

Diplomacy, higher direction of war and strategic communications, three elements that the book discusses at length, were clearly affected by both these factors. The failure of Pakistan to validate decisions, create a cohesive thought process and pursue a coherent strategy, can all be attributed to a breakdown in the civil-military relationship and the hope that deceit could substitute for sound foreign and military policy.[6]

The trend in this context is evident from Kargil and beyond. Pakistan's refusal to accept responsibility for what happened in Kargil, despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary available with international observers, once again echoes from its expression of providing merely moral and diplomatic support to "freedom fighters" in Kashmir. This consistent policy is also relevant to the Americans paying Pakistan for counter-terrorism support, in

the face of realities to the contrary. Afghanistan is no exception either. This common element of employing a rather simplistic form of deceit as a foundational recourse for seeking strategic advantage, indicates a unity of design in actions. This underlying principle has been more visible while applying those elements of hybrid warfare that are best suited for employing the strategy of subterfuge and proxies. This includes operating proxies, undertaking subversion and handling financial remunerations. It is unlike the policy of undertaking direct and overt military operations by Pakistan's security forces against India, witnessed until 1971. These have largely been replaced by sub-conventional and non-conventional operations, all of which form a part of hybrid warfare.[7]

Significance of Kargil

As events post-Kargil suggest, the conflict was possibly a last-ditch attempt by Pakistan to force a military solution to resolve existing disputes to its advantage. The significance of the conflict emerges from a number of factors. These have come to define military conflict and competition in the regional context. For one, the threat of war between two nuclear armed nations had remained a subject of concern and evaluation over the years. Similarly, there has been interest in exploring the potential of employing force below the threshold of a full-scale conventional war. Pakistan forced both these conditions upon India under grave circumstances. By deciding to undertake the nature of intrusion that Kargil represented, Pakistan challenged the potential for a robust response by India. It aimed to achieve a position of local military advantage as a leverage to seek strategic gains. Kargil seemed the best option for this military experiment. Pakistan's selection of this target emanated from three factors. One, it was not the focus of attention for fighting terrorism. Two, nor was it the locus for counter-infiltration deployment. And finally, its geography overwhelmingly favoured the side that created

positional first-mover advantage on the heights. Despite this, Pakistan squandered the opportunity, given the organisational culture that has come to define its actions.

In 1999, the Kargil conflict was seen as an anomalous event in the historical context of subcontinental conflicts. Unlike in the past, this campaign was limited in many ways. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan aimed to ensure that the conflict remained below the threshold level of a major war as doing so allowed them to seek strategic advantage in a restricted area. This offset their limitations of military capability, which would have got exposed in a major war. Further, the information deficit led to an accentuated fog of war during the initial days. This allowed Pakistan to perpetuate the mujahideen ruse, which received a fillip through clever deception and India's inability to identify the adversary in the initial days. Conversely, the decision to carry on with the mujahideen pretense after the initial euphoria, worked against Pakistan's interests. In addition to India operating on its side of the LoC, this self-defeating narrative limited Pakistan's flexibility to employ all its forces and weapon systems. These circumstances, instead of facilitating the achievement of Pakistani aims, only went on to exaggerate the contradictions of their approach. This affected decision-making, diplomacy, and strategic communications alike. In addition to the functional constraints that emerged given these conditions, the conflict also raised serious questions about the utility of force Pakistan had chosen to apply in Kargil.

Kargil suggested to Pakistan that even as space existed within the spectrum of warfare for limited military forays, its acceptability by the international audience had been squeezed, given the nuclear shadow over the subcontinent. It also indicated to India that this space was more pronounced when accompanied by judicious employment of force. In the case of Kargil, the decision not to cross the LoC gave India the advantage to employ all constituents of military power in contrast to Pakistan.

Pakistan's failure to force a strategic or even a limited territorial advantage also emerged as a very critical lesson of Kargil. Pakistan's embarrassment and loss of strategic space to India indicated that even a limited military foray such as Kargil had obvious limitations in terms of the gains that it could provide. This was all the more relevant since a full-fledged war between the two countries had become a receding possibility.

This conclusion raises the most obvious question. If the history of warfighting between India and Pakistan, which includes Kargil, indicates the relative ineffectiveness of conventional military force for waging war, how would Pakistan attempt to seize the strategic initiative against India?

An attempt has been made to seek answers to this question through two distinct segments. As part of the first, three areas of the Kargil conflict to include diplomacy, higher direction of war and strategic communications (SC) are discussed. These have as much relevance for the kind of conflict that Kargil represents, as it is likely to have in the present and future. The sustained relevance stems from a distinct organisational and strategic culture, which has come to define actions within Pakistan's decision-making circles. It is equally relatable to India's decision-making cycle. Irrespective of the strengths and weaknesses that may have emerged during the Kargil conflict, as will be delved into in this book, institutional mechanisms in both countries continue to be guided largely by distinct orientations and interests as has been witnessed in the past.

The Pakistan Army continues to wield decisive influence over their democratically elected counterparts. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, a former senior Pakistani diplomat, reinforces this reality, despite the apparent honeymoon period of the political establishment in Pakistan with the army:

There is a view that for any elected government to successfully contextualise civil-military relations within the framework

of civilian supremacy—a fundamental premise of the Constitution—it must first "stoop to conquer" the reservations of the military. These reservations relate not only to institutional interests; they also reflect an entrenched inclination of the military to regard its political salience as indispensable for the security and survival of the country whatever the letter of the basic law of the land might suggest to the contrary.[8]

The extent of individual powers vested in the army chief and the authority he brings to bear on the hierarchy led him to personalise events during Kargil. There seems to be little evidence of similar situations being avoided as a result of checks and balances that may have been instituted since then. This can be illustrated by events during Kargil in relation to the three factors being assessed.

Usually when diplomacy fails, the direct role of the military commences. However, in the case of Kargil, diplomacy succeeded concurrent with the application of military force. And this was despite the initial setback that diplomats had to contend with. The Lahore bus diplomacy as well as the resultant agreement, brought a ray of hope to those seeking peace between India and Pakistan. Ironically, even as the journey was planned and undertaken, a small group of senior military officers in Pakistan, including General Musharraf, were already in an advanced stage of intrusion and held Indian positions across the LoC. Therefore, the entire duration of the Kargil conflict did not only witness simultaneous diplomatic manoeuvres, it was also preceded by what most saw as a successful engagement between the two countries at Lahore. The pace of diplomatic negotiations during the Kargil conflict and its scope was unprecedented during any other live conflict between India and Pakistan. Eventually, it also became amongst the most successful diplomatic campaigns undertaken by Indian diplomats as part of a military conflict. There were three distinct defining elements that guided Indian diplomacy during the period.

First, India decided to undertake operations on its own side of the LoC. This, despite the immediate military costs, emerged as a critical decision for creating a conducive environment that ensured acceptance of India's position on the issue. Second, the country's determination to evict the intrusion at any cost became a non-negotiable term of reference that guided diplomacy. The resolute determination that it conveyed, ensured that softer options aimed at providing Pakistan a face-saver were rejected out of hand. Third, India successfully created a contrast between a mature nuclear power that was ready to display restraint in the face of grave provocation on the one hand and Pakistan's military adventurism and nuclear brinksmanship on the other. This included the direct indictment of its military leadership in the planning and conduct of the operation. The combined impact of India's military victories and diplomatic finesse, culminated at the Blair House, which became the scene of capitulation of Pakistan's leadership. This event merely reinforced Pakistan's diplomatic failure. However, given the inextricable situation created by the military leadership, it was not surprising to find the diplomats completely outdone by their Indian counterparts.

Higher direction of war emerged as the second decisive element of the conflict. Both India and Pakistan had existing structures for pursuing military options. In fact, Pakistan had undertaken restructuring after the 1971 India-Pakistan war, thereby making its decision-making body arguably more relatable to the challenges of 1999. Despite this, both countries adapted very differently to the challenges that were posed during the conflict. India made the best of an imperfect structure. Despite the hype surrounding the differences between different services, the book proves beyond doubt that even as these professional variations remained, the process of consultative decision-making was vibrant. Not only was this evident amongst the three services, it also included the political elite at every stage of the conflict. In contrast, Pakistan, despite its improved national security

architecture, failed yet again to bring different elements of the apparatus together. Interestingly, the Pakistani establishment had to contend with two adversaries. While India was the obvious external common threat, the political leadership and the military architects of Kargil also saw each other as challengers. Both were in pursuit of their separate objectives. Worse, even within the military establishment, there was absence of unity of purpose. This became evident at each stage of the conflict, ultimately with obvious and visible consequences.

The final element that emerged as a decisive determinant was the ability of India and Pakistan to steer their Strategic Communications (SC). This factor became a critical element of the subcontinent's first televised conflict. Connectivity and communication played an important role in shaping perceptions at a number of levels. From the armed forces within both countries, the domestic population, international audience and the adversary, SC became an extension of diplomacy and a force multiplier for the men in uniform. It took both sides time to come to terms with the 24x7 medium that television presented. It also took time for the armed forces to adjust to the nature of transparency and speed that the televised world demanded. The thin line between scripted press briefs and candid interactions was often trespassed. This was especially true on the Indian side, where the media went as close as was practically feasible to actual combat within the battle zone. And this worked to the advantage of India's SC campaign. The lack of transparency and contradictory nature of information that emerged from sources in Pakistan not only confused the media, it also made it difficult to achieve coherence and unity of purpose. The results and impact were not difficult to perceive. Nor were the resultant reasons for Pakistan losing the battle of perceptions.

The second segment of the book analyses the changing character of war. The book examines the evolving notion of victory that this change is facilitating. It takes Kargil as the jump-

off point in history in an attempt to discern the evolutionary shifts thereafter. In doing so, the focus of the book is broadened to include China as a competitor. This becomes especially relevant since China has displayed a distinctly different and arguably a more sophisticated form of competition not only to India, but with other countries as well.

The analysis has been conducted largely within the scope of hybrid wars. The description of ongoing conflicts and competition has been placed within the ambit of this term, not as much because it is a new phenomenon. Hybrid wars are as old as the history of warfare. Therefore, it is not the nature of warfare that has transformed, with war essentially being violent and a political instrument. Conflicts are increasingly being characterised by the changing emphasis on the constituents that are being applied by nations and at times even non-state actors to seek their political ends. The role of state on state conventional wars between major powers has clearly receded.[9] Instead, it is the sub-conventional and non-conventional array that has found favour with nation states. The Indian example when related to Pakistan's aggressive military endeavours is a case in point. The 1947-48 or the 1965 wars were both hybrid. However, the emphasis was on conventional military application. The ongoing conflict in J&K and beyond is also hybrid. Pakistan has merely reduced the emphasis on conventional military force. Instead, there is greater reliance on employing terrorism, subversion, cyber campaigns, funding efforts, with limited direct involvement of the armed forces from across the LoC. In this context, the Kargil conflict was therefore not at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict. In fact, when viewed with a two-decade perspective, it represents the higher end which is less likely to be repeated in future, given the diminishing returns that are associated with such military methods.

As mentioned earlier, China provides a more sophisticated model of competing with its rivals. The direct employment of

conventional force has not been utilised by China. Instead, it has perfected the art of employing its strategy of "three warfares", which also includes military force as a threat in being. This was best illustrated during the South China Sea dispute. More recently, in 2017, with subtle variations, the same was employed yet again against India during the Doklam crisis. The second section attempts to place this effort in perspective, even as it is related to future competition between India and China.

An objective, militarily oriented assessment to judge the impact and success of these efforts both by Pakistan and China were the logical recourse to conclude the study. However, military assessments while accurate in their interpretation of available facts, are not designed to look at more abstract, yet profound means of interpretation. In a departure from existing extrapolations of relations with China and Pakistan, the book employs a model popularised by James Carse, though in a different context.[10] The author professes the analogy of finite and infinite games to interpret behaviour and life. He contrasts the behavioural pattern of two types of players, who tend to approach a game from a finite and infinite perspective. In doing so, he further lays down the principal differentiating elements that define the two approaches. Thereafter, he employs it to comment on various aspects of human life. The same theory is employed by Simon Sinek in a relatively more recent interpretation. Sinek contextualises it more from an institutional framework for corporate organisations and leaders.

In both analyses, the authors clearly suggest the limitations of finite thought in the pursuit of an objective. This book employs the framework provided by Carse to relate it to the behaviour of Pakistan and to a lesser degree, China. Keeping the guiding rules similar to those provided by Carse, the interpretation of behaviour is interestingly similar to that of individuals and corporations. Unsurprisingly, the success or failure of strategies adopted by Pakistan and China are better understood by this approach. By co-

relating the scope of actions to both geographical and ideational domains, the assessment provides a better understanding of hybrid means as an extension of policy. This becomes relevant in light of its growing employment not only by Pakistan and China in their own ways, but also by a number of other countries as well. In this context, the book argues that Pakistan's policy of expanding the finite boundaries of its past endeavours to the infinite approach of recent years through hybrid means, is also likely to fail. This is premised on the country's reliance merely on extension of time and space in J&K, but not on ideas, which are the basis for succeeding in an infinite space.

The book relates the three elements of diplomacy, higher direction of war and SC to this changing reality and interpretation. It concludes that notwithstanding the changing character of conflict, these three elements remain equally relevant. However, their successful implementation will become more challenging given the complexity of hybrid wars. The thin line between war and peace will demand better understanding of challenges, their long-term manifestation and eventual impact. Further, this must also be related to the capability building processes and associated structures that help ensure a positive outcome of such endeavours.

Notes

1. As narrated by Ambassador Naresh Chandra to the author on May 22, 2017.

2. A number of books provide an account of the conflict on the Indian side. A few of these includes, General V.P. Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2006); Harinder Baweja and G. L. Batra, *A Soldier's Diary: Kargil the Inside Story* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2018); Lt Gen Mohinder Puri, *Kargil: Turning the Tide* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2016); Amarinder Singh, *A Ridge too Far: War in the Kargil Heights 1999* (New Delhi: The Variety Book Depot, 2017).

3. G. Parthasarathy on *Times Now*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p CaNhB0y8vg, accessed on July 28, 2017, from min. 19:45 to 21:30.

4. See Arifa Noor, "More than a personality clash," *Dawn*, December 11, 2018, https://www.dawn.com/news/1450766/more-than-a-personality-clash, accessed on December 12, 2018.

5. This, while recognised by leaders in the past, has been conveyed most blatantly by President Trump. See "Donald Trump attacks Pakistan claiming 'they have given us nothing but lies and deceit' in return for $33bn aid," *Independent*, January 1, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-pakistan-tweet-lies-deceit-aid-us-president-terrorism-aid-a8136516.html, accessed on December 12, 2018.

6. For a detailed analysis of Pakistan's civil-military challenge see, Paul Staniland, "Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments: India and Pakistan in Comparative Perspective," *Security Studies*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, pp. 322-62; Sumit Ganguly, "A Tale of Two Trajectories: Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan and India," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2016, pp. 142-57.

7. For a detailed description see Vikrant Deshpande and Shibani Mehta, "Contextualising Hybrid Warfare" in Vikrant Deshpande (ed.), *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character of Conflict* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2018), pp. 25-35.

8. Ashraf Jahangir Qazi, "Civil-military relations," *Dawn*, January 18, 2019, https://www.dawn.com/news/1458276/civil-military-relations, accessed on January 18, 2019.

9. Max Roser, "War and Peace," *Our World in Data*, https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace, accessed on December 13, 2018.

10. James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility* (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

1

Turning the Tables
Kargil a Diplomatic Coup

T he Kargil conflict of 1999 represents the most recent serious military exchange between two nuclear armed countries. While the military course of the conflict and its motivations are reasonably well documented, the diplomatic manoeuvring that contributed to its termination and the manner in which it was pursued are relatively less known. This is despite the significant role it played through the period and the fact that the crafting of such a response will hold lessons for future conflicts between India and Pakistan, as well as for other limited conventional military engagements.

The circumstances that saw the emergence of the conflict were accompanied by a contrasting set of conditions both in the military and diplomatic sphere in Pakistan and India. While the operational initiative was with Pakistan, giving its army an initial military advantage, the diplomatic circumstances played out very differently. Unlike previous conflicts between the two countries, an additional factor that played on the minds of the leadership of major world powers was the nuclearisation of the subcontinent in 1998. This therefore became a prominent concern that influenced attempts to resolve the armed conflict without it escalating any further. In light of these circumstances, each of the two protagonists had a distinct approach to their respective diplomatic strategy. For Pakistan, from a diplomatic perspective, its military adventurism became an albatross around its neck. On the other hand, India's resolute military response

and carefully calibrated restraint worked in its favour, despite the initial military disadvantage that saw the armed forces lose ground.

The diplomatic paradox that the two countries found themselves in, raises a series of questions that define the nature and scope of India and Pakistan's orchestration of diplomacy during the Kargil conflict and its relative effectiveness in support of their strategic aims. The chapter contends that India's decision to outline a limited objective, accept militarily disadvantageous terms of reference accompanied by a diplomatic blitzkrieg, created conducive conditions for facilitating early termination of the conflict. Further, India's successful diplomatic reach out-manoeuvred Pakistan at every step of the conflict, as illustrated by a series of events that took place in New Delhi, Islamabad, Washington, D.C. and Beijing. It will therefore be relevant to understand the basis for the position taken by the US and China, which were in contrast with their earlier stance during Indo-Pak conflicts.

Major Diplomatic Events Leading to the Kargil Conflict

Before we begin to understand the diplomatic strategy followed by both India and Pakistan, it is important to look at another factor. It is the international and domestic environment shaped by certain major events that had preceded the Kargil Conflict. From the Indian perspective, the decision to go nuclear was a defining moment in India's post-independence history. The immediate aftermath of the nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, 1998, saw "reactions that 'exploded'" in India's face. "About 120 countries, in one fashion or another, objected to these tests."[1] Amongst these, the angst in Washington can be gauged from their decision to leak Prime Minister Vajpayee's letter to the media, which directly related India's decision to go nuclear, to the threat from China. It stated:

I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapons state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state.[2]

The nuclear tests were followed by a wide range of economic sanctions, which were aimed at punishing India and pressurising it to meet international nuclear agreements such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).[3] President Clinton described India's decision to undertake nuclear tests as amongst "the very worst events of the 20th century".[4] Besides the US sanctions, a number of countries joined the bandwagon including Japan which suspended aid loans worth $1 billion and grant aid of $26 million. Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark also imposed economic sanctions.[5]

The impact of economic sanctions varied for both India and Pakistan. Daniel Morrow and Michael Carriere conclude that "because of its prior vulnerability, the Pakistani economy was severely affected by the withdrawal of IMF financing by the US-led coalition among IMF shareholder governments, and by the indirect effects of this withdrawal on other capital flows to Pakistan."[6] Conversely, in the case of India, "sanctions had a marginal—but not negligible—effect on the nation's economy."[7]

Nuclear tests by both India and Pakistan were a major international event, with its reverberations being felt beyond the corridors of non-proliferation *ayatollahs*. It is important to underline its impact, given that the Kargil conflict was fought by two nuclear-armed countries.

The reasoning in certain quarters of the senior leadership in Pakistan was that "We [the Pakistanis] should stand firm, neither panic nor apologize. We are a nuclear power. It will not be easy for India to take the risk of a full-scale war"(emphasis added).[8] This rationale of Shamshad Ahmad was explained by Sartaj Aziz, based on a follow up of the May 29, 1999 meeting. "The foreign secretary, Shamshad Ahmad, while agreeing with the postponement (of the visit of Sartaj Aziz to India), kept insisting that under no circumstances should we withdraw from positions we had occupied. Some of my colleagues then pointed out the stark prospects of a wider war, but the Foreign Secretary discounted that prospect because of our nuclear capacity."[9]

Timothy D. Hoyt attempts to capture the contradiction that accompanied the conflict in the nuclear domain. According to him, "the achievement of nuclear deterrence emboldened Pakistani military leaders to take assertive military action in Kashmir." Further he feels that Pakistan misread India's decision to employ substantial resources to restore status quo ante and US intervention shortly into the conflict, which came only on the condition of Pakistani withdrawal.[10] Amongst the many misconceptions that Pakistan seemed to suffer from, the nuclear dimension emerged as a major factor that led senior generals to undertake the misadventure despite obvious contradictions. These misplaced notions will be discussed in a succeeding section.

The second major diplomatic event was the visit of Prime Minister Vajpayee to Lahore amidst expected fanfare and euphoria. This resulted in the signing of the Lahore Declaration, which reiterated "the determination of both countries to implementing the Simla agreement in letter and spirit" and refraining from "intervention and interference in each other's internal affairs."[11] However, the spirit of the declaration, which was the highlight of the bus journey to Lahore, did not last long. Seven members of a family were killed on February 20, 1999 in the Rajouri district of J&K by terrorists.[12] The hope

kindled by the visit was dashed even prior to its conduct, given the fact that military deployment for the Kargil conflict was already in place, even as the bus from India to Pakistan made its way to Lahore.

Given the fact that the first troops crossed the LoC from Pakistan into India in October 1998,[13] Musharraf was given an ideal diplomatic smokescreen to undertake his operational plan. This may not have been an intentional part of the ruse that Musharraf had envisaged, since there is inadequate evidence of his having taken the civilian government completely on board. Nonetheless, the governments of the two countries as well as the larger international community shifted their attention to what looked like the beginning of a new chapter in the relationship of the two countries.

The desire for peace undoubtedly was a factor that drove the Vajpayee visit to Lahore and the eventual signing of the declaration. However, it also needs to be noted that in the aftermath of the nuclear tests, pressure mounted on both India and Pakistan from the international community to begin negotiations with the eventual aim of ensuring peace, especially in the backdrop of nuclearisation of the subcontinent. Besides asking India and Pakistan to sign the NPT, CTBT, the UN Security Council also wanted a stop to testing of ballistic missiles and cutting the production of fissile material. More importantly, from the perspective of the conflict, the resolution said:

> Expressing grave concern at the negative effects of those nuclear tests on peace and stability in South Asia and beyond, the Council urged India and Pakistan to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid threatening military movements. They were also urged to resume their dialogue on all outstanding issues, particularly on all matters pertaining to peace and security, in order to remove the tensions between them. They

were encouraged to find mutually acceptable solutions that address the root causes of those tensions, including Kashmir.[14]

Therefore, on the face of it, it seemed in the interest of both India and Pakistan to commence the process of dialogue in pursuance of the UNSC resolution. It also led the world to believe that India was serious about its attempt to seek peace with Pakistan.[15]

However, a closer look at events immediately after the tests reveals that the pressure on India was in fact more, given the sudden focus of attention of the world community on India-Pakistan relations in general and Kashmir in particular. This part of the pressure being exerted was in line with Pakistan's foreign policy since it had successfully internationalised Kashmir. Quite to the contrary, from the Indian perspective, this had brought undue attention to a dispute that was bilateral. The nuclear tests ensured that Kashmir was back at the top of international agenda in relation to India-Pakistan relations. It was mentioned along with other global issues like Cyprus deadlock, Sudan civil war, and stalled West Asia peace process in the annual report of the 53rd UN General Assembly. The government took exception to this and found it a "highly disturbing development".[16] On June 3, 1998, Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs said:

Well, I do think, as I think there is general agreement, that Kashmir is a flashpoint. It has been the flashpoint for 50 years of existence for the two countries. The Line of Control is not only subject to shelling and firing but also cross-border activities, which are extremely dangerous, and we have urged both governments to address.[17]

Similar concerns were raised from different platforms and world capitals, much to India's discomfort. Nelson Mandela, as

the Chairperson of NAM, speaking at the 12th NAM Summit also stated that "All of us remain concerned that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir should be solved through peaceful negotiations and should be willing to lend all the strength we have to the resolution of the matter."[18] Thus, from a Pakistani perspective, "The world seemed to be where Pakistan wanted".[19]

If the world was diplomatically indeed where Pakistan wanted it, in relation to Kashmir, why did Musharraf and his cronies have to take the kind of risk that they did to unleash the Kargil operation? And does this seemingly favourable diplomatic environment make the operation an even greater gamble than it would have been under normal circumstances? An assessment of Pakistan's herculean diplomatic effort during the conflict will possibly provide more evidence regarding the same.

Pakistan's Diplomatic Effort

Pakistan's understanding of their diplomatic position varied, based on the perspective that it represented in-house. The two ends of what the position represented, saw the military on one extreme and the diplomatic community on the other. While the former saw an opportunity to settle scores for past Indian indiscretions along the LoC and beyond, the latter realised the precarious position that they had been placed in as a result of the misadventure. For Pakistan's diplomatic corps, Kargil presented a paradoxical situation. It required them to present Pakistan as a victim of India's aggression over the years, even as the Pakistani Army violated the well-established and recognised LoC in the garb of action by "mujahideen". The situation was made worse for diplomats, as they saw this take place in the shadow of peace negotiations painstakingly structured by them, in the immediate aftermath of the nuclear tests by both India and Pakistan. Sartaj Aziz writes:

But for Pakistan, the diplomatic battle was becoming highly problematic as the international opinion was rapidly turning against Pakistan. Our initial contention that Kashmir freedom fighters had occupied certain vacant positions on the Indian side of the LOC was exposed within days, when the Indian forces found and displayed evidence of the involvement of Pakistan's paramilitary forces.[20]

The decision to portray soldiers from the NLI as mujahideen by Pakistan was not the only challenge faced by the diplomatic community. This falsehood continued till May 1999.[21] It eventually changed once the reality of Pakistan's direct involvement became evident beyond doubt to the world community, partly on the basis of a briefing by the Directors General of Military Intelligence and Operations.[22] This was in contrast to Pakistani diplomats in various world capitals, who were floundering, given the lack of clarity on Pakistan's stand on the Kargil crisis.

The logic offered thereafter shifted to India's aggressive patrolling, which could have led to another Siachen,[23] the LoC not being demarcated, skirmishes along the LoC affecting Pakistani civilians that necessitated retaliatory action, India's obduracy on Kashmir and finally India's violation of LoC over the last two decades.[24]

The position taken by the architects of the Kargil conflict within the Pakistan Army was based on some of these arguments, without having thought them through in their entirety. It reflected a naive understanding of diplomacy, lack of military professionalism in analysing India's possible reaction to the misadventure and the false sense of bravado which led to the view that Pakistan Army was capable of holding on to the areas that had been captured. The inherent contradictions in Pakistan's position tied their logic in knots, making their diplomatic position untenable. A simple exercise of scratching the surface of the arguments marshalled by them, exposed the reality.

An argument was made to support the occupation of heights on the Indian side of the LoC. This was premised on India being in violation of the LoC, having occupied territory across it in Chorbatla in 1972, Siachen in 1984[25] and Qamar in 1988.[26] However, even if this was taken at face value, the reason for the so-called mujahideen to take retaliatory action by occupying posts across the LoC remained illogical. This contradicted the veracity of their claim, given the challenges involved in undertaking such an action, especially if one were to believe that the terrorists were acting independently, with only moral support from the Pakistani army. The question that their foolhardy action raised both amongst saner Pakistani voices and international analysts, related to the logic of occupying territory that terrorists could certainly not sustain. As events thereafter proved, nor could the regular Pakistan Army. The claim that "mujahideen" had taken control of the heights also complicated the story that Pakistani diplomats were pushed into selling, as it placed self-imposed limitations on the Pakistani state to escalate the intensity of the conflict, thereby placing soldiers at a military disadvantage.

> Former General Majeed Malik strongly objected to such a plan. 'The proposal to provide Stinger missiles to the Mujahideen will be treated by India as an act of war', he argued. Moreover providing Stingers was also opposed to Pakistan's 'basic stand that Kashmiris inside occupied Kashmir were waging their own struggle for self-determination and Pakistan was only providing moral and diplomatic support'.[27]

This meant that the advantage would shift to India with an increase in intensity of the conflict in the region. After all, the "mujahideen" could not be seen handling conventional weapon systems held only by an army! The brunt of this double-faced diplomacy, which did not allow the employment of weapons

needed to counter the Indian onslaught, caused heavy casualties on the Pakistani side, with led the Northern Light Infantry (NLI) to suffer "2,700 casualties, which is higher than that suffered in 1965 and 1971 wars".[28]

In real terms, at the diplomatic level, Pakistan's international standing was pushed into a precarious position. It was seen as a de facto nuclear power, which had violated the sanctity of the LoC and was clearly the aggressor. This line of thought was frequently repeated, despite varying forms of diplomatic tightrope walk. This depended upon Pakistan's relationship with a country, or a group of nations. The G-8 countries opined in a statement that "[a]ny military action to change the status quo (along the LOC) was irresponsible".[29] Pakistan's most staunch ally, China, too made it clear that even as it was supportive of Pakistan's position on Kashmir, "Both Pakistan and China agreed on the need to de-escalate the dangerous situation that has developed at the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir."[30] There was an indication that Sharif did not receive the support he desired in China and "he came home desperate".[31] J. N. Dixit opines that China was not keen to internationalise the Kashmir issue, given its own worries on Tibet. Further, there was a convergence of interest between China and the US on the issue, with both wanting to return to status quo. "A significance of these sensitive diplomatic activities was that the US and Chinese governments were engaged in close consultations with each other as the war progressed in Kargil."[32] China's concerns were further heightened close to the termination of the conflict when Shamshad Ahmed alluded to the use of nuclear weapons if Pakistan's interests were threatened beyond an acceptable point.[33]

Sartaj Aziz's visit to China was en route to his meeting with his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh. Aziz's diplomatic brief in India, as given by Musharraf was, "not to agree to a ceasefire, nor make a promise for any change in the ground situation". He added, "We should continue to insist that we don't know who

these intruders are but meanwhile India should not raise tensions on the LOC".[34]

Musharraf's position, built on a shaky foundation, was further rendered inconsequential on the eve of Aziz's visit, which saw the release of taped communication between Musharraf, who was in China, and his Chief of Staff in Pakistan. It provided intimate understanding of the plot that had been hatched amongst a small coterie and the direct involvement of the army at the deployment locations across the LoC.[35] It even spelled out the position that Aziz was required to take during his meeting with Jaswant Singh in Delhi, that is, "no commitment in the first meeting on the military situation". Resultantly, Sartaj Aziz suggested a three-step formulation, which included:

> (a) immediate ceasefire, (b) a joint working group to review the LOC and its demarcation on the ground, and (c) a return visit by Indian minister of external affairs, if possible, within a week.[36]

In essence, this would have ensured that Pakistan's forces remained in occupation of the areas they had captured, even as diplomatic negotiations went on. This was despite the clarity that existed on both sides of the LoC, regarding its formal alignment.[37]

This Pakistani position shifted after the initial military setbacks and international opinion clearly perceiving it as the aggressor. According to accounts from Pakistani sources, which have not been officially acknowledged by any credible Indian interlocutor, there were back-channel attempts between both prime ministers through their special envoys, Niaz Niak and R. K. Mishra. This, according to Sartaj Aziz, aimed at the withdrawal of Pakistani forces in exchange for resolving the Kashmir dispute by October 2000.[38]

The culmination of Pakistan's diplomatic effort came in the form of a last-ditch attempt on the part of Nawaz Sharif to seek

a face-saving formulation. This should be seen in the context of events by the end of June 1999. By this time, China had clearly indicated their refusal to support the violation of the LoC. The US response was even more strident, with senior State Department functionaries and Anthony Zinni, the commander of the US Central Command, offering a meeting with President Clinton but only after the withdrawal of Pakistani forces.[39] A series of reverses on the Kargil battlefield, commencing with the loss of Tololing, led Nawaz Sharif to the conclusion that a diplomatic face-saving formula was required to salvage the situation and prevent greater embarrassment that the country was likely to contend with.

There is little doubt regarding Pakistan's intention to seek this diplomatic escape route. However, the manner of its implementation has been debated. William B. Milam, the US Ambassador to Pakistan during the conflict provides his version of the same on the basis of information that he was privy to and his assessment of prevailing circumstances. He suggests that Musharraf's meeting with the head of the US Central Command, Anthony Zinni, made his intentions obvious. "Musharraf's body language clearly indicated a desire to withdraw. He was anxious that Zinni see Sharif and helped set up an appointment with the PM that the Embassy had been having trouble getting confirmed."[40] According to Milam, Sharif agreed to pulling back, after initial reluctance, possibly as a result of a back-channel agreement to a withdrawal on the condition of resumption of the Lahore process. This has, however, been denied by the Indian side.

The diplomatic fiasco that played out during the period of the Kargil conflict was not only brought about as a result of the ill-conceived plan, but also poor management of diplomatic resources by Pakistan. Its diplomats in Washington were practically left rudderless with a lame-duck ambassador who was under posting and indicated little interest in events. A Pakistani diplomat in Washington remarked, "They (the government of

Pakistan) have not even asked for a summary from us since the crisis began. They have not discussed any strategy or given any line of action."[41] The disconnect of Pakistan's diplomatic corps in Washington with even the most fundamental activities in relation to the conflict could be gauged from what one of them was quoted as having said, "We got the news of the resolution [House Foreign Relations Committee resolution castigating Pakistan for the Kargil intrusion] from an AP report" (emphasis added).[42]

The Pakistani diplomatic initiative can thus be seen as a victim of their army's reckless and ill-planned misadventure. The actions left little manoeuvre space for Pakistan and this was clearly evident from the stand taken by China, the US and G8 countries, which feared escalation of the conflict between two nuclear armed countries. This is evident from the receding diplomatic space between the offer of Sartaj Aziz on June 12, at New Delhi, back-channel negotiations, which according to Pakistani sources were scheduled to culminate on June 28 and finally the Blair House meeting on July 4, 1999.

An overall assessment of Pakistan's diplomatic effort during the Kargil conflict reflects as big a failure of achieving its stated objectives as was the military misadventure itself. While to be fair to the diplomats, they were forced to go along with the monumental folly orchestrated by Musharraf and the narrative that was forced upon them, however, their incompetence further lay in remaining two steps behind the reality. At each stage, the diplomatic objective outlined was not only unachievable, it also kept compromising Pakistan's standing and leverage on critical foreign policy issues. The most important amongst these were their relations vis-à-vis India and the claim on Kashmir.

The Pakistani diplomatic, political and military failure had a profound impact on the country. The analysis that emerged amongst the country's intelligentsia at the end of the conflict, was scathing in its criticism of both the civilian and military leadership. Collectively, it laid to rest any semblance of success

that spin doctors in Islamabad or Rawalpindi attempted to extract from the ruins of their misadventures.

The successful internationalisation of the Kashmir issue was one of the most prominent arguments that was doled out both by Musharraf and Nawaz Sharif. Events succeeding the conflict indeed proved that Kashmir had been internationalised. However, the nature of internationalisation was "along India's preferred path". The conflict led the world community to accept any future settlement more on the basis of status quo, rather than any major shift from existing realities.[43] This completely defeated Pakistan's objective, since the one option that remained unacceptable to them was status quo.

So, in essence, the LoC was practically made inviolable, with every major country reinforcing its sanctity.[44] The statements emerging from Washington and the G8 countries reinforced this sentiment, thereby "turning the LoC into a de jure international border".[45] This yet again was completely contrary to Pakistan's stand on the issue, which was based on questioning its delineation and past instances of India's violation of the same. None of these arguments made any impact on world opinion.

Both India and Pakistan were suffering from the adverse impact of nuclear tests and the sanctions imposed thereof. As a result of the conflict, it was India which emerged as the "responsible" and "respected power" that could handle the responsibility of not only nuclear weapons, but also as an international voice of sanity. The contrast between a country which indulged in dangerous adventurism by crossing the LoC and the other, which laid down a self-imposed restraint of not crossing the LoC, despite the obvious military disadvantages, reflected the approach of Pakistan and India. This resulted in a significant diplomatic victory for India, with praise for India's "restraint" and "maturity", simultaneously washing away some of the previous differences that had affected India's image.[46]

The US had remained a firm benefactor of Pakistan in every war prior to Kargil. Events during the conflict, as well as the changing geopolitical realities, facilitated the shift that was possibly already in the making. It greatly enhanced India's trust in the US as a partner. This was borne out by events leading to the visit of President Clinton, which led to the eventual turnaround in relations that was reinforced by the Kargil parleys.

Pakistan's status as a jihadi factory was again highlighted as a result of Kargil. Its claims of being able to pull back the "mujahideen" from the heights, after the settlement of July 4, however false, clearly indicated to the international audience that the country would continue to employ terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Amina Jilani quoting international media on the issue writes, "Pakistan has throughout the conflict maintained that it had no control over the guerrillas, who are Muslim Kashmiris from the Pakistan-held half of Kashmir. But Mr Nawaz Sharif, by promising President Clinton a withdrawal a week ago and by now delivering it has given the lie to that."[47]

Instead of gaining any support from terrorist ranks by openly espousing their cause and undertaking the Kargil intrusion in support of Kashmir, Sharif actually estranged them with his decision to order the pull-out of troops. They were frustrated at having been let down by the unilateral decision, without achieving anything on the negotiating table. The "betrayal" at Kargil had a "profoundly demoralising effect on the liberation struggle" and especially amongst terrorist ranks.[48] There were demonstrations held by a number of terrorist groups and the opposition Jamaat-i-Islami in Lahore. The United Jihad Council rejected the agreement, terming it a "sell-out."[49]

The fate of terrorists and separatists across the LoC in India was no better. Their benefactor had proved to be ineffectual, weak and helpless in the face of India's diplomatic and military counteractions. And worse, nuclear weapons were of little help as events proved. Maleeha Lodhi quotes a senior separatist leader

accurately conveying this sentiment, "First we were excluded then betrayed".[50]

Pakistan's claims of having achieved deterrence against India had also been punctured. The employment of all conventional weapons that India could have brought to bear on Pakistan in the mountainous terrain, despite its nuclear weapons and threats during the conflict, provided adequate proof of the same. Ayaz Amir capturing the sentiment wrote:

> To begin with all the models of Shaheen and Ghauri missiles, and all the replicas of the Chagai hills, which adorn our various cities, should be out on board the best of our naval cruisers and, in a solemn midnight ceremony, dumped far out into the waters of the Arabian Sea. If this crisis has proved anything, it is that the possession of nuclear weapons does not confer immunity from the taking of stupid decisions.[51]

The Kargil conflict brought the schisms in Pakistan's fragile state structures into the open, given the blame game that ensued after the conflict ended. While Musharraf suggested that an operation of such a scale could not have been undertaken without the express approval and participation of the government, Nawaz Sharif indicated that it was the work of a small coterie within the army. This accentuated existing civil-military fissures, leading to a military coup, thereby completing the circle of political reality in Pakistan.

US as a Diplomatic Facilitator

The Kargil conflict was perceived by the US in the backdrop of India and Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998. Bruce Riedel writes, "The nuclear scenario was very much on our minds … In the new post-May era we confronted the reality of two nuclear tested states whose missiles could be fired with flight times of three to five minutes from launch to impact." Riedel adds, "Given these

consequences for escalation, the United States was quick to make known our view that Pakistan should withdraw its forces back behind the Line of Control immediately."[52] The same is reinforced by the former US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Karl F. Inderfurth. However, Ambassador Chandra with his experience of affairs in the US felt differently. He said that "the US makes a pretense. They know that neither India nor Pakistan is going to use nuclear weapons. Although in public, it gives them a handle to show its special interest. And this is fuelled by certain officials in the US. It was therefore a 'total exaggeration' on the US part."[53]

Over a period of approximately one year, after the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan, there were indicators of a degree of common understanding between the US officials and their Indian counterparts. While the Jaswant Singh–Talbott talks helped improve this appreciably, necessary spadework was ongoing in Washington as well. Despite this, even as relations with the US were at best on an "even keel", there was a degree of anger against both India and Pakistan. The events in Kargil necessitated the process of ratcheting up the ongoing process, despite the realisation that it would not be achieved overnight.

Initiatives at Washington

Chandra spearheaded the efforts in Washington. He felt that the test of diplomacy was not to "swim downstream, anybody can do that". The objective was to seek support from "the strong guys, people like McCain, Senator Shelby". His team in the US also "focused on the hard nuts" to ensure that the opposition to India could be minimised. This required the ability to "swim upstream" while negotiating opposition within the US. The end result in the US from the Indian perspective was clear. And it was to "get the US Government on line and see how the LoC had been violated by Pakistan. We had to move US into a position of public condemnation of Pakistan. That was the obvious objective."[54]

The US effort to establish status quo at Kargil commenced almost immediately after the gravity of the situation unfolded. Besides the nuclear challenge that was perceived in Washington, it also became clear to the Clinton administration that India was resolute in recapturing the territory on its side of the LoC, irrespective of the costs involved.[55] This message received a fillip after India commenced the use of airpower on May 26, 1999. Finally, Assistant Secretary of State Rick Inderfurth articulated this view publicly, making the US position clear on the issue.[56]

A key element that facilitated the retention of US support throughout the Kargil Conflict and helped maintain pressure on Pakistan to withdraw from across the LoC, was the Indian decision to not cross the LoC during the conduct of operations. According to Naresh Chandra, who provided details of behind the scene incidents at Washington in an interview, the US also reinforced India's decision to not cross the LoC, the same during the interaction in Washington.[57] However, prior to the acceptance of India's interpretation of direct Pakistani involvement, the US State Department remained non-committal on the issue of intrusion into Indian territory. Not surprisingly, Pakistan had given it a spin of their own. "Their (Pakistan) thing was that infiltration across the LoC was taking place all the time. So, what's new? These are people from PoK and Kashmiri militants inside the Indian territory." The State Department on its part said, "We don't know really what is happening. At those heights even the Indian Army cannot survive". The Indian contention in Washington was that "anybody who has not had the backing and logistics support of a professional army cannot survive at these heights". Chandra argued that the attempt "to pass on this canard that these are freedom fighters is silly. Please consult your General. Would you buy it?" In order to reinforce this argument, Ambassador Naresh Chandra confirmed how he employed his local Washington social contacts to convey the right perspective within the government. "It is inconceivable that private groups can stay at those heights

and then fight." It took some time to convey the message and dispel the fog of war to expose the reality of Pakistan's game plan at Kargil. Once it was achieved, it was followed by the logical conclusion that "it is the regular army of Pakistan".[58]

Naresh Chandra's interview to the author further reveals interesting insights into Indian manoeuvring aimed at building pressure upon Pakistan. Yet another attempt at reinforcing the reality was initiated through the Chairman of the intelligence Committees. On the prodding of Chandra, presentations were made to them by the CIA, with specific details of the intrusion. After a couple of interactions with the State Department, it became clear to them that the Indians knew that the US was by now aware of the reality of the intrusion. This raised the question of how and why it was important for the US to formally acknowledge the reality of the incident. Chandra felt that as a superpower this awareness related to the status and perceptional responsibility of the US. Therefore, once they acknowledged the reality as it existed in Kargil, it was incumbent on them to take suitable action, unlike other countries which could acknowledge it and yet not do anything about it. "If the US says it is convinced, it has to do something. So there is a difference between the US and other countries. Because with them acceptance carries responsibility." The Ambassador added, "So my job was to corner them and force them to accept". This acceptance led to the summoning of Riaz Khokhar, the Pakistani Ambassador to the US and the feedback at the end of it from the US perspective was: "You (Ambassador Naresh Chandra) gave us a tough time and we gave him a tough time". Thereafter the objective was to escalate the issue, as the level of Khokhar yielded limited gains. This led to an escalation to Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State. Karl Inderfurth was picked as the key intermediary for the negotiation, as he was the closest to Albright. However, Khokhar was not able to get Albright to speak to Nawaz Sharif. This further led to a push from the Indian diplomatic side to

employ the services of the US Ambassador, William B. Milam in Islamabad instead. This step, however routine that it may seem under normal diplomatic conditions, proved to be critical under the circumstances.

Albright spoke to Nawaz Sharif and confirmed having conveyed the message in the strongest of terms. She, however, repeated the request to refrain from crossing the LoC during the conduct of operations. The same opinion was also shared in New Delhi as the objective was to facilitate conditions that could lead to a resolution of the crisis. However, India was equally prepared to expand the conflict if the need arose and restraint did not yield the requisite results. More specifically, it could have happened if India found the "US response toothless", Chandra recalls. However, till both India and the US cooperated, they kept each other's concerns on board. Further there were no promises given from the Indian side. Instead, the indication was that if the cooperation was fruitful, chances are that the LoC would not be crossed. When even this did not yield the requisite results, Chandra raised the level to the NSA, Sandy Berger, who having been briefed, arranged a presentation to President Clinton in the third week of June.

Pressure was further applied by India through the House Foreign Relations Committee. The Committee introduced a resolution which was eventually adopted as HR 227. It called upon the US government to oppose Pakistan's policy of support for the armed intrusion and further, called for the immediate withdrawal of the intruding forces "supported by Pakistan" from across the LoC. The resolution called for "future respect for the Line of Control", thereby not only seeking the withdrawal but also establishing its inviolability.[59] Interesting inputs from the period also suggest that Narendra Modi, as party General Secretary, while was on a visit to the US found the resolution "toothless" and a series of meetings with Congressmen led to an amendment that recommended

the cutting of US support for funds released from international and US financial institutions.[60] The passing of the amendment was also corroborated by Congressman Ackerman who was the initiator of the same.[61]

In the same time frame, a letter was written by Prime Minister Vajpayee to President Clinton. It was sent by hand through Brajesh Mishra, India's National Security Advisor. "There was one paragraph in that which was only one sentence. 'We are determined to get this one way or another' ... The point that was being made was that if you people don't act and leave it only to us, we will do what is necessary ... But we never ruled out the possibility of crossing the line of control or the international border."[62] This is confirmed by General Malik, who as a reaction to the Prime Minister's statement in early June that the LoC will not be crossed, suggested that such categorical statements were best avoided, especially since it could become an operational necessity if the evictions were not achieved in a suitable time frame.[63]

Deciphering US Actions

The US desire to take, what they described as a fair and pragmatic approach to the situation, came as a surprise to both India and Pakistan, since it ran contrary to the expectations of the two countries. For once, Pakistan was not supported despite being in the wrong as had happened during earlier India-Pak wars, and India was supported since it was in the right.[64] The trust that Clinton's actions reposed amongst the Indian leadership became the basis for a turnaround for the relationship after the nuclear tests. Its culmination was witnessed during the presidential visit to India in 2000, as also the follow-up visit by Vajpayee to the US, the same year. The diplomatic fine line drawn during the Kargil conflict therefore not only facilitated a resolution to the Kargil crisis, but also laid the foundation for a bipartisan, all weather India-US strategic partnership into the next century.

However, given the history of the relationship, the US actions deserve deeper analysis, in terms of the reasons that led to the decision that they eventually took, especially in light of their position during previous Indo-Pak wars.

It would be naive to believe that the US rooted for India during the Kargil conflict and were resolute in their rejection of Pakistan's arguments to its international audience just because of the righteousness of India's stand. The history of the relationship of the three countries did little to suggest this. Therefore, one must assume that the US position was based on what they perceived to be their national interest under the prevalent circumstances. It seems evident from the writings of senior US government functionaries that the nuclear dimension was a major factor in the facilitation efforts. Bruce Riedel writes, "In the post-May era we confronted the reality of two nuclear tested states whose missiles could be fired with flight times of three to five minutes from launch to impact … Given these consequences for escalation, the US was quick to make known our view that Pakistan should withdraw its forces behind the Line of Control immediately."[65] US concerns vis-à-vis the nuclear threat were echoed by other scholars as well.[66]

It is also possible that the US was looking for an opportunity to deepen its engagement with India, as became evident across party lines, both during the Clinton and Bush administrations. While the shift was already underway, the irresponsibility displayed by Pakistan only worked towards worsening its standing, thereby highlighting India's responsible approach in contrast. This decision was guided by the changing strategic landscape in South Asia and beyond with the end of the Cold War. It also coincided with India's emergence as a fast-developing economic power, which was likely to become an important player in the geopolitical balance in Asia. The imminent rise of China and US concerns about their ascendance only reinforced this realisation. The shift was underscored by Condoleezza Rice in an article in

Foreign Affairs in 2000, where she noted that "There is a strong tendency conceptually to connect India with Pakistan and to think only of Kashmir or the nuclear competition between the two states. But India is an element in China's calculation, and it should be in America's, too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one."[67]

China as the Surprise Package

Just as Pakistan felt let down by the US which was clearly in favour of India's stand on the Kargil issue, China's role, despite being far more nuanced and palatable in its formulation, also gave little to cheer in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.[68] The environment prevailing in Beijing was in some ways similar to Washington, D.C. The chill that had developed in the aftermath of the nuclear tests continued to persist and gave few formal openings for pursuing diplomacy as would have been the case under normal circumstances. However, there were two specific events, along with their aftermath, which had a considerable impact on events during the Kargil conflict.

The first was the visit of China's President Jiang Zemin to India in 1996. During the visit, the Chinese Ambassador to India stressed on their opposition to the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute, which did not go down very well in Islamabad.[69] This was followed by a visit to Pakistan, where Zemin further reinforced the point in language that seemed to reflect the Indian stance better than Pakistan's. He said in the Pakistani Senate: "If certain issues cannot be resolved for the time being, they may be shelved temporarily so that they will not affect the normal state-to-state relations." He went on to add, making the Chinese stand more explicit, "China's consistent policy is that the issue should be solved through peaceful consultations. It should be settled through these two countries (that is, India and Pakistan). Our position remains unchanged and the issue (that is, of Kashmir) should be settled through peaceful means. It is

a problem left over from history. Pakistan and India have some differences. Kashmir is a very complicated and sensitive issue."[70] These remarks provided the policy framework for building upon the relationship even during the Kargil conflict. This was clearly reinforced by the Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji to Nawaz Sharif during his visit to China.[71]

The second defining element that impacted China's stand could well have been the statement by the then Defence Minister George Fernandes, describing China as the foremost potential threat to India. This was reinforced by the letter written by Prime Minister Vajpayee to President Clinton outlining the reasons for India's nuclear tests. According to Ambassador Vijay Nambiar, this description deeply embarrassed and angered China. However, purely from the perspective of the Kargil conflict, it may have helped India instead of Pakistan. China was keen to dispel the notion of it being the reason for India going nuclear and being seen as a major threat. Any attempt at overtly supporting Pakistan, especially militarily, would have only reinforced this narrative. "The unwillingness of the Chinese to come out strongly and publicly on the side of Pakistan as it had done in previous conflicts, was to an extent influenced by their desire not to make this look as a self-fulfilling kind of evidence or a validation of what the Indian side had said that China was indeed behaving like an enemy."[72]

It also requires emphasis that Chinese official statements were made under limited public pressure in relation to the developments in Kargil, despite Pakistan enjoying a special relationship. This was primarily because the focus of public attention centred upon the mistaken bombing of its embassy in Belgrade, during the Kosovo crisis. This indirectly helped the Indian side, as decision making in Beijing could remain more objective and rooted in Pakistan's gratuitous behaviour, which was obviously recognised, given the nature of official statements emanating from Beijing.

In the backdrop of the nuclear tests and relatively limited interaction that was taking place as a result, the Indian embassy in Beijing attempted to reach out to the hierarchy through influential individuals and think tanks in China, who were clearly well linked within the power circles. This, just like in the case of the US, ensured that the Indian concerns and position on the issue reached the right quarters. Among these influential individuals was Huang Hua, the former Chinese Foreign Minister and representative to the United Nations. There was also interaction with a former Ambassador of China to India, Cheng Ruisheng, and a civil intelligence operative. This served two objectives. First, it gave accurate factual data on events to the Chinese government. Second, it also reinforced the belief that the Chinese would not do anything to reinforce the view that they were inimical to India's interests.

The role of the President of India during the Kargil conflict, K. R. Narayanan, is often neglected. Having served as an ambassador to China earlier, he had continued to maintain good relations with the country. During the conflict, he had meetings with the Chinese Ambassador to India, Zhou Gang, and during one such meeting, he did provide a rationale for India's nuclear tests, which the Chinese interpreted as regret for the statement by Fernandes, even though it was not meant or even implied as such.[73] He did indicate that India did not consider China as an enemy. The gratitude that China owed to him reflected in an invitation to visit China, which he did in 2000, thereby in some ways reflecting the normalisation of relations.

One of the significant visits undertaken by Jaswant Singh during the Kargil conflict was to China. However, contrary to conventional wisdom, this was not directly related to the Kargil conflict in terms of the context in which it was handled by the Foreign Minister. He undertook the visit within the scope of India's relations with China, especially in a bid to bring them on an even keel after the nuclear tests. However, the situation

in South Asia did figure as part of the talks. Given the ability of Jaswant Singh to nuance his message, he did emphasise on the need for India to improve relations with China. According to him, perceptible success was achieved in this regard and "Sino-Indian relations are back on the rails of normalcy".[74] Jaswant Singh also clarified to Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan that unlike his assertion of Kargil being a part of the larger problem of J&K, that was not the case. The Foreign Minister also apprised his Chinese counterpart of the caution that existed in New Delhi in relation to the overtures from Pakistan, given the experience of Lahore and the disconnect between power centres in decision making.[75]

The success of India's diplomacy in China can be gauged from Premier Zhu Rongji's meeting with Nawaz Sharif. He reinforced the need for a bilateral settlement of the crisis and asked Pakistan to end the ongoing crisis. He also underlined the diplomatic isolation of Pakistan on the issue.[76] This left little doubt in Pakistan's mind regarding China's reluctance to intercede in the Kargil conflict in any way.

India's Diplomatic Strategy

According to the former Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, the directive received from the Prime Minister in relation to the Kargil conflict included three distinct elements. First, "turning back the aggressor," second, "defeating all his designs" and third, "reversing the aggression but with the maximum of restraint."[77] These were not only conveyed internally by Vajpayee, but also to Sharif. Soon after it became evident in May 1999 that the Pakistani Army regulars were involved in the intrusion, Vajpayee spoke to Sharif. According to Jaswant Singh, Vajpayee said, "We are aware that this intrusion in Kargil involved the use of regular troops from the Pakistan Army".[78] He further conveyed India's determination to take all necessary steps.

The initial period of the conflict, unsurprisingly, given both limited availability of inputs from the scene of action and a deliberate attempt by Pakistan to obfuscate reality, was marked by statements that did not convey the picture in its entirety. The MEA, through its concerted endeavours at the very inception of the conflict, attempted to place the facts in the right perspective. This included briefings to a number of country representatives in the UN, even as the Security Council members were preparing to meet informally. The staff in the US was particularly active, as some initial statements did not reflect India's position accurately. A detailed formal statement was also issued by the MEA to place the facts on record.[79]

The MEA's role was aimed at "protecting the international flank of the MoD". This was achieved by clearly establishing Pakistan's complicity in the Kargil intrusions. This further led to three objectives that the MEA had outlined as the basis for bringing to an end the crisis that had been perpetuated by Pakistan. These were:[80]

- Pakistan's armed intrusion in Kargil will be evicted and its aggression vacated. All Pakistan regular troops and extremist elements under its command and control will have to withdraw. For this purpose, our armed forces will take all necessary action on our side of the Line of Control.
- Once this intrusion has been cleared, Pakistan would need to reaffirm the inviolability and sanctity of the Line of Control.
- Dialogue, as part of the Lahore process, which after all, was initiated by India could only then be resumed.

India's outreach to the international audience was based on two pillars. First, it centred on the decision to not cross the LoC, whereby the country's restraint became evident. Second, it was conveyed to the world capitals that India did not have any aggressive or expansionist objectives that were rooted as an extension of the military response. The entire operation as

a result was projected as a defensive and limited attempt at achieving status quo. However, the determination to achieve it was made clear. This was a critical element of India's response, as the nuclear dimension had raised concerns amongst major powers, some of whom saw their worst fears slowly turning into reality.

This outreach was best synergised through a joint effort of the MEA and the MoD. Both ministries worked in tandem to complement the national effort. The success of this endeavour reflected in the ability of the state to function cohesively under the stress of conflict in the pursuit of a common objective. Once the objectives had clearly been defined, these were repeatedly reinforced through an extensive media outreach. This was critical for the overall endeavour of the state. The government's strategy to employ the media also helped build national consciousness and unity, a factor that became the basis for a strong military response. As a result, it became evident that the MEA's outreach was not only an element of its primary role of shaping diplomatic relations externally, it also supplemented the endeavour of the armed forces to reach out to every corner of the country.

Crossing the LoC?

The decision not to cross the LoC became the cornerstone of India's policy in Kargil. As events have proved during the Kargil conflict, this was a key element of India's overall strategy, despite knowing very well that it was likely to raise the cost of reoccupying the heights for the armed forces. This was a well-considered decision taken by the government, as has been reinforced by some of its senior functionaries. L. K. Advani, the Home Minister in the government in 1999, explains:

> It was designed to win international support for the Indian position and to show Pakistan as the aggressor that violated the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. It helped allay the fears of

the international community, especially its influential constituents in the West that the conflict could spiral out of control and result in nuclear conflagration. Although the irresponsible language of "nuclear backmail" was indeed heard during the conflict, it was entirely from the Pakistani side. It just contributed to the increasing global isolation of the ruling establishment in Islamabad.[81]

Brajesh Mishra explains the basis for the decision. He says, "We had no information and we don't believe that Pakistan was ready to do it (use nuclear weapons)." The reason that Mishra ascribes to it was the Indian decision to refrain from crossing the LoC during the conduct of operations. He further adds, "Even for the use of the air force, [they were mandated] not to go beyond the line of control. In fact, the Air Chief said to me at that time, 'How can I do this, I have to fly South to North and I will cross the line of control.' So, I told him, no you fly from East to West." The fundamental logic for the decision was that "as long as we kept within our side of the line of control and not cross the line of control, there would be no cause for any nuclear weapon. And Pakistan knows we can destroy them if they do that … It was all because we decided not to cross the line of control. The day we crossed the line of control, the security council will meet and say status quo."[82]

G. Parthasarathy, India's ambassador to Pakistan, reinforces this assessment. He says that the Prime Minister in India was very clear that wars are fought for a political purpose. And therefore, even as the Indian territory occupied by Pakistan was to be vacated, it would be done without crossing the LoC by both the army and the air force.[83]

A similar sentiment was expressed by Vijay Nambiar. He felt that the decision to not cross the LoC by India, took away the only reason that China could have exploited to adopt an openly pro-Pakistan policy, which could have led them to undertake overt means to support their all-weather ally.[84]

Brajesh Mishra indicates that the additional cost in terms of loss of soldiers was a factor that had been taken into account while taking the decision to restrict the conflict to the Indian side of the LoC. "Even at the cost of too many lives of our soldiers, we would try to remove the Pakistani infiltrators by fighting on this side of the line of control."[85] However, as the Prime Minister's letter to Bill Clinton during the conflict and the Indian Army Chief indicated, this did not imply that the restriction was in perpetuity. It could be re-evaluated if the circumstances dictated the need to cross the LoC.

Ambiguity of LoC?

One of the core arguments employed by Pakistan to fight its diplomatic case was the fact that the LoC was not clearly demarcated in the area. In a briefing given to Nawaz Sharif on May 17, 1999, which was attended by Gen Musharraf, Lt Gen Aziz Khan (CGS), Lt Gen Mahmud Ahmad (Commander 10 Corps), Lt Gen Ziauddin (DG ISI), Gen Iftikhar Ali Khan (Secretary Defence), Gen Tauqur Zia (DGMO), and Maj Gen Javed Hasan (Commandant FCNA), Sartaj Aziz quotes, "Finally, Pakistan has succeeded in capturing some areas along the 'unmarked LOC,' in retaliation of the increasing incursions India has undertaken on this sector over the years."[86] The Pakistan Army therefore not only tried to sell the logic of an undefined LoC to the larger international audience but also to their political leadership and population at large. This falsehood was contested successfully by India and exposed with the release of maps signed by both sides after the termination of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Parthasarathy says, "There were some 70 odd maps of the line of control, signed just after the 1971 conflict, and we circulated the exact definition of those lines saying Pakistan was lying. So in the world community we established that the line of control had been delineated."[87]

Israel has emerged as one of the most prominent defence partners for India in the recent past. However, this relationship was still being shaped in its early years after India and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992. The Kargil conflict came as a blessing in disguise for the relationship, as Israel proved the strength of its commitment to India's security, both through its diplomatic stance and the supply of defence hardware during the course of the conflict and at a much larger scale thereafter. This helped India plug some of the most glaring deficiencies in its defence preparedness.

The Kargil conflict saw unequivocal diplomatic support from Israel when it indicated that the "LoC should not be violated".[88] Besides the diplomatic support, Israel was amongst the only countries that actually supplied India military hardware during the conflict. Israel, "dug deep into its military equipment reserves to supply ordnance and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in order to give the ill-prepared and ill-equipped Indian Army the edge over Pakistan in the 11-week-long war."[89] This further included the supply of mortar bombs and laser guided missiles for the aircraft.[90] Though Israel had provided military support to India during the previous wars against Pakistan as well, Kargil became a turning point for Indo-Israeli relations, given the additional impact of sanctions after the nuclear tests of 1998.[91]

The impact of critical military hardware received from Israel was both timely and mission critical. A rare instance of technological assistance that came into play during the conflict is recounted by Air Chief Marshal NAK Browne, former Indian Chief of the Air Staff.[92] According to him, India had negotiated the purchase of a Litening Pod in 1997 for the Mirage and Jaguar aircraft to designate laser guided bombs both during day and night. Despite the sanctions as a result of the 1998 nuclear tests by India, the Israelis facilitated both software and hardware modifications on the equipment. This led to its employment at targets between 15,000 and 17,000 feet and undertaken

from a flying height of 30,000 feet, given the threat from man-portable air defence systems employed by Pakistan in Kargil. The effectiveness of Indian bombing missions is acknowledged by a former Pakistani Air Force pilot who said, "By June 16, [the] IAF was able to open up the laser guided bombing campaign with the help of Jaguars and Mirage 2000 … The Mirage 2000 scored at least five successful laser-guided bombs on forward dumping sites and posts."[93] Incidentally the IAF deployed the system even prior to the Israeli Air Force, which was still in the process of operationalising it.

Involvement of Pakistan and India's Determination?

A critical element of India's diplomatic endeavours was to convince the international community that Kargil was not a case of adventurism by a rag-tag terrorist group. Instead, it was a deliberate and well-thought-out misadventure by Pakistan's Army.

The role of Chandra and his team in the US has already been highlighted. Their efforts ensured that inputs from India and those available within the intelligence community in the US reached the right quarters and forced the prevalence of rationality in decision making.

The conviction with which India established Pakistan Army's presence across the LoC, was matched equally with persistent determination to ensure their eviction. Pakistan, quite clearly in an attempt to seek a position of advantage on ground, articulated its case for a ceasefire. However, this was unequivocally rejected, since it would have left India in a weak bargaining position, given Pakistan's territorial advantage. Indicating India's resolve, despite international calls for ceasefire, on June 7, 1999, Vajpayee said:

> I want to make it plain: if the stratagem now is that the intrusion should be used to alter the Line of Control through talks, the proposed talks will end even before they have begun.[94]

The clarity of thought of the Prime Minister was further reinforced by Jaswant Singh when he added, "The aggression has to be undone, militarily or diplomatically, whichever is done first".[95]

It was this determination and the possibility of going beyond the initial response that led to serious diplomatic pressure being applied by the world community and especially the US, to seek Pakistan's withdrawal without any quid pro quo. The thoughtful Indian decision to confine operations to Kargil and on India's side of the LoC, was not a watertight guarantee, as was indicated in the letter from Vajpayee to Clinton. Though India's determination to retake it "one way or another" certainly reflected India's position.

During a call on June 14, Clinton attempted to convince Vajpayee to hold talks. This was rejected by India, on the premise that talks could only be held after the vacation of Indian territory by Pakistan. Later during the month, the trip undertaken by General Zinni to Pakistan, was a result of a clear understanding within the US that Pakistan was indeed the clear aggressor and India was serious about applying all means necessary to ensure the vacation.[96] India stuck to its core belief and strategy right till the end of the conflict. As a result, the spadework done prior to the meeting with Sharif at Blair House, made the Indian intent clear. "The President also consulted with the Indian Prime Minister on the phone. The Indians were adamant—withdrawal to the LoC was essential, Vajpayee would not negotiate under the threat of aggression." Given this stance by India, "The President sought to reassure Vajpayee that we would not countenance Pakistani aggression, not reward them for violating the LoC and that we stood by our commitment to the Lahore process …"[97]

Internationalisation of Kashmir?

There is often a debate on the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue as a result of Kargil. This, according to Musharraf, was

one of the objectives of Pakistan's strategy. It raises questions regarding the validity of this claim and more importantly, the diplomatic line that India chose to tread to ensure that Pakistan did not achieve its desired objective.

The diplomatic outreach undertaken by India during the Kargil conflict, especially in relation to the role played by embassies in major foreign countries has been outlined earlier. Interviews with ambassadors of these countries suggests that there was no formally outlined strategy that was conveyed to them.[98] Conversely, the respective ambassadors were successfully able to interpret their role within the overall government policy. This was especially a challenge in the light of nuclear tests conducted by India. It made the task of convincing countries about India's stance that much more difficult. The Kashmir issue had been brought to the forefront of India-Pakistan relations after the 1998 nuclear tests, with the onus of talks more on India. However, as events during the conflict and its immediate aftermath suggest, the issue got overtaken by Pakistan's irresponsible military misadventure. The diplomatic advantage that Pakistan had gained after the nuclear tests was squandered on the heights of Kargil. This not only had an immediate impact in the short-term on the specific issue of Kashmir, but also facilitated in cementing the US position on it. This revolved around the bilateral nature of the engagement between India and Pakistan for its resolution, inviolability of the LoC and rejection of terrorism as a tool for forcing a resolution to the dispute.

There is little doubt that Kargil emerged as a triumph for not only the soldiers who fought the intruders inch by inch, on a battlefield most would shudder to imagine, but also for the diplomatic community in Delhi and across world capitals. The collective wisdom of the political elite and the diplomats ensured that India regained territory that had been occupied by Pakistan. More importantly, they did so by turning around the adverse diplomatic circumstances prevailing after India's nuclear tests

and the resultant sanctions that were still in place. As a result, the challenge for diplomats was to facilitate the regaining of territory on the battlefield and simultaneously build pressure on Pakistan by its unequivocal indictment as the aggressor. This was in contrast with some of the earlier wars, where the settlements were eventually reduced to hyphenating not only the relationship but also the wars, much to India's discomfiture.

Notes

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7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Sartaj Aziz, *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), quoting Raja Zafarul Haq, p. 265.
9. Ibid., p. 264.
10. Timothy D. Hoyt, "Kargil: The Nuclear Dimension" in Peter R. Lavoy (ed.), *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 144.
11. "Lahore Declaration February, 1999," *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*, http://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18997/Lahore+Declaration+February+1999, accessed on July 24, 2017.
12. Jaswant Singh, note 1, p. 199.
13. There are different perspectives available from Pakistani authors regarding the time at which the incursion commenced. Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events That Shook Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), p. 87 suggests that it commenced in October 1998 and Col Ashfaq Hussain, *Witness to Blunder: Kargil Story Unfolds* (New Delhi: Bookwise (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2013), p. 35 places the month as December 1998. In either case, it was well before the Lahore summit which took place in February 1999.

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16. "Annan incurs BJP's wrath over Kashmir," Rediff.com, September 8, 1998, http://www.rediff.com/news/1998/sep/08annan.htm, accessed on June 29, 2018.

17. Karl Inderfurth, "Crisis in South Asia: India's Nuclear Tests; Pakistan's Nuclear Tests: What Next?" *Hearing before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs*, May 13, June 3 & July 13, 1998, https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/senprol.htm, accessed on June 29, 2018.

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19. Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events That Shook Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), p. 58.

20. Sartaj Aziz, note 8, p. 262.

21. J. N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War & Peace* (New Delhi: Books Today, 2002), p. 60.

22. Nasim Zehra, note 19, p. 169.

23. Pakistan accused India of attacking a forward post in the Shyok sector of Siachen, which was used as the basis for the "spill-over" that resulted in the Kargil situation. See Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events That Shook Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), p. 151.

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26. Sartaj Aziz, *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 266 and Zafar Iqbal Cheema, "The Strategic Context of the Kargil Conflict," in Peter R. Lavoy (ed.), *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 49-55.

27. Nasim Zehra, note 19, p. 135.

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29. Sartaj Aziz, quoting the G8 statement in, *Between Dreams and Realities:*

Some Milestones in Pakistan's History (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 260.

30. Sartaj Aziz, note 8, p. 268.

31. Strobe Talbott, quoting the US Embassy in Pakistan, in *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb* (New Delhi: Viking, 2004), p. 159.

32. J. N. Dixit, note 21, p. 61.

33. Ibid.

34. Sartaj Aziz, note 8, pp. 266-67.

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44. Afzal Mahmood, *Dawn*, July 18, 1999, from *Strategic Digest*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, September 1999, p. 1463.

45. Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, note 43, p. 1451.

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84. Interview with Vijay Nambiar, note 72.

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97. Bruce Riedel, "The 1999 Blair House Summit," in Peter R. Lavoy (ed.), *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil War* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 136.

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2

The Higher Direction of War

This chapter analyses the higher direction of war during the Kargil conflict, both from the Indian and the Pakistani perspective. In doing so, an attempt is made to better understand the existing organisational structures in both countries, the effectiveness of these structures and more specifically their contribution to the conflict in 1999. This will be assessed based on their efficiency during the preparatory period, which includes joint training, planning and decision making. Further, the success of this preparation will be analysed in relation to the actual conduct of war as an integral part of the national war waging capacity.

The higher direction of war during the Kargil Conflict, in terms of the organisational structures in place, was not very different from previous wars. In India's case, the unqualified victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war did not demand major changes in the existing structures. On the other hand, Pakistan did witness some changes in 1977, given its embarrassing debacle. However, a change in structure is not necessarily a guarantee for a change in behaviour and approach to warfighting. The conflict in Kargil did highlight this anomaly, though in varying degrees in the case of India and Pakistan.

This chapter further examines the organisational culture that characterises the higher decision-making process in Pakistan and India. It is premised on the fact that structures merely provide the bare-bone framework. However, for structures to remain effective, the procedures that define and guide their functionality

must be robust and ironclad. It is this element that ensures that individual whims do not dictate decision making in times of crisis. At times when structures and procedures are imperfect, the organisational culture of the decision-making establishment serves to either contribute or constrain this process. The cases of Pakistan and India provide interesting insights in this regard, as the following narrative of each country suggests.

Structures for Higher Direction of War

Pakistan

The structures for the higher direction of war have yielded poor results in the case of Pakistan, across all wars fought against India. While the details of the outcome of the Kargil conflict for Pakistan will be analysed in due course, a brief assessment of the 1971 war is instructive in terms of the weaknesses displayed and how they continued to imperil its functioning in 1999 as well. The Pakistan Army commissioned a group of eight officers, including one from the air force, to review the war effort, on December 29, 1971, just a few days after its termination. This was restricted to the western theatre alone. The candid assessment indicated a fatal delay in commencing the war on the Western Front. "Had a more broadband policy formulation machinery existed, a timely and correct decision may have been taken which may have helped either to avert total disaster in East Pakistan or may have put us in a better bargaining position."[1] This was caused by centralised and personality oriented decision making, relying on a small coterie, and rendering existing institutions redundant.[2]

The limitation noted with regard to Pakistan's structures for higher direction of war was equally flawed during the 1965 war with India. The reliance on a coterie to take major decisions and bypass existing structures was as evident in 1965, as it was in 1971 and the Kargil conflict.[3] This included a level of secrecy, which allowed information and plans to be shared only amongst

a very small group of officers. It went to the extent that the Air Chiefs during both wars were completely unaware of the war plans and were brought into the picture only after the die had been cast. The failure to take into account India's reaction to the war was also similar. In 1965, Pakistani Army planners had been warned of India's reaction across the international border. However, this warning did not deter them from going ahead. A similar repercussion was notified in 1999, which was brushed aside by Musharraf repeatedly. The similarity was not restricted to higher direction of war alone. It stretched to Musharraf's use of the war to discredit Sharif's so-called sell-out, just as Bhutto had done after the Tashkent negotiations to Ayub Khan to launch his political career.[4]

In a bid to reform the existing structures and decision-making process, the reorganisation of Pakistan's higher defence organisation was presented as part of a white paper in 1976. It gave complete authority on defence and security matters to the Prime Minister. He would be assisted by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) and the implementation of its decision was left to the Defence Council, headed by the Defence Minister. The specific responsibilities of the Prime Minister included: allocation of resources for defence; establishment and reorganisation of institutions; raising and development of armed forces; and coordinating defence policy with domestic and external policies.[5]

The members of the DCC included the Prime Minister as Chairperson, as well as the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance. It also included the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), and the three service chiefs. This committee had responsibility to "evaluate the total threat to national security, evolve national security/defence policy, allocate resources, define the role and tasks of the Armed Forces in accordance with the national policy/strategy and coordinate appropriate actions through various ministries which have a bearing on national defence."[6]

The Defence Council was tasked to "translate the defence policy formulated by the DCC into military policy. Its role is to examine, review and recommend for approval, to the DCC, the role, size and structure of the three services. It also formulates policies for indigenous production, research and development and induction or procurement of defence materials and equipment. Defence Minister chairs it and the membership has a good mixture of civilian and military exports."[7]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) consisting of the CJCSC and the three service chiefs is responsible for providing professional military advice. However, the CJCSC does not have veto powers for final decision making and in case of difference of opinion, matters are referred to the defence minister.[8]

This organisational set-up, which emerges from the legacy of the 1976 white papers in a bid to reform the national security and defence establishment in Pakistan, remained constrained by several factors. These were relevant as much in 1971, as they were in 1999 and the challenges continue thereafter as well.

Pakistan's security establishment as an organisation cannot be delinked from the reality of power equations. This suggests that the de facto power centre in Pakistan in relation to defence and foreign affairs, especially with countries such as India and Afghanistan, is the army. The *de jure* constitutional mandate that rests with the prime minister and his or her council of ministers is often irrelevant to this reality. This realisation is not only prevalent within Pakistan, but has also been learned by countries such as the US and China, who soon mastered the art of addressing the real power centres within Pakistan to ensure material impact of bilateral policy. This implies that the 1976 mandate, outlined earlier, was merely a paper exerciser paid lip service by the senior leadership of the army.

This reality was further constrained by organisational limitations that, instead of compensating for the political realities of Pakistan, only ended up supplementing them. Gen. Ehsan ul

Haq comments that the DCC by not being answerable to the Parliament remained unaccountable. Further, given the glaring absence of a dedicated staff, it is not able to pursue its decisions. It also lacked inputs in the form of expert advice from think tanks and met only when a crisis had already arisen, making its actions reactive. Similarly, the Defence Council has been ineffective because: the Prime Minister who is often the defence minister, did not have the time to convene it; service chiefs had direct access to the Prime Minister; and desired expertise was not available with the members.[9]

The third component of the JCSC was also rendered ineffective due to the roles assigned to each of its constituents. The CJCSC was in no position to enforce his decisions and at best functioned as a coordinating agent. The access of service chiefs to the prime minister, who often chose to bypass him, further rendered his influence ineffective. Haq, a former CJCSC himself, laments that despite the mandate to supervise and conduct war, "he has no jurisdiction over planning, budgeting, training or even operations of the armed forces during peace time." This is also evident in the process of attaining jointness, which despite the best intentions of the 1976 white paper, did not materialise. Even a critical factor such as nuclear strategies, which should be a part of joint planning, remained inadequately addressed by the structure that persisted. The real-world domination of the national security architecture and policy-making on important national security issues by the army, all but rendered the JCSC redundant. Further, the service chiefs failed to function in an integrated manner, leading them to pursue their individual service agenda.[10]

This was a stark reality of the Kargil conflict. Even the creation of a command-based structure in 2007, with a Northern, Southern and Central Command remained a half-measure, since it failed to make these integrated commands that synergised the three services. An internal study done in Pakistan's National Defence College in the late 1980s, indicated centralisation of

command, which went against the spirit of manoeuvre warfare. This centralisation resulted in failure to delegate command and the persistence of a zero-error syndrome, which made the army risk averse, thereby adversely affecting the Pakistani military leadership.[11]

India

The Indian experience with higher direction of war, despite past successes, has at best been chequered. However, unlike Pakistan, wherein the limitations of the structure led to military debacles, the Indian experience in 1971 resulted in a resounding success, the limitations of the structure notwithstanding. Lieutenant General Jacob, based on his experience during the 1971 war, underlined the limitations that affected decision making given the absence of a National Security Council. A National Security Council could have facilitated the coordination of political, economic, foreign and military strategies. He further reinforced the weaknesses noticed in higher direction of war at the political and military levels suggesting that there was "no suitable machinery for the higher direction of war at the highest level."[12] The scathing analysis of Air Chief Marshal P. C. Lal in his autobiography in relation to the higher direction of war in 1965, partly emerged from the lack of jointness amongst the three services. He accused the Chief of Army Staff, General J. N. Chaudhury of treating the war as his "personal affair, or at any rate that of the army alone, with the Air Force as a passive spectator and the Navy out of it altogether."[13] The jointness witnessed during the 1971 Indo-Pak war did benefit from the lessons of the previous wars, however, instead of structural or procedural changes leading this change, it was more due to the personal rapport of the three service chiefs.[14]

The higher direction of war is spearheaded by a structure which has not witnessed much change in India over the years. The broad parameters of this structure, as these existed prior to the Kargil conflict, included a Cabinet Committee on Security

(CCS), at the top of the pyramid. This was comprised of the Prime Minister as the chairperson and the Defence, Foreign, Home and Finance Ministers. In addition, the committee could invite specific individuals on as-required basis. The roles defined for the committee included:[15]

- to deal with all defence related issues;
- to deal with issues relating to law and order, and internal security;
- to deal with policy matters concerning foreign affairs that have internal and external security implications including cases relating to agreements with other countries on security related issues;
- to deal with economic and political issues impinging on national security;
- to review the manpower requirements relating to national security including proposals concerning creation of posts carrying the pay scale or pay band plus Grade Pay equivalent to that of a Joint Secretary to the government of India and higher, and setting up of new structures to deal with security related issues;
- all matters relating to atomic energy; and
- all matters relating to major defence production, research and procurement.

The Ministry of Defence, with the Defence Minister as its helm, was and remains responsible for discharging the responsibility of national defence on behalf of the cabinet, which is headed by the Prime Minister. "The principal task of the Ministry is to frame policy directions on defence and security related matters and communicate them for implementation to the Services Headquarters, Inter-Service Organisations, Production Establishments and Research and Development Organisations."[16]

The limitations of the existing structure of the MoD has been addressed by several strategic analysts and military officers.[17]

Their argument stems from two principal issues. First, the concept of civilian control over defence matters that was the guiding factor post-independence, ended up as bureaucratic control. This emerges as a result of the relative detachment of political leaders in matters related to strategic and security related issues, a critical void which is filled by a generalist bureaucracy, despite limited experience on defence-related subjects. Second, service headquarters have not been integrated with the MoD and function as attached offices despite the changed nomenclature of the services post-Kargil, wherein they were given the additional prefix of integrated headquarters. Instead of the services being a part of the integrated headquarters as desired, they ended up as subordinate ones.[18] The two limitations together created a unique challenge wherein an unwanted and unhealthy rivalry was created within the Defence Ministry, primarily between the uniformed and civilian officials with the latter maintaining substantial influence over administrative policy. However, despite that, when it came to professional military matters, the Defence Minister's Directive, which is supposed to be the bottom-line for guiding the preparedness of the three services, is written by the services themselves and sent for approval!

The third tier was represented by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC). This committee is headed by the senior most service chief as its chairman. "The Chiefs of Staff are the authority for advising the Defence Minister and normally through him the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs on all military matters which require ministerial consideration."[19]

This suggests that the Committee should ideally be able to provide cohesive and collective advice. However, the structure and functioning of the Committee suffers from certain limitations. First, the tenure of the Chairman of the Committee is unduly short and the lack of continuity affects decision-making authority. Admiral Arun Prakash indicates that one of his important functions was linked to the nuclear command

authority. However, the short tenure placed severe constraints on his understanding and decision-making ability.[20] This is true for other decision-making functions of the Chairman, whose tenure is based on the residual service in his appointment of Chief of his respective service. This could well imply that he could be Chairman of the Committee for just a month, if that was his residual service prior to superannuation.

Second, the method of functioning of the Committee, requires it to take decisions by consensus. Even the Chairman, despite his seemingly higher status, is one amongst equals. Therefore, the objective of creating integration in doctrine, logistics and operations is affected by the inability of a competent authority to arbitrate or enforce instructions among the services. Professional advice often tends to get divided along service lines when competing interests clash on subjects related to allocation of resources and responsibilities. The debate over control of aviation assets is a case in point, which witnessed the army and air force laying competing claims over the resource. Further, even when both maintain the same or similar assets, there is little coordination in their maintenance and at times even procurement.

Third, the Chairman of the COSC wears two hats. Even when he becomes the Chairman, he also remains the Chief of his own service. Contrary to conventional wisdom, this does not divide his loyalties. Instead, these remain with the parent service, whose interests are the primary motivation for the Chairman, just like it is for the others, who might be in his shoes at a later date. The only assurance that such decision making provides is that it would not ruffle any feathers in any of the services. And in case of a difference of opinion, decisions tend to get deferred or kicked upstairs for someone else to decide. This ensures that decisions are anodyne and servile to the interests of each of the services. A case in point was the joint doctrine released by Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff in 2017. The Headquarters came in for

severe criticism, not as much for what it said, instead it was for what it could not. The process of the doctrine passing muster within each service ensured that nothing visionary or even well-structured came out from the document.[21] This in many ways remains symptomatic of the joint structure and effectiveness of the three services, which often tend to function at the level of the lowest common denominator.

Beyond the COSC, the limited understanding of defence-related issues places severe constraints on the hierarchy to intervene in a suitable time frame and with the necessary experience that defence-related decision-making demands. This implies that decisions are delayed and tend to remain along the confines of the beaten path.

The assessment of the two defence structures clearly reinforces their limitations. In the case of Pakistan, the inordinate influence of the army renders the structures in place redundant. On the other hand, India witnesses a more complex reality. This revolves around a contradiction, wherein the bureaucracy retains a major influence on routine peacetime decision making, which is often administrative in nature. Conversely, operational decisions are almost completely dominated by the armed forces, given their professional understanding of matters military and the glaring void with the organisational structure to vet these matters.

This raises the issue of the relative performance of the two countries in war and the influence of higher direction as a determinant. The Kargil conflict, which is the most recent case of armed conflict between the two countries, provides an ideal backdrop for this assessment. There are several parameters on which higher direction of war could be judged while analysing the Kargil conflict. Among these, this section will delve upon the efficiency of decision making and responsiveness of the organisational structure for the higher direction of war.

The Efficiency of Decision-making and Responsiveness of Organisational Structures

Pakistan

The decision to go to war perhaps remains the most critical dilemma for the governing elite of any country. Unless parameters and considerations that must facilitate such decisions are analysed dispassionately, the possibility of taking a flawed decision remains high. These relate to war aims, ability to achieve them through superior strategic capability and/or outclassing the adversary's stratagem and finally the ability to handle possible contingencies that might arise before, during or after the war. Needless to say, the ultimate test of a statesman lies in winning a war without fighting it, thereby making the very act of going to war redundant.[22] The judiciousness of the decision, therefore becomes a critical factor that not only impacts the country's international influence and standing, but also its domestic affairs, as events both in India and Pakistan proved in the immediate aftermath of the Kargil conflict.[23]

The conditions prevalent in Pakistan expose contradictions that have continued to affect its decision making, especially in relation to India. The process of reasoned decision making emanates from a structure that can assess considered choices. This process benefits from the professional inputs of various specialist agencies to include the foreign office, military, finance, intelligence, home affairs, to name a few. Each of these agencies has a core area of expertise and it is on the basis of this expertise that they bring to bear their informed inputs. The equilibrium that is created as a result, provides a holistic input for decisions, especially those as critical as waging war. In case any of these institutions becomes dominant and gains the power and influence to override others, the balance that is the basis for decision making is rendered ineffective. The situation in Pakistan reflects this reality, even during periods of democratic rule. This is all the

more relevant in relation to matters dealing with military affairs and foreign policy with critical countries such as India, China, United States and Afghanistan. The contradiction that Pakistan suffers from relates to the inability of the army to take reasoned decisions on its own, given the lack of expertise to do so, and its refusal to allow other institutions to have an equal say in the process.

It is therefore not surprising that the wars of 1965, 1971 and Kargil continue to be remembered for incidents of "tactical" brilliance, even as repeated strategic failures never really gave a fighting chance to the soldier on the battlefield. This inherent limitation has had a crippling impact on Pakistan's decision to go to war in the past, and been the reason for emerging vanquished every single time. This is evident from Pakistan's insistence on pursuing a flawed policy despite the lessons of 1947-48 and 1965, only to face a humiliating partition in 1971. On the contrary, whenever rational thinking and decision-making has guided decisions, Pakistan has saved themselves the embarrassment of the kind faced in Kargil in 1999.

There has been a debate regarding the Kargil plan having been presented prior to 1999 and rejected for the challenges it posed. This seems to have indeed been the case as elaborated upon by Nasim Zehra. In 1996, General Jahangir Karamat was presented a similar plan. He demanded a thorough examination of the plan and sent it to the Planning Directorate, from where it went to the ISI. The plan was then put through a joint services panel of officers. Each element of the reversals faced by Pakistan in 1999 was brought to the fore in 1996, including dealing with the international reaction, challenges of air support, going against ongoing peace initiatives, impracticality of incorporating mujahideen, etc. "They concluded that while the plan was tactically plausible, strategically it was a nightmare".[24] Why then did Pakistan, a mere three years later, yet again go ahead with a plan that had been considered a strategic disaster by a structured

planning process within the army? There have to be good reasons, or at least reasons that are considered sound in the perspective of the senior Pakistan Army leadership repeatedly. Observers both inside and outside the country have been confounded by five fixations that have characterised the actions of Pakistan's military elite in every single war that they have fought against India.

First, the reason that India will not or cannot enlarge the conflict beyond Kashmir, was not a logical premise borne by historical facts. Yet, this fallacy led to inexplicable adventurism by its army on the false premise that the creation of a favourable combat situation in Kashmir could offset any advantage in conventional superiority that India may have had elsewhere. This act of misjudgement was witnessed in 1965, which led India to undertake a counter-offensive across the international border (IB), much to Pakistan's surprise.[25] Musharraf had ruled out the very same possibility in 1999 as well. The situation, as it developed in 1999, did not demand that India cross the IB. However, there is little doubt that an adverse situation in Kashmir would have led to such an eventuality. The same has been reinforced by General Malik, the Chief of Army Staff during the Kargil conflict. He suggests that besides an offensive posture in the air and on the open seas, the armed forces were ready with offensive and defensive operational plans beyond Kargil and kept all military options open.[26] He further adds, "My instructions, therefore, were that our forces should be deployed and maintained in such a state of readiness so that, given six days' notice, we should be in a position to launch an offensive across the international border or the LoC."[27]

Malik also confirms that the three Chiefs had given themselves time till September 1999 for eviction under the existing terms of reference laid down by the government. Beyond this, options to enlarge the conflict were on the table.[28] Further, he indicated that plans for actions required to be initiated duly signed by the Corps Commanders were asked for and available to him in Delhi

for implementation, as and when needed. This clearly indicated the requisite preparedness of the armed forces to ensure that the intrusion would be vacated, irrespective of the means required to achieve it.

Not only did Musharraf misjudge India's ability to enlarge the conflict across the IB, he also failed to understand the intensity of reaction within the battle theatre itself. In his book, Musharraf asserts that "India overreacted by bringing its air force into action … The Indians brought four regular divisions into the area, along with a heavy concentration of artillery."[29] Musharraf's description of India's actions as an overreaction indicates that he and his team had not expected the use of air and large concentration of artillery in the sector. Had he understood the reality of the situation, it would have very much been a part of his contingency planning. Given this clear and unambiguous stand of the Indian government and the armed forces, the premise on which Pakistan's decision making rested and the repeated assertions made by Musharraf, seem to have been based on a fickle appreciation of the situation and of history. Musharraf's understanding of India's reactions and position on Kashmir and beyond that the security of the country is neither unique nor isolated in its misunderstanding. Previous dictators and rulers in Pakistan have displayed similar naivety, while assessing India's military reaction. The example of Ayub Khan who remained under similar illusions under similar conditions has been discussed earlier.

Second, Pakistan's misjudgement of India's intent, also echoed in their lack of understanding of international opinion and their reaction to events in Kargil. The approach of China and the US to the Kargil conflict has been covered in detail in the previous chapter. The miscalculation was more likely a case of cherry-picking assessments for future contingencies in relation to major world powers, to suit the plan that had been formulated by the coterie of four. The absence of systematic analysis of events and their likely fallout had clearly not been thought through. This

was possibly the result of attempting to situate the appreciation, to suit the powers that be within Pakistan. In this case, the lure of going down in history as the leader who taught India a lesson was too appealing to reject, despite the obvious challenges involved. This was not only true of Musharraf, but for a short duration during the Kargil conflict, of Nawaz Sharif as well. He evidently got carried away by his depiction as the saviour of Kashmir by the military top brass in a bid to seek his post-facto approval of the operation, well after its implementation. According to Nasim Zehra, during the first detailed briefing to Sharif on May 17, 1999, Lt Gen Aziz said,

> Sir, Pakistan was created with the efforts of the Quaid and the Muslim League and they will always be remembered for creating Pakistan and now Allah has given you the opportunity and the chance to get Indian Held Kashmir and your name will be written in golden letters.[30]

Reminding Sharif of his Kashmiri descent, he was further told that he would be remembered as "Fatah-i-Kashmir." This seems all the more irrational, given India's strong and resolute stance during previous wars, when it came to protecting its national interest. This was most evident during the 1971 war which saw India withstand US pressure and despite it, achieve objectives beyond its initial military aims. These are instances that Pakistan had failed to learn from and reinforced the flawed model of higher direction of war and decision making. And worse, it yet again, illustrated the ability of the military hierarchy to undermine the country's existing decision-making structures.

Third, Pakistan fooled itself into believing that the level of unrest in Kashmir could play a decisive role in achieving the desired objectives, despite being proved wrong on every single instance in the past.[31] While there is little doubt that the redeployment of forces within J&K did lead to creation of voids

in the counterinsurgency grid that led to a degree of instability in Kashmir. However, the ability of the terrorists and their handlers from across the LoC in Pakistan, to create a second front for India and destabilise the war effort, remained a misplaced notion that was eventually borne out by events thereafter. This is despite the fact that commencing from 1999, Pakistan relied heavily on the employment of suicide attackers from the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in J&K and beyond across the rest of the country. A fillip in the number of such attacks from 1999 till 2002 reinforced Pakistan's strategy to challenge India.[32] This included attacks on religious shrines, families of security forces, J&K Legislative Assembly and the Indian Parliament.

Fourth, despite being a part of the same country for centuries, the Pakistani elite never understood the complex cultural cross-currents of the Indian society. The seemingly obvious contradictions of a caste-based society led Pakistan to believe in its inherent fissures, without recognising the underlying strength of unifying ideas and shared history. The three months of conflict probably did more to highlight what the sight of a martyred soldier could achieve in galvanising the nation in its collective zeal to fight the aggression. The world media did not merely witness state funerals for soldiers who died in combat, but cultural, religious and regional cohesion, even in areas which were affected by indigenous insurgencies. There were no questions raised regarding the ethnicity of a fallen hero. Nor was there any less reverence for the sacrifices that they made. On the contrary, Pakistan, given its policy of attributing the intrusion to terrorists, failed to acknowledge and honour their own soldiers. This was a failing that impacted the rank and file of its uniformed force. And there is little doubt that it was seen as a betrayal of fallen heroes on the battlefield.[33]

Fifth, there exists a belief in Pakistan of a corrupt Hindu mindset in India, in addition to the contradictions of a caste-based society. The Hindu is vilified as a wily and scheming individual

who values self-interest over everything else. This assumption was additionally flawed by the fact that India is not a Hindu country, as presumed by Pakistan. Even as Hindus were and remain a majority within the country, other religious denominations, irrespective of their numbers, are equal partners in India's security and development. The 1971 war is often quoted as an example of this diversity and especially in relation to the senior hierarchy in the army and the architects of the eventual military victory. The Chief of Army Staff, General Sam Manekshaw was a Parsi, Lieutenant General J. S. Aurora, a Sikh and his Chief of Staff in Eastern Command, Lieutenant General J. F. R. Jacob, a Jew. Two of these three communities are a miniscule percentage in India. However, that did not deter them from contributing in the most profound way to India's war waging effort. Nor did it stop the government from acknowledging their contribution. While Manekshaw became the first Field Marshal of India, Jacob was a Governor of two Indian states, Goa and Punjab. Myths often tend to get created to serve political ends. While the British did so with the "martial race" theory, in a bid to divide and rule the country, the Pakistani elite continues to peddle the theory of superiority of the Muslim fighter, to create moral ascendency amongst the armed forces.[34] However, such theories work only until they are tested. And India's experience in combat has disproved both in equal measure over the years.

There are several accounts of the Kargil conflict emanating from influential public figures, who were all in positions that gave them an insider perspective of the conflict. The responsibility for deciding to undertake the deep incursion across the LoC into Indian territory by Pakistan, has been contested and the entire truth is yet to be known. There are competing claims regarding the decision and its inclusiveness. However, it is more relevant for this chapter to assess the process involved in the decision making rather than unravelling the claims that have been made. The process eventually followed must be co-related with the national

security architecture in Pakistan and the degree to which it played a role. Further, if designated processes were indeed followed, and if these did not yield the desired results, then the very structure that allows such decisions to be taken must be questioned.

Musharraf in his autobiography suggests that it is a myth that the operation was launched without taking the political leadership into confidence. He justifies this claim by qualifying the manoeuvre undertaken as defensive, which was well within the purview of the local commander, that is, the commander of the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA). In doing so, he had merely plugged the gaps in their deployment, which the Pakistan Army envisaged were likely to be exploited by India. Musharraf supports this by referring to their intelligence assessment. Further, he claims that this improvement of defensive posture had the approval of both the corps and army headquarters, with details of the operation, disseminated on a need-to-know basis. Musharraf also claims that Sharif was briefed regarding the details on January 29, February 5, March 12, May 17, June 2 and July 22 successively as the operation progressed.[35]

There are two aspects related to the higher direction of war that deserve greater scrutiny. If this operation was indeed aimed at merely improving the existing defensive posture on Pakistan's side of the LoC, as suggested by Musharraf, then his contention is justified and it is indeed within the purview of the local commander to undertake tactical precautions given the intelligence inputs claimed by Musharraf. However, if this operation involved a deep incursion into territory held by India across a well-established LoC, then to call it "tactical" seems to be a lame and amateurish attempt at obfuscation, for which one does not need military experience to comprehend the reality. Even if one were to go by Musharraf's statement that Sharif was indeed briefed on January 29, a record of events in the operational theatre indicates that movement across the LoC had taken place well before that, including dumping of logistic supplies for the

troops. This was a closely guarded plan. "General Javed also convinced him that he should not reveal the plan to others. He said, 'Things do not leak from the lower levels. They leak from the top.' COAS agreed and never took the Corps Commanders and other service chiefs in confidence till deployment across the Line of Control was complete. When even Corps Commanders were not taken into confidence, how could the civil Government be entitled to know what the group of these four generals was up to."[36] According to Hussain, reconnaissance parties had gone across the LoC on December 18, 1998 and by January 1, 1999, dumping of logistic stores had begun.[37] The timing and manner of approval of the plan is also reinforced by Shaukat Qadir. He indicates that it was taken to Musharraf by the Corps Commander 10 Corps, Lieutenant General Mahmud Ahmad, accompanied by Major General Javed Hassan through the CGS, Lt Gen Mohammad Aziz in mid-November. The plan was then approved in principle, with orders to commence preparations.[38] Nasim Zehra in a recent book that painstakingly details the events prior to and during the conflict, places the date of incursion even earlier, in end October. It is in the backdrop these events that Sartaj Aziz counters Musharraf and his contention that the decision to undertake the operation was well considered and had the support of major decision makers.

> A military commander without consulting the political leadership or the foreign office, initiates a major military operation that violates the Simla Agreement and effectively derails the Lahore peace process, achieved after such sustained efforts and then expects the political leadership to handle all the adverse consequences. An army commander can and should handle smaller operations at the local level but cannot and should not initiate operations that have such widespread diplomatic and international implications without the explicit approval of the political leadership.[39]

This statement gains greater credence, given the course of action that had been proposed by Pakistan's Foreign Office and duly approved by the DCC, a mere two months prior to the outbreak of hostilities at Kargil.[40] This implies that Musharraf had undertaken an action that was clearly in contravention to agreed government policy, thereby short-circuiting the decision-making cycle. In the process, he also created a sub-loop that functioned in isolation without the benefit of expert advice.

The discordant note amongst the three Services became evident well past the commencement of hostilities. On June 13, 1999, in a meeting chaired by Sharif, the Naval Chief asked a pointed question, which had to be parried by the Prime Minister in a bid to avoid an awkward situation. Admiral Fasihuddin Bukhari asked, "Since I have been away, may I ask what are the objectives of this large-scale mobilization? We want to go to war over a few desolate heights that we may have to vacate anyway during the forthcoming winter?"[41]

The limitations in decision-making were voiced even more vocally by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), which was involved in the conflict as an afterthought, just like the Pakistan Navy and most elements of the army. Air Commodore M. Kaiser Taufail, in an elaborate article on the role of air force during the conflict, notes:

> In an effort to keep the plan secret, which was thought to be the key to its successful initiation, the army trio took no one into confidence, neither its operational commanders nor the heads of the other Services. This regrettably, resulted in a closed-loop thought process which engendered a string of oversights and failures;
> - Failure to grasp the wider military and diplomatic ramifications of a limited tactical operation that had the potential of creating strategic effects.

- Failure to correctly visualize the response of a powerful enemy to what was, in effect, a major blow in a disputed sector.
- Failure to spell out the specific aim to field commanders, who acted on their own to needlessly 'capture' territory and expand the scope of the operation to unmanageable levels.
- Failure to appreciate the inability of the army commanders to evaluate the capabilities and limitations of an air force.
- Failure to coordinate contingency plans at the tri-Services level.[42]

The nature of decision making within Pakistan was a critical factor for what happened at Kargil. It clearly emerges that the eventual decision did not undergo the scrutiny of a wider cross-section of people, which could have potentially stalled its implementation and the subsequent upheaval that was caused as a result. A lot has been written about decision making on Kargil by a small coterie of officers. This centralised decision-making rendered the considered process followed by the DCC ineffective, which was used by the army to seek a post-facto stamp of approval to decisions that had not only been taken but also implemented by them. Interestingly, it was not only the army but also Sharif, who ultimately short-circuited the DCC and its procedures to finally rely on his kitchen cabinet to take crucial decisions. The most critical among these was his eventual late-night trip to Washington to negotiate a settlement with the US President Clinton on July 4. The DCC, which was scheduled to meet on July 5, to take the final decision on the issue, never met and Sharif took the decision in consultation with a small group of people and proceeded to Washington.[43]

The decision was inordinately influenced by a group, whose individual and collective mindset was responsible for an ideologically motivated decision, rather than a more rational

professional decision-making process. Javed Hassan, a well-read officer, despite his exposure to the structured systems of the US in his capacity as Defence Attaché, allowed his literary pursuits to be led astray by ideological motivations that were anchored in his dislike for India, Hindus and by a coloured perspective of subcontinental history.[44] His book *India: A Study in Profile*, published in 1990, is not only a reflection of this mindset, but also that of the Pakistani military brass, since it became part of the prescribed study on India. Colonel Ashraf Hussain quotes from Hassan's book, giving a glimpse of prescribed writing within the army on India. Writing on the caste system in society he says, "People who have observed India from close quarters describe its democracy as a 'functional anarchy' and opine that socialism can hardly be said to have been practiced and the secular state is profoundly religious … in parts of the country it is much easier to get medical help for a cow than for a child…." He concludes with a military assessment, "The pattern of India's military defeat at the hand of invaders from the west continued to repeat itself. From 712-1206 AD Muslim armies of Arab, Afghan and Turkish origin attacked India and defeated their larger and better equipped Hindu adversaries."[45] This element of stereotypical thinking was also evident in the military hierarchy involved that ultimately became a part of the Kargil misadventure.

Decision making was also influenced by the deeply religious overtones that such initiatives were given, especially when it related to countries such as India. Repeated references in Hassan's book highlighting the Hindu mindset and superiority of Muslim invaders in subcontinental history, was a sign of a blinkered vision. Mahmud Ahmad's profile indicated a similar fanatical zeal. "As a consequence, perhaps, he became dangerous in the way that anyone will become if they believe that they are 'incapable of doing wrong'."[46] The messianic fervour with which military operations were approached could have benefited by high levels of motivation that religious indoctrination can

facilitate. However, in the absence of professional military advice and diplomatic inputs, it only sped up Pakistan Army's slide towards a disastrous venture.

The existence of religiously motivated actions is not new to Pakistan, nor the coloured opinion of India and Indians. Stephen Cohen,[47] Christine Fair[48] and Hussain Haqqani are some of the authors who deliberate upon the subject in their writings. Shuja Nawaz, in his book, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*, quotes a former FCNA commander, Major General Irshadullah Tarar, who suggests that Ziaist teachings had taken hold of the Pakistan Army by the 1990s and continued to influence military behaviour thereafter. He also confirms that an impression had been created that the Indian Army would not fight a war.[49] However, the pursuit of the same across the threshold of objectivity is what made the Kargil quartet different from past military leaders. The differences that cropped up during the course of initial briefings, both from the diplomatic community and service officers, serving and retired, clearly indicated the adverse impact of hubris that the military hierarchy suffered from.

The decision-making structures that were short-circuited prior to the Kargil conflict were not only civil-military, but also within the military. It is apparent from the account of officers involved at senior levels within the Pakistani armed forces that the decision to go ahead with the intrusion was taken without the benefit of either a staff examination of the option, or the opinion of sister services. Lieutenant General Shahid Aziz, the former Chief of General Staff, who was heading the analysis wing of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), during the Kargil conflict, says that "its objectives were not clear and its ramifications were not properly evaluated".[50] Similarly, General Karamat, the former Chief of Army Staff in Pakistan quotes a senior officer of the Joint Chiefs Headquarters, who was present during the briefing to the Prime Minister. Taken aback by the plan of action, he ordered a staff check at his level, deputing two officers to validate it from

the Indian perspective of logistics build-up. Their conclusions indicated that an Indian build-up would be successful given the transport resources which could function through the hours of darkness. This would have been adequate through the next winter, even with Pakistan occupying the heights. And a more serious interdiction would have led to an offensive elsewhere in Kashmir, escalating the conflict. This according to Karamat, was contrary to the political aim set out for the military venture.[51]

India

The limitations if any, of India's existing defence structures, as well as those at the time of Kargil conflict do not vary in a major way. The changes that came about because of the Group of Ministers recommendations, while addressing to some extent issues like intelligence and joint organisations to include the Integrated Defence Staff, did not structurally change institutions that were responsible for implementing the higher direction of war. This includes integration of the services into the MoD and the larger national security apparatus.[52] The issue of cohesion amongst the three services, which function through the COSC, also remained unaddressed, even after the reform process. These subjects were raised by the Group of Ministers (GoM) report, headed by L. K. Advani.[53]

The Kargil conflict brought several aspects to the fore, which have since been identified by the principal actors of that period. Important ones that impact higher direction of war include: resource allocation and employment during the conflict; hesitation to share intelligence during the initial stages of the conflict; procedural differences between demanding impact on target vis-à-vis the assets themselves. These issues raise questions related to processes and structures that may have adversely affected decision making. Though, despite these challenges faced primarily during the initial few days of the planning process, the nature of debate that has emerged since then, does little justice to what was achieved through

the cohesive action of not only the three services, but also the national decision-making process. Even as lessons must be drawn and learnt from these experiences, overemphasis on differences during the initial phase of operations has tended to underplay the successes, especially when viewed in contrast with actions across the LoC. To better understand the process that was followed and the response of various structural components, a brief chronology of events as related to decision making during the initial weeks of the conflict is in order. The focus of the assessment will however remain on specificities that relate to higher direction of war.

On May 3, 1999, the first intimation of the presence of intruders came to the army. This was followed by dispatch of patrols within different sectors, commencing with Batalik. The input was confirmed in this sector by May 7.[54] Similarly, subsequent patrols in the Dras, Mashkoh, Kaksar, Turtuk and Chorbat La sectors also confirmed the intrusion.

The first official intimation of the presence of intruders, despite the limited intelligence that was available until then with the army, suggests that on May 8, 1999, Northern Command informed Air Marshal Narayan Menon, who was the Air Officer Commanding J&K at that time, of the presence of "dozen or so intruders in the Batalik area". This was followed by a request for attack helicopters to facilitate their eviction. This was turned down given the "unsuitability of the AH in the intended area of interest". Further, Menon contended that employment of armed aircraft within 10 kilometres of the LoC needed the sanction of the government, since it would have violated existing agreements between India and Pakistan.[55]

On May 13, 1999, George Fernandes visited Jammu and Kashmir, accompanied by the Northern Army Commander, Lieutenant General H. M. Khanna and the Corps Commander 15 Corps, Lieutenant General Krishan Pal, with information from the previous day confirming intrusion of large numbers into the Batalik sector.[56]

On May 14, the Vice Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant General Chandrashekhar, called on the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, A. Y. Tipnis. This was the first formal interaction at the highest level between the two services. Tipnis reiterated the previous stance of the Air Force and did not accede to the request for employment of helicopters. This was followed by a formal meeting of the COSC on May 16, wherein the same issue came up for discussion, with a similar stance taken by Tipnis. The Chairman COSC, Admiral Sushil Kumar concurred, having been informed of the possible consequences of employing air power, which primarily related to enlargement of the conflict.[57]

The very next day, on May 17, 1999, a meeting was organised in the operations room of the army. This was attended by George Fernandes, Brajesh Mishra, Secretaries Defence, Home and Foreign Affairs, in addition to the three chiefs. Here, yet again, the criticality of the existing situation was outlined by Chandrashekhar, after which Tipnis outlined his assessment and implications, which led Brajesh Mishra to order maintenance of the status quo. The next day, a CCS meeting was convened. This was the first formal interaction of the service chiefs with the Prime Minister and members of the CCS. Despite a detailed briefing at this forum, employment of air power was not given sanction.

After the return of General Malik from an official visit abroad, he called for a COSC meeting on May 23. Here his assessment of the situation was discussed in detail, which included the need for joint planning and operations. He reinforced the need for gaining strategic initiative and prepare for possibility of escalation by Pakistan or India.[58]

A CCS meeting was convened on May 24, which saw a detailed briefing by Malik and accompanied by his assessment of the prevailing situation. This included Pakistan's likely objectives assessed as: Cut off the Srinagar-Leh road; alter status of LoC; divert attention from anti-terrorist operations; revive

insurgency in J&K; capture Turtuk and part of Central Glacier. He suggested the need to contain any further loss of posts, keep road communications open, locate, contain, isolate and evict intruders, and hold reserves for any contingency. Further, he sought permission to use air and naval power in the pursuit of these objectives.[59] The meeting was followed by another the very next day and approval to undertake joint operations and employ air power was given, with restriction on crossing the LoC, as an accompanying term of reference. Besides some of these formal interactions, several informal interactions took place at various levels with an aim of coordinating the military effort.

The sequence of events and its respective interpretation by various actors become the primary reason for ongoing debates regarding resource allocation and its employment during war. It is evident that the existing structures successfully facilitated an interaction between the services as well as the highest authority responsible for national security, in the form of the CCS. Between May 8 and May 25, there were a series of formal and informal interactions that took place with the aim of coordinating the war effort. The inclusion of the political hierarchy is also clear, with Fernandes undertaking his first tour of J&K on May 13. This was followed by differences between the three services being taken up during the CCS meeting on May 18 and then again on May 24 and 25, prior to joint operations being launched on May 26, 1999. Therefore, despite the limitations of existing structures that have been highlighted earlier, the services and political actors successfully discussed the allocation and employment of fighting platforms.

However, the ensuing debate clearly illustrates that both sides, the army and the air force, were not entirely satisfied with the process and outcome during the initial phase of the conflict, until consensus could be built by May 25, 1999. This can partly be attributed to the inadequacy of intelligence, which in turn led to different opinions on the nature of platforms

to be employed. However, beyond that, it was the absence of a competent, professional arbiter, who could have facilitated an earlier decision on the issue, either by resolving it within the services, or providing the requisite advice to the political authorities regarding the same. The system, as it existed during the Kargil conflict, allowed any one of the services to retain a veto power over resources under its control, thereby forcing decision making to be kicked upstairs. While this can function, albeit with some delay under normal circumstances, in relation to technical issues and wartime decision-making, it could lead to vital loss of time, as may have happened in this case. This conclusion is based on the premise that an arbitration authority, with the necessary experience and understanding of the issues, could have facilitated faster decisions. However, the possibility of a delay because of limited intelligence during the initial period and the arbiter veering towards the perspective of the air force cannot be ruled out purely as an objective assessment, which could have been influenced by an individual's understanding of a situation and taking a more detached perspective in relation to military commanders in closer proximity to the conflict. As a result, one could argue that it may have led to delay in decision making. Conversely, it could also lead to a more dispassionate and objective decision-making process.

The initial phase of the operation suggests an inability on part of the army to integrate the air force in the planning process. Instead the decision to seek assistance to implement the army's plan rather than making a joint plan, limited options that may have been available had the three services treated it as a challenge that equally affected them all. Tipnis writes:

> There had been total lack of army-air force joint staff work. When the army found itself in difficulties, information/ intelligence had not been communicated by Army HQ, in any systematic manner to the Air HQ. There had been no call for

a joint briefing, leave alone joint planning, both at the service
and command headquarters; just repeated requests for armed
helicopter support. Air HQ seemed to have more information
than WAC.[60]

Similarly, the air force simply offered a reply to what was
asked of them, as was the case with employment of attack
helicopters. The situation could have been served better through
viable options in a bid to proactively assist the army, which
clearly faced a serious predicament. This had been recognised
by the air force as well, given the desperate queries emanating
from the army. Therefore, even as the army failed to take the air
force into confidence, the air force did little to go out of their way
to win it. These actions and reactions are an unfortunate echo
from the past, which has witnessed similar situations and equally
acrimonious debates.

A critical decision taken by the CCS was the restriction on
crossing the LoC by both the army and air force during the conduct
of operations. The diplomatic implications of this decision have
been analysed in detail in the previous chapter and suggest sound
logic for this decision. Purely from a military perspective, this
did have a serious impact for the conduct of operations. This
concern has been reiterated by both services. Menon highlights
the constraints imposed on attack profiles, which needed the
breaching of the LoC to successfully undertake the air sorties.
In the absence of this option, the limitation "adversely affected
air operations" and led to the adoption of "sub-optimal attack
directions".[61] Menon goes so far as to say that "If the military
had been able to convince the government about the imperatives
of going across the LoC, the duration of the Kargil war and
therefore the losses suffered by us would have been reduced."[62]

The response of Chandrashekhar is not very different. He felt
that "the restriction of not crossing the LoC has no military logic,
when the adversary has already violated the borders".[63] However,

both Malik and Tipnis are less critical of the decision, with the former clearly indicating his understanding of the reasons, given a distinct lack of clarity regarding Pakistan's motives and identity of intruders during the initial period of the conflict.[64]

It is undoubtedly important to assess the impact of this decision on the conduct of war, however, given the focus of this chapter, it is perhaps more relevant to analyse the process followed for coming to this decision, especially given that it was likely to have had an impact on the conduct of operations, as it eventually did. The CCS meeting of May 18 did not indicate this term of reference, as the employment of air had been negated at that stage. Thereafter, on May 24, the directive regarding not crossing the LoC was conveyed. Malik does not refer to any meeting with senior government functionaries between these two dates and nor does Tipnis, which could have led to the decision being discussed or conveyed. In an interview to the author, Malik confirmed that the government had not consulted the services prior to reaching the decision to not cross the LoC. He further confirmed that this decision was conveyed to the Chiefs during the CCS meeting of May 24, 1999.[65]

The benefit of hindsight suggests that the strategic advantages that India accrued because of this decision outweighed the operational constraints that were imposed. Had the conflict lasted longer, which could have well been the case had the US, G8 countries and China not found Pakistan in clear violation of the LoC, and put pressure on Pakistan to withdraw, the casualties suffered may have been more than those due to the limitations imposed. During the course of the conflict, when a question was raised regarding Malik's reference to the restrictions imposed, Advani displayed clarity of mind at the political level, when he said if "we do not impose constraints we may not have got the kind of universal support we have today. Very often in this kind of situation the issue is who the aggressors are. Who attacked first— they or we. Now that is not the issue. How do we proceed—that

has to be considered."[66] In this light, while the decision proved to be judicious, it would have been more appropriate to take the military leadership into confidence while taking it to begin with, so as to prepare them better for the constraints. The logic behind the step would have also been disseminated based on an informed decision-making process, rather than *fait accompli*, as it seems to have been in this case purely from a perspective of the military commanders. The importance of a consultative decision-making process was also borne by yet another incident.

Soon after the commencement of the conflict, Vajpayee, on more occasions than one, indicated India's resolve to not cross the LoC while undertaking the eviction operations. General Malik expressed his reservations regarding this commitment in his book and reconfirmed it during the course of an interview to the author. He requested the Prime Minister to avoid any future references to this assurance as the inability to evict the intrusion could lead to not only crossing the LoC, perhaps even the international border.[67] This clearly reinforced the intent and resolve of the armed forces and the nation to regain lost territory. General Malik's intervention yet again suggested the need for careful analysis of the situation and the importance, as well as benefits, of collective decision making. The suggestion of the Chief indicated that decision making, however well-thought-out it may be, cannot substitute the value of inputs that can come from domain experts, who are responsible for implementation of doctrines, strategies and the grand strategy of the state. This becomes all the more relevant, given the relatively hands-off approach of the political elite towards defence policy and operational issues. As a related issue, it also re-emphasises the need for closer integration of the armed forces in the decision-making process and into institutions, not only during war, which they largely have been, but also during peace, when policy options, capabilities and intelligence often throws up opportunities to analyse such contingencies.

Despite the difference of opinion regarding consensus on employment of air during the first couple of weeks of the conflict, the cohesive functioning of the three services, CCS and the national war waging machinery thereafter, is what made the vital difference between higher direction of war, as viewed on both sides of the LoC. Irrespective of the merits of the case, even the process that involved the decision-making hierarchy prior to it, displayed an inclusive, open and democratic system at play. This led to inputs from various actors and the CCS weighing it in the context of diplomatic factors. As a result, the larger strategy at work was more coherent, considered and effective, both on the battlefield and on the diplomatic chessboard, where Pakistan was completely outclassed at a game they had begun in all earnest.

If Pakistan was guilty of repeatedly misjudging India's resolve, intent and inherent cohesive resilience, India has conversely been guilty of not expecting the unexpected. Even though most of these attempts have come to fraught, the fact remains that India has been surprised more often than it would have liked to. If a similar analysis is attempted in relation to India, as has been outlined for Pakistan, then three factors emerge as the possible reason for India repeatedly reacting to situations.

First, as a militarily superior power, India never felt that it faced a calamitous threat from Pakistan. This was reinforced by India successfully thwarting Pakistan's misadventures in 1947-48 and 1965, despite commencing operations from a position of disadvantage, given that the aggression came from across the border. Further, in 1971, India not only blunted Pakistan's attack on December 3, the war also witnessed its division into two halves, with the creation of Bangladesh. The nature and scope of threat that Pakistan represented, had been eliminated from the eastern theatre with remarkable success. The follow-up of the same at Siachen, where India gained a position of advantage and a favourable situation across the LoC, only reinforced this thinking. After the initial challenge posed by the threat of state terrorism in

Punjab in the 1980s and J&K during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, India succeeded in stabilising the situation there as well. The long history of these military adventures emanating from Pakistan only reinforced the prevailing perspective of Pakistan being a perpetual irritant that could be managed with the existing resources of the state, without much strain.

Second, India's approach to national security has often added up to less than the sum of its components. This has led to its comprehensive national power rarely amalgamating into cohesive homogeneity. A number of factors have been attributed to this limitation in the past, varying from structural inadequacies to a less than perfect civil-military balance. These limitations are real and have often been the basis for attempts at rectification through defence reforms, however limited in scope these may have been. The pursuit of these reforms has led to the neglect of a more critical change. This remains the relatively hands-off approach that decision-making authorities have maintained in relation to external security threats and challenges. While they have risen to the occasion in times of crisis, the failure to perceive and prepare for future threats has allowed adversaries to slip through gaps in foresight and vision that helps prepare a country by providing its national security apparatus the much-needed direction. The lack of a national security strategy, failure to clearly outline threats and challenges, the inability to prioritise allocation of resources in pursuit of national security, has repeatedly led to a maximalistic approach to matters military, with a two and a half front threat becoming the bottom line for defence preparedness. In the absence of clear direction, the military continues to spread thinner across seemingly endless priorities, only succeeding in enhancing its structural hollowness rather than addressing core priority areas.

Third, the ability to read an enemy's war preparedness is considered a critical element of the preparatory phase of defensive plans. Unless a country or the armed forces are able to consider

each individual "battlefield indicator" as an element of the big picture that steadily unravels the larger warfighting strategy, there is a distinct possibility of being surprised. This further leads to a retrograde battle being thrust upon unsuspecting troops, as was the case in Kargil. The repeated inability to achieve battlefield and strategic transparency therefore emerges as a critical limitation of the state, including the armed forces.

This inability is partly related to outlining the vision to achieve enhanced transparency. However, it is more a factor of resources that need to be invested to achieve said transparency. In an environment of competing priorities and the desire to have a full spectrum capability that ranges from low intensity challenges to a nuclear threat, and relies upon a manpower intensive model, this challenge is likely to remain unresolved in the foreseeable future. The challenge is further accentuated by the stated desire to plan and prepare for a two and a half front war, to include two conventional adversaries and the threat of terrorism within the country. General Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Army Staff asserted, "The Indian Army is fully ready for a two and a half front war".[68] Difference of opinion on this capability was voiced a few months later by Lieutenant General Surinder Singh, the GOC-in-C of the Western Command. He felt that fighting on two fronts is not a "smart idea".[69] The constraints of existing budgets for undertaking rapid and extensive modernisation have been articulated repeatedly in the past.[70] More importantly, within the limitations of the existing budget, priorities should be assigned to the more immediate and the more obvious security challenge. This will transform the existing reality of a small component of a large army fighting an adversary undertaking hybrid war with poor equipment, to a larger component of a smaller army fighting with improved equipment and in conditions of enhanced strategic transparency. Unless the existing disbalance can be corrected, strategic surprise is one factor that will continue to weigh in favour of the adversary.

Evidently, India's structures and processes are not perfect. This has been reflected not only by the Kargil conflict, but also during preceding and succeeding national security challenges. However, an important element that differentiates the two countries is the follow-up to the conflict. Unlike Pakistan, India did witness a deliberate and structured attempt at learning from the lessons that Kargil taught. This not only led to an institutionalised attempt at analysing events and procedures in the form of the Kargil Review Committee Report, headed by K. Subrahmanyam, but also a Group of Ministers, tasked with providing vital suggestions related to national security. Some of these, despite not being complete in their scope or impact, were an important step in this introspective process. The desire of the Indian Government to conduct such an exercise was in itself an important first step in reforming defence structures and the decision-making process.

Notes

1. Secret "GHQ Report on Indo-Pakistan War [19]71," Pakistan Army Archives, quoted by Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 311.

2. Ibid., pp. 311-13.

3. Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events That Shook Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), pp. 30, 167, 168.

4. Ibid., p. 422.

5. Gen. (Retd) Ehsan ul Haq, "Restructuring Higher Defence Organisation of Pakistan," Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, August 2013, p. 19.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 20.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Shuja Nawaz, note 1, p. 581.

11. Ibid., p. 570.

12. Lieutenant General J. F. R. Jacob, *Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), p. 160.

13. Air Chief Marshal P. C. Lal, *My Years with the IAF* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1986), pp. 161-62.

14. Vinod Anand, "Evolution of Jointness in Indian Defence Forces," in Harsh V. Pant (ed.), *Handbook of Indian Defence Policy: Themes Structures and Doctrines* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2015), pp. 174-75.

15. "Composition and Functions of the Cabinet Committees," Cabinet Secretariat, https://cabsec.gov.in/writereaddata/cabinetcommittees/english/1_Upload_805.pdf, accessed on September 14, 2017, p. 7.

16. Annual Report 2016-17, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, http://mod.nic.in/dod/sites/default/files/AnnualReport1617.pdf, accessed on September 18, 2017, p. 8.

17. See Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2010), pp. 39-41; Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.), "Defence Reforms: Contemporary Debates and Issues in Call for Change: Higher Defence Management in India," IDSA, July 2012, http://www.idsa.in/system/files/Monograph6.pdf, accessed on September 18, 2017, pp. 23-24; General V. P. Malik (Retd.), "Higher Management of Defence and Defence Reforms: Towards Better Management Techniques, in "Call for Change: Higher Defence Management in India," IDSA, July 2012, http://www.idsa.in/system/files/Monograph6.pdf, accessed on September 18, 2017, pp. 39-40.

18. Even as the Army and Navy made the change in nomenclature, the Air Force continues with it.

19. "The Chiefs of Staff Committee," Integrated Defence Staff, Ministry of Defence, http://ids.nic.in/cosc.htm, accessed on September 18, 2017.

20. Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.), "Defence Reforms: Contemporary Debates and Issues in Call for Change: Higher Defence Management in India," IDSA, July 2012, http://www.idsa.in/system/files/Monograph6.pdf, accessed on September 18, 2017, p. 25.

21. "Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces," Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, Ministry of Defence, April 2017, New Delhi, https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint_Doctrine_Indian_Armed_Forces.pdf, accessed on January 22, 2019.

22. A war strategy objective made famous by Sun Tzu. See "Attack by Stratagem," Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, https://suntzusaid.com/book/3/6/, accessed on July 4, 2018.

23. Soon after the Kargil conflict, Musharraf took over as a military dictator overthrowing Nawaz Sharif and in India, Prime Minister Vajpayee who headed an interim government during the conflict, won the next election to lead the country for five years thereafter.

24. Nasim Zehra, note 3, pp. 45-46.

25. "Pakistan was taken aback when India launched attack in '65; Ayub Khan no intention of war; Gohar Ayub Khan," *The Lahore Times*, http://www.lhrtimes.com/, accessed on July 4, 2018.

26. General V. P. Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2006), p. 128.

27. Ibid., p. 140.

28. Interview with General V. P. Malik on January 9, 2018, at his residence at Panchkula.

29. Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 91.

30. Nasim Zehra, note 3, p. 161.

31. Ibid., pp. 159-60. In this case the plans included fuelling insurgency in Leh, Ladakh area as well, in order to cause a breakdown of the state security structure.

32. Vivek Chadha, "Countering Fidayeen Attacks," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, December 15, 2016, https://idsa.in/policybrief/ countering-fidayeen-attacks_vchadha_151216, accessed on July 4, 2018.

33. Nasim Zehra, note 3, pp. 350-53.

34. C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 161-65.

35. Pervez Musharraf, note 29, pp. 95-96.

36. Col Ashfaq Hussain (Retd.), *Witness to Blunder: Kargil Story Unfolds* (New Delhi: Bookwise (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2013), p. 62. The four officers who have been referred to in a large number of accounts including this one are General Pervez Musharraf, Lieutenant General Aziz Khan, the Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant General Mahmood, Corps Commander, 10 Corps and Major General Javed Hassan, the commander of FCNA.

37. Ibid., pp. 69-71.

38. Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict 1999," *RUSI Journal*, April 2002, p. 25.

39. Sartaj Aziz, *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 283.

40. Ibid., p. 254.

41. Ibid., p. 273.

42. Air Commodore M. Kaiser Taufail, "Role of the Pakistani Air Force during the Kargil Conflict," *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2009, http://www.claws. in/images/journals_doc/1400825199M%20Kaiser%20Tufail%20CJ%20 SSummer%202009.pdf, accessed on October 18, 2017, pp. 110-11.

43. Nasim Zehra, note 3, pp. 289-93.

44. Col Ashfaq Hussain (Retd.), note 36, pp. 53-61.

45. Ibid., p. 56 and p. 59.

46. Ibid., p. 26.

47. Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

48. C. Christine Fair, note 34, pp. 66-102.

49. Shuja Nawaz, note 1, p. 510.

50. Khaleeq Kiani, "Kargil adventure was four-man show: General," *Dawn*, January 28, 2013, https://www.dawn.com/news/782010, accessed on October 17, 2017.

51. Shuja Nawaz, note 1, pp. 513-14.

52. During the course of writing of this book, the government created a Defence Planning Committee in April 2018. While details of the role and charter of the committee did emerge through the media, however, its impact and effectiveness can only be gauged over time as and when it delivers on some of these responsibilities.

53. "Report of Group of Ministers on National Security," Government of India, http://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/GoM%20Report%20 on%20National%20Security.pdf, accessed on November 6, 2017, pp. 97-98.

54. "From Surprise to Reckoning: Kargil Review Committee Report," Government of India, National Security Council Secretariat, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p. 98.

55. Air Marshal Narayan Menon, "Kargil Controversy: IAF on the Ghosts of Kargil," *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 25.3, July-September 2010, July 22, 2016, http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/kargil-controversy-iaf-on-the-ghosts-of-kargil/, accessed on November 15, 2017.

56. General V. P. Malik, note 26, p. 106.

57. Air Chief Marshal A. Y. Tipnis (Retd.), *Force*, October 2006, p. 10.

58. General V. P. Malik, note 26, pp. 121-22.

59. Ibid., p. 124.

60. Air Chief Marshal A. Y. Tipnis (Retd.), note 57, p. 12.

61. Air Marshal Narayan Menon, note 55.

62. Ibid.

63. Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, "Kargil—An Overview," http://generalchandrashekhar.blogspot.in/2012/07/kargil-war-overview.html, accessed on November 16, 2017.

64. General V. P. Malik, note 26, p. 126.

65. Interview with General V. P. Malik on January 9, 2018, at his residence at Panchkula.

66. "Restraint has won India universal support: Advani," *Rediff On the Net*, June 27, 1999, https://www.rediff.com/news/1999/jun/26kash10.htm, accessed on September 7, 2018.

67. General V. P. Malik, note 26, p. 146.

68. "Indian Army prepared for a two and a half front war: Army Chief General Bipin Rawat," *The Indian Express*, June 8, 2017, https://indianexpress.

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3

Strategic Communications during the Kargil Conflict

Even as the first shot was fired on the icy heights of Kargil, India and Pakistan had begun their strategic messaging in support of their actions. Over a period of time, this portrayal evolved, with both sides attempting to gain a position of advantage, through a battle of narratives, which complemented the clash of wills on the battlefield. As the strategic picture became clearer over time, so did the messaging, at least in case of India. This clarity was relatively conspicuous by its absence on the Pakistani side. The country suffered at the hands of the senior military hierarchy, as a result of fundamental flaws in the planning of their strategic communications (SC). These emanated from the irrational persistence with which discernible falsehood continued to be peddled throughout the period of the conflict. In fact, it did not end with the dramatic defeat on the battlefield and loss of face for Pakistan. The process went on for years thereafter, with Musharraf seeking refuge behind the failed attempt at creating a façade of falsehood.

In addition to persisting with a weak narrative, the ruling elite in Pakistan also failed to understand the reach and impact of the electronic media. Its role as a catalyst in disseminating SC narratives, caught the Pakistani establishment on the wrong foot, despite having a more cohesive public relations structure in place.

This chapter contends that effective SC can be achieved through a coherent and credible narrative, backed by a strong

rationale which strikes a timely connect with the intended audience and an understanding of the medium of communication.

Competing Strategic Communications during the Kargil Conflict

The Kargil conflict took place when the Indian subcontinent was at the cusp of an information explosion. Its most discernible impact was witnessed on televisions across the region. If not the most important, it certainly was the most visible platform employed for strategic messaging by both countries.

From a meagre 1.2 million homes in 1992 having access to televisions post liberalisation in India, the numbers grew to 14.2 million in 1996. Besides bringing the era of soap operas into Indian households, the other major proliferation was 24x7 news. NDTV, a channel which played a critical reporting role during the Kargil conflict in 1999, was established a year earlier in 1998.[1] Other networks that emerged during the same period included Zee TV and Aaj Tak, which were pioneers in bringing television news to the masses. In contrast, Pakistan's tryst with satellite private channels commenced after the conflict, constraining their potential impact. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordnance came up only in 2002, in a bid to regulate electronic media.[2] While this limited the reach of independent private channels during the conflict, Pakistan Government controlled PTV reached more households per thousand in Pakistan in 1999 than news channels did in India.[3] This presented a contrast of greater numbers per thousand having access to televisions in Pakistan, though in an environment of controlled and tailored news reporting. Information dissemination on PTV was done in accordance with the SC plan of the army and more specifically the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), on orders of the military leadership. As a result, despite numbers being in Pakistan's favour, the state lost the information campaign on all fronts, to include international opinion building and the ability

to garner and retain support for the conflict in their own country. In fact, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took the state-run PTV to task for its "poor" coverage" and led to the setting up of a cabinet committee "to probe its lapses".[4]

The Pakistan Army was quick to learn its lessons from the 1999 Kargil conflict. This reflected in the subsequent opening up of the media space and its privatisation in 2002. Ayesha Siddiqa writes, "There was a clear military-strategic objective behind it, such as building capacity nationally and internationally to compete in a 'media war' with India. The lesson learnt from the Kargil war of 1999 was the manner in which the Indian media had turned global opinion against Pakistan."[5] India's evaluation of the Kargil conflict, as also the information and media component, was done as part of the Kargil Review Committee.[6] This was followed by a Group of Ministers report, which addressed a number of issues that had been raised during the course of deliberations. The major ones in the Kargil Review Committee report included:[7]

- Enhance capacity of media cells at army formations such as Udhampur and Srinagar.
- Recommence the war correspondent's course.
- Incorporate modules on information operations and perception management in courses.
- Establishment of dedicated radio and TV channels to entertain armed forces personnel. These can also counter false propaganda of the adversary.
- The government must evolve procedures to keep the people informed on important national security issues.
- Need to come up with official history of the Kargil conflict and India's nuclear weapons programme.

These assessments clearly suggest that the information campaign not only played a major role in the Kargil conflict, it also led to deep introspection within both countries. Resultantly, it reconfigured the media space in a bid to influence public opinion

through a far more sophisticated informational competition that became all the more effective with the proliferation of diverse digital platforms as has been witnessed in the recent past.

Prior to drawing comparisons between the Indian and Pakistani endeavours at crafting a strategic narrative in support of their respective operations in Kargil, an interpretation of the term SC will be flagged, primarily to create a common understanding for further analysis.

There is a lack of consensus on defining SC, despite a number of attempts having been made in the past. Understandably, these tend to get influenced by the context in which the term is defined. From the world of corporate communications to politics and military operations to developmental work, definitions tend to create subtle, yet significant variations. Christopher Paul defines SC as "coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signalling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives."[8] He goes on to quote and analyse a number of other definitions, including the one given by the US Department of Defence, and provides a critique for each. Without getting into a detailed literature survey of these, a common understanding of the term for the purpose of this paper is: *the communication of a message for the achievement of desired national objectives*. This is based on the premise that the messaging is not restricted to dissemination of information alone and often includes actions and intentions as well. Similarly, the desired objectives could vary depending upon the audience and the degree and nature of impact intended. Often this could also result in contrarian effects as well, wherein a positive impact on a particular group could simultaneously result in a negative one on the other. Therefore, the end result of SC cannot be absolute in its visualisation or implementation.

This is all the more relevant given the constituents that are considered a part of the concept of SC. These include: public diplomacy, public affairs, information and psychological

operations.[9] The accounts of the period clearly suggest that some of these components of SC played an important role during the conflict. This chapter will briefly focus on these, with emphasis on how it unfolded in relation to the media and the thought process behind it. Unsurprisingly, the media became an important constituent of psychological manoeuvring by both sides, in a bid to gain moral ascendency amongst a variety of target audiences. This included the international fora and especially, some of the major countries which played an important role in convincing Pakistan of its misadventure, popular domestic sentiment, as well as the armed forces.

India

SC Organisational Structures

The structures that were in place for handling the information campaign became the first building blocks for the strategy adopted by India. The Government of India had and continues to have public relations officers (PRO) and public relations units at 25 locations in India.[10] Of these, the army, navy and air force PROs are located in Delhi. They are responsible for the dissemination of information on behalf of the services through the media. In addition to them, there is a network of PROs located in sensitive areas, which includes Srinagar and Udhampur, two locations which were relevant to the Kargil conflict. The PROs function under the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) which in turn is headed by an officer of the Indian Information Service. It is this officer as Director of the DPR who is the spokesperson for the MoD (upgraded to the level of Additional Principal Information Officer [APIO]).[11] However, this role has remained more prominent during routine functioning rather than operational situations. As will be described later, the spokespersons during the Kargil conflict were drawn from specialists within respective services, instead of the DPR chain.

A more intimate role was played by an organisation called the Army Liaison Cell (ALC). Originally known as MI 24, it dealt with psychological operations. And prior to its operationalisation within the Military Intelligence Directorate, it was a part of the Military Operations Directorate. However, events during the conflict demanded the need for a more specialised body, which could amalgamate both public information and psychological operations. The ALC filled this gap, though, on an ad hoc basis. Over time, this became more formalised and the organisation has evolved as not only an instrument for the army's outreach to the media, but also the brain behind its psychological operations initiatives. Called the ADGPI, possibly on the basis of a Major General ranked officer who heads it, the organisation has also made its presence felt on social media, employing it as a major platform for outreach.

During the initial stages of the conflict, two initiatives were undertaken by the army to augment its handling of information, given the limitations of existing structures. First, Major General Arjun Ray and a team of officers was brought in to handle the suddenly increased load at ALC and to provide it with the necessary direction. This also included Colonel (later Brigadier) R. E. Williams, who dealt with the media. While Ray came by early May 1999, the others were effective by the end of the same month.[12] Second, a professional journalist, and also a Territorial Army officer, Manvendra Singh, was also attached with the ALC. He provided the Chief of Army Staff with inputs for better utilising the medium that the media provided.[13] In the field, the PROs at both Udhampur and Srinagar worked towards providing information updates from Kargil. They also facilitated the movement of journalists, to-and-fro, from the battle zone.

The air force and the navy did not have similar organisations and continued to function through their PROs. However, given the operational requirements, the services themselves played a more proactive role in disseminating information and explaining

the role and actions undertaken by them. In fact, the Western C-in-C of the Air Force and the Chief of Naval Staff were open to interactions with the media, including candid comments on their role and limitations.[14]

In addition, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had an effective set-up, which was already in place and was well established to handle interactions with the media through the office of the Joint Secretary External Publicity JS (XP). This structure had matured over the years and successfully handled the challenges that came its way during the conflict. The MEA further had the advantage of having representatives across the world as part of Indian embassies, thereby creating an impressive outreach, especially in countries that were considered more influential.

A unique and effective response of the government to its outreach efforts, was the decision to create a three-man interface with the media. This included representatives from the army, air force and MEA. Collectively, they gave a joint and coherent perspective, emanating from the corridors of diplomacy and the battlefields of Kargil. Their press conferences provided a daily update and served the information campaign of the government well. None of the PROs operating from Delhi under the DPR were an active part of this ad hoc structure that was created as part of the operational requirement.

These actions suggested that the government was quick to supplement the existing structures that existed when the intrusion began. The adaptations at the ALC, including enhancing its profile, getting the services of a journalist and establishing a three-member team for press briefings on a daily basis, were some of the initiatives undertaken. This filled existing voids in the information structure. Given the flow of information from multiple locations, there is little doubt that the existing set-up could not have coped with the nature of challenge presented by the conflict and the accompanying deluge of information.

However, these were adaptations aimed at enhancing the profile of a system which was not geared up for a crisis situation like Kargil. And as is often the case, it took time before these initiatives could streamline existing systems, which were rushed through more as a reaction to events, rather than previously established procedures. This has lessons for situations which may demand immediate effectiveness, as compared with the prolonged duration of the Kargil conflict, which gave time for sprucing up the organisation.

The ad hoc restructuring led to officers being moved at short notice to the ALC. Despite the limitations of a challenging responsibility, for which most of them had limited training, the prevailing circumstances ensured that the ALC adapted with haste. The newly created organisation gained heft quickly because of easy access to the senior hierarchy within the army. Further, the location of the ALC within the army's intimate command and control structure allowed close supervision of its actions. It also facilitated easy allocation of the army's resources at short notice, making reactions sharper and in tune with the deadline-oriented nature of journalism. This was in contrast with the DPR, which controlled the complete team of Defence PROs. The routine functioning of this organisation during peace, was rarely tested, given the scope of responsibilities, dealing primarily with public relations alone. This was reinforced by its structural characteristics and limitations, which gave little leeway to adapt to the nature of the challenge presented during the Kargil conflict. As an illustration, the Director's chain of reporting linked him to the Principal Information Officer and not the MoD, which limited the influence and control that the MoD had on the functioning of this chain. Dinesh Kumar, a journalist who covered the conflict, argues, "To explain the point further, his annual confidential report is written by the PIO and his telephone bills are paid by the Press Information Bureau, rather than by the MoD. Thus, his commitment and allegiance to the MoD is not institutionalised."[15]

Further, given the distinct disconnect between the army and the Information Service led establishment, the PROs were granted limited access to operational issues, other than the release of routine press briefs or arranging press meets on specific events. And even when the desire to push for a major initiative or a breaking development arose, the slow and laborious procedures involved made it difficult to meet deadlines that the media was used to, as part of their functioning.

These limitations made sure that the newly spruced up ALC became the centre of all activity during the Kargil conflict and the DPR, including the PROs played a relatively limited role, despite the mandate. This was not the only structural anomaly that was noticed during the conflict. The limited experience of newly placed officers within the ALC also meant that they learnt the ropes more on the job, rather than as a result of institutionalised and structured processes, which prepared them for the task at hand. This often led to conflicting situations and frequent change of orders.

Coping with the SC Challenge

An understanding of some of the limitations that affected the initial experiences of journalists, provides an overview of the challenges faced by the planners of India's information campaign.

The Indian experience from the informational perspective at Kargil is not framed merely as seen by the army or the government, but also as viewed by the people and the media. Before outlining the scope and mandate for SC from the government's perspective, it would be useful to reiterate the evolution of events as viewed by certain sections of the media. These can be assessed during three distinct stages.

The first reflected a state of confusion on part of the government and the armed forces. During this period, there was inadequate information on the nature of intrusion, its extent and the forces behind it. As a result of its underestimation, the

army expected that the eviction would be a routine affair. The contradiction between this assessment and the casualties suffered, when reported by the media, became a cause for consternation within the government and especially the army. The second stage saw the consolidation of the situation, even as the armed forces came to terms with the reality of the challenge. This witnessed mobilisation of forces, implementation of planned attacks and the heroism of the soldiers captured in all its glory by the media. The last stage saw the eventual victory of the Indian state, commencing with Pakistan's decision to withdraw their forces in the wake of military losses on the peaks and diplomatic isolation on the world stage. This was followed up by an evaluation of the campaign, more as a reflection of events and their strategic implications.

Reacting to the Challenge

During the initial phase of the conflict, the army's approach oscillated from not knowing enough to being overconfident of pushing out the "infiltration" purportedly by terrorists supported by the army.[16] The recorded conversation between General Musharraf and his Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant General Mohd. Aziz, reinforced this misinterpretation of the situation on the Indian side. Quoting the conversation between the two Director Generals of Military Operations, Aziz said that the Indian DGMO "would put three points again and again that they (militants) should not be supported, and without your support they could not be there, they have sophisticated weapons and we will flush them out, we will not let them stay there."[17] This misjudgement reflected in the approach towards dissemination of information and its employment to gain leverage over the adversary. The confusion within the Indian Army, understandable under the prevailing conditions immediately after the detection, was also visible from the media's reporting of events.

Shekhar Gupta, who deposed before the Kargil Review Committee, chaired by K. Subrahmanyam, recalls his interaction with the Committee and the details he provided. Even though most of his inputs did not find place in the eventual report, he shared his experiences and findings after a few years of release of the unclassified part of the report. Interestingly, he published the amended version of the transcript that had been provided by him. This included corrections he made, to ensure that the transcript carried his understanding of events. It said:

> There was an effort on the part of the Government to pretend that nothing had happened. In conversations with uniformed persons, Shri Gupta explained that he was told until 26/27 May that it was no 'big deal'. Briefings at highest level (DGMO) also underplayed the crisis saying that only there were incursions in 3 small pockets which would soon be cleared. The MEA briefing by the Foreign Secretary also said that a few incursions had taken place and they were being pushed back.[18]

Shekhar Gupta's observations are corroborated by the press release issued by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Defence Wing, entitled, "Infiltrators on the Run" on May 18, 1999. It spoke of heavy casualties having been suffered by the infiltrators, their being evicted from five posts and remaining areas following suit shortly. It also claimed their supply lines being cut off from Pakistan.[19] This, as events subsequently proved, did not reflect the reality of the situation as it prevailed during that period.

There was widespread acknowledgement of the media's positive role during the Kargil conflict in India. However, the mutual admiration that the media had for the soldiers fighting in Kargil and the soldiers displayed for the media beaming their stories across the world, also witnessed a degree of acrimony. This was especially so during the initial phase of media induction into the battle zone. Gaurav Sawant indicates at least two

instances when he was almost placed under arrest by the army for what he describes as "objective reporting". This was partly a result of the initial setbacks suffered on the battlefield. Much to its embarrassment, it was after 2-3 weeks that the army realised the extent of the actual intrusion. This was accompanied by the understanding of the magnitude of the military challenge that the task of evicting the enemy presented to the soldiers. And worse, the casualties that the initial forays brought, even as the army scrambled to orchestrate a coherent response, amplified the pain that some of the reporting caused. "At the initial stage, truth was painful to the army—especially their top brass."[20]

On June 4, 1999, the entry of journalists into the sector was banned. Orders were also passed to stop interactions between the media and the soldiers.[21] Misgivings between sections of the media and the army were evident for a few days thereafter, given the adverse operational conditions and slips in coverage that threatened to affect security from the army's perspective. The yearning to cover the war on one hand and the army's attempt at safeguarding their security on the other, became conflicting requirements, until it was largely resolved over the next few days.[22]

The initial period also saw a rush of journalists into the battle-zone on the one hand and the army desperately attempting to regulate both the news and their movement, on the other. Control of access from Srinagar based 15 Corps headquarters, Command Headquarters at Udhampur, New Delhi based Public Relations Officers of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the three-armed forces, as well as the newly established Army Liaison Cell, saw frequent change in orders. From a stage where reporters reached the conflict zone on their own, to receiving formal permission to report from the battle zone and finally being stopped en route, every possible situation played out during this period. Similarly, access to media persons from Delhi, often superseded requests from local journalists from Srinagar, much to their irritation. A

similar case was observed in the case of provision of hired transport to selective journalists.[23] This was aggravated by the large theatre of conflict and limited coordinating mechanisms available for mobility within it. The capacity of structures at Srinagar and New Delhi to coordinate and control reportage at Kargil was bound to remain sub-optimal under these circumstances.[24] Further, the absence of a structured information dissemination mechanism at Kargil, meant that coordination became a challenge, especially as the battle progressed and most newspapers and television channels became desperate to seek a direct feed from the battle zone.

The organisational structures involved with SC also came under unprecedented strain. This was clearly evident from the contradictions that arose from this strain. Some of the initial statements did little justice to the situation prevailing in the battle zone. Chindu Sreedharan quotes one such incident from a media brief which read: "We detected the intrusion very early and responded effectively".[25] Sreedharan makes an important point regarding the provision of realistic inputs and the negative impact of failing to do so. "Thus, to conclude, in their excitement at managing the war, Delhi has clean forgotten the dangers of mismanaging public relations. It has forgotten that downplaying big trouble will lead to greater trouble."[26]

The nature of reporting that emanated from the battle zone, at times in the absence of corroboration, ended up misrepresenting the actual situation. Media's access to individual soldiers and officers, who were exposed to a part of the reality, also led to a distorted picture in some cases, given the limited understanding of individual soldiers of the conflict situation.[27] This limitation had an adverse impact on the prevailing conditions. Rumours that emanated from within the battle-zone, often on the basis of uncorroborated individual inputs, created false alarms. It was therefore not surprising that the media reported the presence of women fighters seen cooking on the heights and concrete bunkers

in the area. As was subsequently ascertained, these reports were a result of unsubstantiated and exaggerated inputs received during the conflict.[28] On their part, journalists approached their personal contacts to verify information, however, this could not replace an information dissemination structure at Kargil. The ALC could at best facilitate information dissemination at Delhi. Though, as journalists at times found, there was a time lag between their inputs in Kargil, when compared with substantiated confirmations that were given at New Delhi. At times, the "sanitised" version lost the impact that direct feeds from Kargil were having. Often this was not merely a lag, but factual inaccuracies that crept between the versions in the field and at Delhi. In one case, while a statement issued in Delhi suggested that the intruders had been pushed "right up to the LoC" in the Batalik sector, army inputs closer to the sector suggested otherwise.[29]

This limitation was acknowledged by General Malik as well. "Most of the public relations officers, including some from the Army, had very little knowledge or experience of combat situations. They were unable to respond adequately, or in time, to the queries raised by the domestic and foreign media persons." Most times the challenge emanated from the limited understanding of what makes a good story that the people at large would be keen to read or see. This is where General Malik's assessment was spot on and was shared by journalists as well.

> I am not asking the Indian forces to share operational secrets with the media. I don't want them to come running to us every time they lose or kill a man. All I suggest is that they share information that can be shared. That they capitalise on stories that would sell the Indian operations to the world—and, believe me, there are plenty of 'em![30]

Over time, an attempt was made to create a "pool system" of reporting which included briefings, tour visits to Kargil and

operational rundowns. However, this structured format, given limited resources and the very nature of the format, did not last long.[31] The reservations of the media to such a system eventually led to its discontinuation.

During the course of reporting from the battlefield, both the army and the media faced a rather complex contradiction. The stories that welded the country together during the two-month-long conflict, were the ones that brought the element of human emotion, narrated by individual soldiers, going into or coming back from a bloody battle. This captured the reality and vagaries of war, creating an emotional connect between the soldiers fighting in a distant battlefield, and the people of the country, who suddenly became an extension of their pain, mirth, laughter and stoic resistance in the face of death. This presented a paradox for planners within the army. For a strictly hierarchical organisation, the freedom to soldiers to speak their mind could not have come easily. However, it was this very freedom that eventually turned the informational tide in favour of India. Gen Malik acknowledges that the "almost instantaneous" war reporting was helpful in "obtaining public support for the war effort".[32]

The Pushback—An SC Offensive

By the time air assets were pressed into action and the complete war waging potential of the country, including the navy, was put into motion, the armed forces and all other elements of the state were well poised to turn the tide of battle in their favour. This was also the stage at which the reality of the events hit the media with the same force as the Indian side hit back at the adversary. By June 7, 1999, it was evident to the army that the real adversary that the country confronted was the Pakistan Army.[33] The "mujahideen" fiction was merely a lie that had been allowed to perpetuate, given the strategic advantage that it offered Pakistan.

The information policy of the government during the Kargil conflict was not as clearly spelt out in public. It can however be

deduced from the national objectives shared by the MEA.[34] These were:

1. Pakistan's armed intrusion in Kargil will be evicted and its aggression vacated. All Pakistan regular troops and extremist elements under its command and control will have to withdraw. For this purpose, our armed forces will take all necessary action on our side of the LoC.
2. Once this intrusion has been cleared, Pakistan would need to reaffirm the inviolability and sanctity of the LoC.
3. Dialogue, as part of the Lahore process, which after all, was initiated by us could only then be resumed.

The pursuit of these objectives by extension is therefore a logical conclusion that can be inferred from the course of events thereafter. However, given the cohesive and combined conduct of the information campaign by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), air force and army spokespersons, it is reasonable to assume that General Malik's interpretation of these guidelines was an attempt at formulating an SC strategy on the basis of the government's political objectives as outlined by Jaswant Singh.[35]

• Expose Pakistan regarding their involvement in operations, delineation of LoC and their disinformation campaign.
• Justify the policy of restraint and the logic of military action.
• Spread awareness of organisational capability, valour, morale, leadership and determination to win.
• Stick to the truth. Analysis only by senior officers.

Singh's understanding of events as they unfolded, and the impact of media as "almost a player in the contest," became an important element of the ensuing SC strategy pursued by the government. Jaswant Singh realised "how important it was that India got across its viewpoint effectively, timely and correctly".[36] It was in pursuance of these objectives that he decided to have joint press briefings with the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry

of Defence. Interestingly, they met Jaswant Singh whenever he was in Delhi prior to their engagement with the media to ensure that the right message, in the right terms was passed on to the world at large. It is little wonder that the approach adopted by the government continues to stand out as an excellent example of SC. The applicability of the medium as a tool of warfare was an apt assessment that was understood and implemented from the highest level of the government.[37]

This was not only evident at the level of the joint briefings, but also in the manner in which India undertook its larger media outreach with clear objectives that it was required to achieve. The resolve of the Indian state to push intruders back from Indian territory, unambiguity regarding the LoC, direct involvement of the Pakistani state and maturity in handling of the situation, were clearly outlined objectives that all constituents of the state, both within and outside the country, strived to achieve. Their success in this endeavour, can largely be attributed to an effective policy of SC that was well conceived at the highest level of the government, carefully calibrated during the course of the conflict and implemented by all constituents. Any aberration that did take place, was quickly offset by immediate corrective action. As an illustration, a statement by the Defence Minister George Fernandes regarding free passage to the intruders did not go down well with some sections within and beyond the government.[38] However, this was denied by him soon thereafter.[39]

Amongst the successful SC endeavours were efforts aimed at exposing Pakistan's direct involvement in the Kargil misadventure. This was cemented by the release of conversation between Musharraf and Aziz, intelligence gathered by major countries like the US, inadvertent leaks from within the Pakistani ranks, and through concerted efforts of the ALC. In addition to the display of captured documents recovered from dead Pakistani soldiers, interviews with captured soldiers were also organised by the ALC and released through the media. Despite this irrefutable evidence,

Pakistan continued to refuse acceptance of their soldiers' bodies. Brigadier Williams confirms that this changed when soldiers from Pakistani Punjab were killed and pressure mounted from the heartland to change the policy.[40]

Similarly, India's unambiguous stand on its resolve to evict the enemy from its territory remained clear and resolute throughout the period of conflict. Not only did India indicate the use of force despite self-imposed constraints, it was also suggested on more occasions that one that these restrictions could be discarded if Pakistan did not understand reason and restraint. Barkha Dutt indicates in her book on the basis of an interview with Brajesh Mishra that Vajpayee's letter to Clinton suggested that "Crossing the Line of Control (LoC) was not ruled out".[41]

The success of India's SC was not only felt by the domestic audience, but also by foreign media persons, who witnessed a shift in how the conflict was approached. Dwaipayan quotes Tony Clifton of *Newsweek* who compares the Kargil conflict to the secrecy surrounding the 1971 Indo-Pak war that he had covered: "I'm very much struck by the regular Indian briefings, admitting casualties, pictures of coffins coming home—somewhere along the line the public relations of the Indian army have been turned around 180 degrees."[42]

While this arrangement worked well, it could convey only as much, in an open environment. An element of information strategy that was not exploited to quite the same degree was the concept of off-record background briefings. Dinesh Kumar felt that background briefings to defence correspondents during the conflict could have created a more understanding and a sympathetic support base for the armed forces.[43] This is an assessment reinforced by the Kargil Review Committee report as well.[44] It does not imply that such briefings did not take place.[45] Possibly the number of interactions and its scope was not found adequate in some quarters.

Introspection

The aftermath of the Kargil conflict presented a mixed set of emotions. On the one hand, the euphoria of a well-deserved victory pervaded in the country. However, on the other, instead of an objective assessment of limitations and weaknesses, a competition for credit and the tendency to shift the blame became all too evident. The televised nature of the conflict not only brought home the glory and heroism of leaders, it also highlighted the existing faultlines in the process. Some of these issues included the responsibility for intelligence failure, inter-service differences, especially between the air force and the army,[46] procurement procedures and credit for the victory at Kargil, given the electoral implications of the same.

These debates had their share of news space in the aftermath of the conflict. However, instead of analysing the perspectives projected by respective sides, it is possibly more relevant to debate the structural factors that became reasons for the differences to arise. Different agencies and services are bound to have their respective perspectives. The aftermath of the Kargil conflict became an avoidable competition, where debates veered away from analysing doctrines and ideas which could have enhanced the decision-making process. This can be attributed to the inability to think and function collectively in spirit, even if circumstances forced it in practice. This emanates from structural fissures among different organs of the state. It is equally relevant for differences between the three wings of the armed forces. Kargil remains a lesson in what went right. However it is also a lesson for what can be done better through enhanced integration and closer cohesion to ultimately ensure collective ownership of national security.

Pakistan

Pakistan's information handling structures were better defined during the Kargil conflict. The Inter-Services Public Relations

(ISPR) department, which functions as a mouthpiece of the armed forces, not only deals with public relations, but also SC. The ISPR, established in 1949, with elements of all the services, has deep roots in not only disseminating information, but also shaping opinions. Lt Gen Ata Hasnain describes the ISPR as the "psy-warfare centre of the Pakistan armed forces" and "the most professional PR and strategic communication machinery ever put together by a set of armed forces anywhere in the world".[47]

The structured and homogenous organisation of the ISPR is the face of public relations for the armed forces in Pakistan. However, the military dimension of operations is undertaken by the ISI, to include Information Operations (IO) and Intelligence-Based Warfare (IBW). As an illustration, the ISI has singularly been responsible for Pakistan's employment of terrorism in Afghanistan and India. This not only relates more recently to Kashmir, but also to operations undertaken in Punjab and prior to that, in Northeast India. To that extent, a part of ISI's responsibilities includes Information Warfare (IW) as its charter, even as the ISPR provides the public relations face for the same. However, research on the ISI and personalised accounts suggest that the ISI's capabilities go well beyond IW. *The Bear Trap*, provides a revealing account of the ISI's role in Afghanistan, as does Steve Coll, an award-winning journalist specialising on Afghanistan and Pakistan, more recently in his book, *Directorate S*.[48] Rana Banerji, a former Indian government official and specialist on the Pakistan armed forces, provides a detailed analytical assessment of the ISI and its evolutionary role over the years.[49] This reinforces the contributions of the ISI in information-based operations, especially in India.

If Pakistan possessed a more robust, cohesive and capable structure during the Kargil conflict, why did its narrative and information operation falter? The challenge faced by both these organisations was not very different from that of Pakistan's diplomatic corps. A detailed assessment of these challenges has

been attempted separately. Briefly, Pakistan's failure to create an impact, in the long run, stems from similar reasons.

The narrative that drove the media campaign was riddled with far too many contradictions. This made it difficult to sustain its core underpinnings beyond the initial period of euphoria. The ISPR, over the years, has been successful in selling Pakistan's victimhood to its population. There has been a continuity in their narrative that has become a part of the country's basis for competition with India. Closer to the events in Kargil, an attempt was made to illustrate this through contrived examples like India's occupation of Siachen and prior to that, violations of the LoC. However, the ISPR failed to sell it to the international audience, who were not taken in by the historical co-relation, especially since it was largely fallacious. The story of India's impending offensive that led to Pakistan Army's decision to plug the gaps to forestall it, was also rejected given the failure of ISPR to muster up any substantive evidence in support of the same. It was even more difficult for Pakistan to sustain the narrative of mujahideen spearheading the campaign, which after the initial period of the conflict, fell by the wayside. William Milam confirms that the Director General of Military Operations of the Pakistan Army had confided in the US military attaché the active involvement of the Northern Light Infantry in fighting the Indian Army.[50] Dwaipayan Bose reinforces this reality.[51] He suggests that the Pakistani media was unable to better utilise the situation, given the lie of mujahideen that the army continued to peddle to the people. He also suggests that the restrictions that were placed on the media to visit areas in the vicinity of the battle zone, unlike India, further distanced them from the realities of war.

The media underlined these realities in Pakistan, as part of a seminar held in the country, during the conflict. The Pakistani scribes envied the performance of their Indian counterparts during the conflict, while at the same time, "regretting that their own media failed because of the government's policy to keep it in

the dark".[52] Journalists further accused the government of either misleading them or refusing to guide them during the conflict. Contrary to conditions in India, the commencement of the Kargil conflict "coincided with a crackdown on the press and the arrest and humiliation of journalists by the Sharif government".[53] The most telling conclusion of the seminar indicated an important reason for the nature of the response.

> While the government claimed that its army was not involved in the infiltration of Kargil, the press wrote proudly that Pakistani troops had captured Indian posts in Kargil. Similarly, while the Pakistan government was telling the world that the militants involved were Kashmiris, the press was carrying interviews with militant leaders who boasted that the intruders comprised men 'from Morocco to Indonesia'.[54]

This disconnect with the army was a result of the absence of a coherent SC plan. The quartet of officers who conceived the plan attempted to justify it as they went along, without a well-thought-out strategy to address the international audience. As a result, even a well-oiled and structured organisation such as the ISPR and the ISI failed to both justify and retrieve the failing situation.

Suggested Options to Enhance Strategic Communications

Effective SC commences from direction provided by a central narrative that must be formulated in the pursuit of a national vision. Amongst the few senior functionaries from within the government, Nirupama Rao, a former spokesperson for the MEA and Foreign Secretary, has articulated on the issue at length. According to Rao, "strategic communication embodies the confluence of policy goals, effective persuasion and power— political, military and economic. It embodies advanced planning and involves what is termed the 'purposeful use of communication'

to fulfil the mission of the concerned organisation."[55] She further elaborates on the desirable characteristics of such messaging, emphasizing on its simplicity, consistency and compelling nature. Rao points to the limitations of its one-time press release focused impact and instead suggests the use of its interactive nature, done on a real-time basis, aimed at both domestic and international audiences. This, she adds, must be conducted across various interactive platforms rather than merely the ones that command the most information for a specific situation.

The existing structures within the army and for that matter other Indian armed forces as well, raise contradictions that impedes their SC capability. The armed forces are staffed by officers who come on a two to three-year tenure to function as strategic communicators. The selection of these officers is more a function of routine posting, based on their sector profile and meeting the requirements of the appointment. In a best-case scenario, this is supplemented by limited word-of-mouth reputation. These can be a case of generic selection on the basis of profile, which does not include SC attributes. As a result, the process might end up bringing in an ill-equipped officer for the job at hand, despite the fact that he may be professionally sound, but just not cut out for handling SC. Second, the armed forces provide limited opportunities for officers to build and enhance their skills at communicating with people beyond their respective services. This is all the more relevant in case of opportunities to interact with the media, with occasional exceptions in operational areas, where limited interaction is permitted to disseminate information. However, even this is within the parameters of approved briefs. Further, there are few opportunities available for building this capability. These constraints present a challenge since SC is a niche specialisation even in more open environments outside uniform, which often requires the services of specialists to pursue. Courses of instruction and orientation capsules run within the armed forces and in think tanks are useful. However,

beyond a point, most of these are also constrained by a straight-jacketed teaching process, which cannot recreate the environment within which SC can excel.[56] Therefore, finding a suitable officer for the task at hand is likely to remain more an exception rather than the rule.

This reality must be seen in light of certain fundamental characteristics of SC in the context of its role. First, the understanding and expertise of a professional media or communications specialist is unlikely to be replicated within the services under the existing manning policy of the SC set-up. Second, even in more flexible and flat hierarchical organisations, SC is being handled by specialists. Some of the best SC campaigns are designed, developed and deployed by content creators to achieve the requisite impact amongst the intended audience. This is as relevant for the strategic community as it is for non-governmental organisations and the corporate world.[57] Third, the age of social and new media further necessitates the need to operate within the media space on a real-time basis. The existing systems within the services make this a challenge, wherein clearances at every subsequent level are the norm prior to release of information or comments. Fourth, the ADGPI (erstwhile ALC), still does not have complete governmental sanction in terms of its structure and role.[58] This lack of complete sanction finds it in professional conflict with the PRO based set-up, coordinated and controlled by the Indian Information Service. Further, the Information Warfare (IW) set-up within the Army Headquarters adds yet another layer to the structure, without necessarily creating coordinating mechanisms between the three. Fifth, the absence of a nodal authority within the army and amongst the three services, despite the presence of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), limits the quality of coordination that the existing mechanism can generate.

These limitations suggest a contradiction between what needs to be the doctrine guiding the armed forces while planning and executing SC, the structures that are in place and the capacities

that these organisations seem to have. It would be an interesting comparison to correlate the SC functions of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the armed forces. For one, both are organisations with the government and second, the need for strategic outreach seems to be an important requirement for both, as events in the past seem to suggest.

The MEA has created a formal division headed by a Joint Secretary called External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division. Every division within the MEA, feeds inputs to the XP division. These form a part of the weekly briefing of the media. The authenticity of the inputs is ensured by its validation at the highest level within the division. Depending on the nature of inputs, some of which involve relations with other countries, the MEA, if needed, validates the drafts, prior to the XP division releasing them to the media. The system functions as a hub and spokes model. While all other divisions form channels for provision of validated inputs, the XPD collates and releases them thereafter. There is only one central agency in the form of the XPD, vested with the responsibility and authority to deal with public interaction.

In contrast, ADGPI has created requisite capacities over the years. However, the PRO chain remains vested with the power to interact with the media and release information. The hierarchy of the latter has limited understanding of operational issues, as was evident during the Kargil conflict, wherein the ALC (now ADGPI) took over the complete role of information outreach. In the past, individual personalities have facilitated seamless functioning between the two. However, more often than not, these two organisations function within their respective stove pipes and worse, often at cross-purposes.

Technically, the Defence Technical Publicity Rules 2004 continue to guide media interaction. It designates the PROs alone as the official spokespersons. Further, guidelines exist for undertaking publicity, including the level at which it needs to be cleared. The lowest level at which interaction can take place with

the media is a brigade, though with clearance from the Director General of Military Intelligence.[59]

There has been an endeavour on the part of the three services to engage in public diplomacy more proactively. This is especially the case in relation to operational challenges faced by the security forces as part of counter-terrorism operations. There has also been a degree of delegation, which enables officers to brief the media on operational issues. Similarly, the ADGPI is far more active on social media, as compared to the past. However, these initiatives serve the purpose of public information more, rather than the comprehensive requirements of SC.

The challenge of handling SC presents both structural and capacity issues. When this is viewed especially in relation to the armed forces, the closest option that emerges within the government relates it to the XPD in the MEA. This comparison suggests that the MoD, armed forces and more specifically the army needs to create unity of doctrinal thought, structural cohesiveness and operational capacity to ensure effectiveness.

This can best be achieved in the army by amalgamating elements of PRO chain, ADGPI and IW under a single entity. They can ideally be placed under a Director General Information, who looks at public information, strategic communications and psychological operations. The operational elements of information, with both offensive and defensive aspects, can remain with the military operations directorate. This includes elements of IW, to include cyberwarfare (CW) and electronic warfare (EW). A coordinating agency with Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff can function as a bridge between similar structures in the navy and air force as well.

A step in this direction is under consideration, with the army restructuring its headquarters. The possibility of appointing a Deputy Chief (Strategy), with a Director General Information Warfare, with both the ADG(PI) and ADG(IW) under him, is a step in the right direction.[60]

Since it has been noted that service officers can rarely bring the requisite strategic communications expertise, the option to recruit territorial army officers from within the journalistic, advertising, digital and content marketing domains to assist the armed forces, needs to be explored. Needless to say, their experience can help create a pool of SC professionals in uniform. The example of Manvendra Singh during the Kargil conflict is a case in point and needs to be replicated.

Defence forces the world over have often accused the political hierarchy of being relatively ignorant about matters military. However, one area where their training and experience is honed to perfection is the ability create a connection with the electorate. SC is an art most political leaders perfect over time. Therefore, the political leadership is ideally placed to provide SC objectives as part of the overall guidelines. It is up to the armed forces thereafter to derive suitable themes from these as part of their larger military strategy. It is also one area where the political class can remain hands-on during the follow-up process as well.

SC is about openness, transparency and the ability to make the audience a part of the storytelling journey of the principal actor. The armed forces are presently constrained in this regard. There continues to remain misgivings regarding opening up to the world beyond the close-knit uniformed fraternity. Even as professionals are invited to assist in this endeavour, a simultaneous policy of opening the archives, putting in place a realistic declassification policy, sharing military history, making attempts at exposing the general population to the armed forces way of life, are some of the initiatives that need to be taken, to create the requisite impact.

The armed forces in general and the Indian Army in particular has shied away from nurturing specialists, primarily as a result of the existing human resource policies. Often, the challenges of cadre management have trumped the need for creating domain expertise.

The field of SC is no exception. This is one area which requires staff which has the requisite exposure, education and erudition to meet the modern-day communication challenges. Some officers who have headed the public information directorate have done justice to their jobs through sheer perseverance and commitment. However, it is only appropriate that their selection is based on experience in SC, exposure and realistic training on the subject.

The Future

The Kargil conflict, despite being almost two decades old, became an excellent case study for analysing SC. It highlighted the importance of having robust structures in place. However, more importantly, the experience suggested the need for a coherent narrative that must guide a cohesive effort in the pursuit of SC. Pakistan's failure in this regard is an example worth examining.

While the Indian state may have eventually tasted success both on the battlefield and within the domain of SC, the obvious limitations of existing structures continue to remain only too obvious to ignore. These challenges can best be addressed by moving beyond the existing compartmentalised system of functioning and creating a structure which can best implement the vision provided by national policy.

SC is far too complex a field of expertise for generalists to master. Even as reaching out to professionals is an option that can be explored, the possibility of TA officers recruited from within professional media agencies is perhaps a more lasting and reliable possibility that is worth exploring.

Present and future conflicts are as much about the utilisation of force, as they are about the perceptions that are created around them. Often, these perceptions tend to override the reality that they represent. Under these circumstances, where the speed of dissemination of information and the options available to undertake it have increased exponentially, there is little choice but to give SC the importance it deserves.

Notes

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5. Ayesha Siddiqa, "How Pakistan's Military Manages the Media," *The Wire*, https://thewire.in/books/managing-media-pakistan-military, accessed on July 13, 2018.

6. See *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000), pp. 260-62.

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8. Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communications: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates* (California: Praeger, 2011), p. 3.

9. There are different interpretations of SC. However, Ekaterina Vinogradova concludes that the description of SC primarily includes three components. She defines these in her paper as: Public Diplomacy intends to study and inform foreign audiences as well as establishes contacts. Public Affairs includes the management of public opinion. This involves building of associations between society and national agencies or commercial entities to understand social, political or economic processes. Finally, information operations use resources, means and ways of disseminating information to exert a certain effect on human assumptions and behaviour. See Ekaterina Vinogradova, "The Role of Strategic Communication in International Relations," *International Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 4, 2014, p. 169.

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17. Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2006), p. 215.

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19. See Dinesh Kumar, note 14, p. 26.

20. Gaurav Sawant, *Dateline Kargil: A Correspondent's Nine-Week Account from the Battlefront* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2000), p. ix.

21. Ibid., p. 22 and p. 36.

22. For an overview of the relationship of local commanders with the media see, Gaurav Sawant, note 20, pp. 35-37.

23. Dinesh Kumar, note 14, pp. 27-28.

24. Interview with Dinesh Kumar, a correspondent with *The Times of India* during the Kargil conflict on July 18, 2018.

25. Chindu Sreedharan, "How India's losing the PR war," *Rediff On the Net*, June 5, 1999, https://www.rediff.com/news/1999/jun/04chi.htm, accessed on September 6, 2018.

26. Ibid.

27. Col SC Tyagi, note 13, p. 80, quotes Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, who reinforces the adverse implications of coverage based on insights that are constrained in their perspective, given limited exposure to the conflict. This he reinforces was the case in Kargil as well, where media within the battle zone should have concentrated more on human interest stories.

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43. Dinesh Kumar, note 14, p. 29.

44. *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*, note 6, p. 216.

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4

The Challenge of Future Conflicts
Kargil and Beyond

The Kargil conflict was a landmark event in the subcontinental roller-coaster timeline. The conflict followed up on the most decisive war fought between India and Pakistan, a mere 28 years earlier in 1971. In the context of previous wars, Kargil and the events beyond challenged the status quo at several levels. One, in contrast to the 1971 Indo-Pak war, there was a conscious decision by the two countries to restrict their operations to a limited theatre of war, despite a large array of armed forces available to both. Two, the aftermath of the war further reinforced the trend that saw countries moving away from major wars designed to attain strategic objectives. Pakistan's decision to refocus primarily on sub-conventional options against India added credence to this shift. Three, the decision to breach an international understanding by Pakistan when its forces crossed the LoC, was a direct invitation to use force, a reality in the context of two nuclear armed countries that went against conventional wisdom. This saw the pursuit of a conventional war, despite its limited context, under an ominous nuclear overhang. The ensuing events challenged the notion of deterrence that existed within the nuclear haves and the larger strategic community. Four, given the limited canvas available to Pakistan to employ force, the irrationality of the decision became even more apparent. Not surprisingly, Kargil did not cement a place for Musharraf in the annals of military history, at least for the right reasons. Further, the immediate aftermath of the conflict rarely witnessed the General being accused of military acumen,

except within the Pakistan Army's limited circle of serving officers and for obvious reasons.

Despite these contradictions, Musharraf claimed victory and continued with the ongoing hybrid war in J&K. Did this action come as a surprise or reflected the evolving character of war, which increasingly blurred the thin line between victory and defeat? This was not only evident from how Musharraf reacted, but also from the behaviour of other nations and non-state actors involved in protracted hybrid wars. This suggests that irrespective of how military victory or defeat are perceived by the audience, the evolving character of war has created the scope for interpreting it very differently by one or more of the players involved. Second, the results of the Kargil conflict, when seen in contrast with other sub-conventional options, suggest that the law of diminishing returns has begun to afflict conventional wars, considering the advantages that other constituents of hybrid wars provide, especially to the weaker side. While this may yet not clinch the argument in favour of doing away with standing armies trained and prepared to fight such wars, however, it certainly makes a case to step back and take a careful look at the future direction of warfare and the basis for armies still preparing for a war that is less likely to be fought.

The shift in the character of war, as also aggressive competition, has been noted by a number of strategic analysts.[1] However, even as this change seems to be well identified, its relation to victory largely remains work in progress. The shift has also increased the options available to nations to engage in aggressive competition, without going to war. Some of the elements that can be employed within its scope include cyberattacks, economic measures, legal channels, internal disturbances, to highlight a few. One could argue that a few among these instruments have always been available to nations in the past as well. The change lies in the context of their inter-se importance in relation to the use of force. The trend is further reinforced by the increasing faith placed on

some of these elements, especially by major powers, which have chosen hybrid elements to achieve their objectives, instead of more traditional means of enforcing will. The case of Russia's operations in Crimea and Ukraine, Chinese actions in the South China Sea, Iranian, Russian and US actions in Syria and Iraq, and Pakistan's operations in Afghanistan and India, are all indicators of the increasing relevance of the changing character of conflict.

The events centred around Kargil in 1999, and thereafter in the entire J&K and beyond in India, provide a useful case study of how this change has created an opportunity dominated by perceptions. It has further facilitated attempts at turning the notion of victory on its head to derive advantage, at least from a narrow and contrived perspective. Is this a reflection of the changing reality of wars, where perception and narratives will at times obfuscate reality? And if this is indeed possible, will the next conflict also be fought in a similar way with some variations? Given the circumstances prevailing in the subcontinent and its neighbourhood, what are the lessons that can be drawn to ensure that India is better prepared for future conflicts?

The following chapters will endeavour to answer these questions with India as the focal point of research. Unlike the previous section, which dealt primarily with Pakistan, given the context of the Kargil, hereafter China will also be considered as a factor for evaluating potential shifts.

Note

1. Gurmeet Kanwal, "Changing character of conflict: The new wars to come," *Deccan Herald*, October 31, 2018, https://www.deccanherald.com/content/640248/changing-characher-conflict-wars-come.html, accessed on May 15, 2018 and Robert H. Scales, "Forecasting the Future of Warfare," *War on the Rocks*, April 9, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/04/forecasting-the-future-of-warfare/, accessed on May 15, 2018.

5

Competing Notions of Victory
Case of Pakistan

Who Won in Kargil 1999?

Before crystal-gazing into the future, it would be useful to analyse the reality and perception of the Kargil conflict. Amongst the many elements associated with it, there are competing claims of victory that emerge from observers independent of, and involved with, the conflict. It is for this reason that the result of the Kargil conflict varies, depending on the perspective that frames it. It is quite obvious that General Pervez Musharraf, the former Chief of Army Staff, saw it as a military victory. The soldier turned politician, while still in power, wrote in his autobiography: "Considered purely in military terms, the Kargil operations were a landmark in the history of the Pakistan Army … I would like to state emphatically that whatever movement has taken place so far in the direction of finding a solution to Kashmir is due considerably to the Kargil conflict."[1] This is an interesting observation coming from the architect of a conflict fought between two nuclear powers, which was witnessed by the world with justifiable concern. Even as the reality of this claim will be analysed later, purely from an analytical perspective, it becomes more important to assess the tenets of a perceived victory in a kind of conflict represented by Kargil. This is a relevant investigation, as Musharraf's claim and ensuing statement suggests that the notion of victory may have just become a more open-ended formulation in an era wherein, at

times, claiming victory and defeat tend to represent its notion more than the substance of its reality.

Victory, or even military victory, can be viewed from different perspectives. In a sense, it is not very dissimilar from a cricket series played between two sides with a vastly different capability on paper and further, their respective past record to bolster this reality. The first element of varying notions taking over the reality of a series emerges when viewed from the perspective of an individual. A batsman or a batswoman may score a triple century and enter the record books. However, his or her team may end up on the losing side. In such a case, the triple centurion emerges a victor within the limited personal context. These individual achievements might even win the man of the match award and result in career progression. Similarly, a team, which is the underdog in a series, may win its first 20 overs match, only to lose the series. This win in itself might trigger celebrations. In fact, in such a case, victory even in one test match or a twenty overs game, could be seen as a moral victory against the fancied side. Under these circumstances, how does one relate to the notion of victory? For the triple century scorer, the series is perhaps a success. The decidedly weaker team may also claim moral victory based on a single 20 overs match. This is all the more relevant when the side enters the series as an underdog against a much more fancied opponent. The evolving character of conflicts and the resultant change in the notion of victory has also raised similar issues. This is especially the case when victory and defeat tend to be seen and acknowledged within a specific sphere of time, underscored by a pre-designated duration and number of matches to be played. This has the characteristics of a finite game, rather than an infinite play, a concept that will be analysed later in the section to relate both the notion of victory and approach of countries to their inter-se competition.

It is important to contextualise this reality in relation to how Pakistan's approach towards India has evolved over a period of

time. The shift has not been sudden. Instead, it is an outcome of Pakistan's compulsion when faced by a conventionally superior adversary and the failure to achieve desired strategic objectives.

There was a vacuum created by the absence of a major war between India and Pakistan because of the nuclearisation of both countries. The resultant situation forced Pakistan to look for alternatives in order to continue with its policy of seeking victory, even if its notion had undergone a change. This vacuum was filled by employing terrorism as an instrument of state policy by Pakistan as part of its hybrid war. The introduction of hybrid war in the military lexicon is a recent phenomenon, however, it has been practised for long. Both India and Pakistan are not exceptions to this art. However, what evolved was the inter-se importance of components employed as part of this war, and their evolution, given the impact of technology. This trajectory in the case of Pakistan stems from its history of military engagements with India. The failed employment of militia both in 1947-48 and 1965 in support for a major military campaign saw the turning of the tables on Pakistan, with India paying back in a similar way. This resulted in an embarrassing loss on the battlefield and of national morale in 1971. The realisation that the conventional battlefield was unlikely to produce desirable results, the sub-conventional domain took centre stage. From amongst the bouquet of options in its hybrid quiver, Pakistan laid increasing emphasis on terrorism as an instrument of an undeclared war. The loss of 1971, wherein there was little doubt regarding the losing side, gave way to a far more ambiguous conflict, fought amongst the people. Here, unlike the 1971 war, there were no instruments of surrender, no battles won or lost, no air, naval or land campaigns. The battle of attrition unleashed by Pakistan, was designed to bleed India through a thousand cuts. Victory was integral to its very initiation.[2] The protracted conduct of this new form of war, was a statement aimed at challenging the might of a larger and arguably more powerful state.

The resultant notion of victory had the ingredients of success at a number of levels. For the governing elite, it worked at the psychological and political level. Pakistani leaders repeatedly raised their voice in support of the so-called threatened and persecuted Muslims in Kashmir and India, to reorient the focus of their population towards an external threat. This served the purpose of diverting attention from domestic mismanagement. It further helped retain the artificial construct that had gone into creating and sustaining the idea of Pakistan, in order to cement fissiparous tendencies, lessons from the emergence of Bangladesh notwithstanding.

The military, as the pre-eminent institution in Pakistan and often the de facto government itself, employed the ongoing struggle in Kashmir as a raison d'être for its existence. The generals linked the army to the safety and security of the country, in the face of an existential threat to Pakistan. This imagined fear reinforced the institution's importance and position.[3] The phantom threat also ensured a steady funding for their personal and institutional extravagance. And finally, radical elements within Pakistan were allowed the requisite space to further their agenda of bashing "Hindu India," in the fond hope that it would keep the fires of extremism isolated from domestic faultlines. Even as this policy achieved limited success, domestic flames ravaged the country in an ongoing struggle between moderation and extremism.

Despite this reality, each of these constituents viewed victory from the confines of their narrow interests. The retention of power and the utopian idea of playing a perpetual David in the fight against a big, bad Goliath, represented in itself an element of victory, irrespective of the eventual result. This was made possible because the hybrid war that was being waged was characterised by its protracted nature. It ensured that immediate and clearly identifiable results were conspicuous by their absence. Under these conditions, the reinterpretation of victory became that much more a case of arguing its notion and imagination.

In a bid to convert a lost finite war against India into an infinite one, fought under favourable conditions, Pakistan removed the rule of a fixed timeline for the match, which could be prolonged on its terms. However, every successive leader never succeeded in eliminating the burning desire for a victory during his/her leadership. This is the reason why Pakistan's hybrid strategy has remained and will probably continue to remain unsuccessful, as has been the case during the past 30 years and more.

The success of this strategy was closely linked to international attention and support for Pakistan's Kashmir cause. When this seemed to slip, given the weariness of major powers and intransigence of the opposing sides, Musharraf attempted to raise the threshold of tolerance. He tested both nuclear and conventional deterrence that existed between India and Pakistan, in a bid to seek international attention and intervention. Kargil was an attempt at crowning the perceived strategic advantage that Pakistan had achieved, through its employment of terrorism in Kashmir. Musharraf's smug perception of India's constraints and international unease, given the nuclear dimensions, allowed him to believe that Pakistan could not only reinforce its notion of victory, but also strengthen it through Kargil. The combined impact of the Kargil misadventure and 9/11 changed that. This lethal combination was a recipe for disaster for the world at large, wherein nuclear blackmail could become the backdrop for using terrorism as a state policy. The delicate balance that Pakistan had straddled with acrobatic excellence, finally seemed to have been hit by Musharraf's impatient desire for forcing a solution to the Kashmir issue. The prevailing notion of victory was overridden by a chronic case of strategic overreach. Resultantly, the short-sighted desire to achieve the immediate finite military gains had overtaken the more profound and long-term infinite approach.

The analogy of the triple centurion was given a shot by Musharraf after the Kargil debacle in a bid to extract the traces of a victory. He drove a wedge between half-baked military

achievements during the conflict and its diplomatic failure. He also attempted to attribute the initial limited success of the tactical manoeuvre to strategic gains that pre-empted India's "planned offensive", which was merely an excuse conveniently manufactured to undertake the misadventure.[4] Despite the well documented military and diplomatic setbacks, he continued to claim victory. This was facilitated by the hazy notion of victory that can accompany a conflict like Kargil, where after both sides return to their original military deployment, it becomes difficult to articulate the achievement of designated or, worse, undesignated objectives. In the case of Pakistan, this translated to Musharraf claiming that any movement on the Kashmir issue, was a result of Kargil.[5] He also suggested that the grand tactical achievement won the war for Pakistan. He reinforced his argument by further linking it to the casualties suffered by India. He falsely assessed it to be higher than the number of Pakistani soldiers killed during the conflict.[6] The desperation of these claims indicated an attempt to overshadow a more realistic and objective assessment of the conflict in terms of the notion of victory.

This can best be analysed based on the terminal objectives of the conflict, outlined by both sides. The achievement of these objectives, partial or complete, as well as the efficiency with which these were implemented, provides a clear assessment of the notion of victory that was aimed to be achieved. Pakistan's aims, as indicated by Musharraf included pre-empting an offensive against Pakistan, movement on Kashmir and achieving near parity of force-levels thereby forestalling a conventional attack.[7]

The very first reason cited by Musharraf for undertaking the tactical military operation by Pakistan suggested that a military manoeuvre by India, was already in an advanced stage of planning. This claim has not since been corroborated by any source, despite a number of international insider accounts being published. The purported military action does not find any mention or even a hint, despite detailed accounts having been written during the

last 20 years in India. It is quite evident that Musharraf employed it as a bogey for justifying his misadventure. The absence of the option cannot therefore be taken as the basis for assessing the success on part of Pakistan. Conversely, the desperation to concoct an alibi indicates the desire to create a smokescreen for the misadventure.

The lack of movement on the Kashmir issue between the two countries, despite two decades having passed since the Kargil conflict is self-evident. Therefore, any claim to victory is a self-defeating argument. On the contrary, Kargil has remained the most prominent symbol of distrust for any Indian negotiator since then. The Lahore agreement is a lesson India is unlikely to forget any time soon.

Musharraf's bluff of achieving conventional military balance was called when India employed all three services to ensure eviction of the intrusion. It was further reinforced by the bottling up of the Karachi harbour by the Indian Navy and the armed forces being placed on a six-day notice for undertaking an offensive.[8] Finally, lessons from the Kargil conflict led to the cementing of the limited war doctrine that was highlighted by General Malik in 2000 and became a formal part of the Indian Army doctrine in 2004.[9] More recently, India undertook air strikes at the JeM camp at Balakot in Pakistan, despite the supposed military balance and deterrence that exists between the two countries. Had Musharraf's claimed objective been achieved, none of these actions would have been implemented.

In contrast, India's objective was primarily to achieve status quo ante and force Pakistan's return across the LoC and restore its sanctity.[10] There is little doubt that this objective was ensured by the country over a period of three months. Besides this, the resultant achievements went beyond the stated goal. India emerged as the more mature and stable country, which could handle its status as a nuclear power, unlike Pakistan. The unintended consequences of this period also witnessed a series of

dialogues that built the foundation for a breakthrough with the US. The trust that was created allowed the building of a strategic partnership. As a follow up, India and the US were described by Vajpayee as "natural allies".[11]

This should be seen in the context of India and Pakistan's diplomatic status immediately after the nuclear tests. As highlighted earlier, India was under considerable pressure. Kashmir, much to India's discomfiture had been pitchforked into the forefront of outstanding international diplomatic issues. By the time curtains fell on the Kargil episode, Pakistan had all but lost the leverage it had gained in 1998 after the nuclear tests. Intended or otherwise, India had emerged with major diplomatic gains, especially in contrast with Pakistan. The events that followed only reinforced this reality.

If these were the comparative stated goals of the two sides, there is little doubt regarding the victor, despite the relatively flexible notion of victory that was paraded by Pakistan. The only factor that diluted this victory for India was the cost that had to be paid, irrespective of the fact that Pakistan may have paid an even higher price in terms of casualties during the conflict. This raises the possibility of Pakistan having evolved its strategy to further downscale the concept of limited wars in the context of its hybridisation. It simultaneously saw India hone its strategy as well to ensure that limited strategic objectives could be achieved through less manpower intensive means.

Pakistan's Evolving Strategy of Limited Conflict

The debacle at Kargil forced a rethink in the Pakistani military establishment. Pakistan's strategy to fight India, with specific reference to Kashmir, seemed to have come a full circle. Commencing in 1989, it began with an active strategy to employ terrorism as an instrument of state policy in Kashmir. This strategy aimed to create unrest and tie down the armed forces, during the initial years. The receding benefits of this approach,

led to the Kargil conflict shortly after the nuclear tests in 1998. The failure to achieve desired objectives, adverse international reaction and the military disadvantage of a limited conflict, led Pakistan to revitalise terrorism. Post 1998, this came with the added insurance of its nuclearisation and the ability to wage an increasingly effective information war. Post-Kargil, the script that played out was along predictable lines. Pakistan employed a calibrated and coordinated policy of subversion and terrorism against India. With the initial exception of attacks against politically sensitive targets such as the Indian Parliament, which led to the arraignment of armed forces along the borders during Operation Parakram, Pakistan kept the threshold below the level that might provoke a military response. However, this balance was severely tested after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, which saw terrorists take the sea route to enter the financial capital of India and unleash high profile attacks against high visibility targets. Emboldened by the absence of a strong military reaction, the metamorphosis into a classical hybrid war, with terrorism and information technology becoming the primary components and hard power retaining its salience in support, became the basis of Pakistan's strategy of retaining the initiative against India.

Not only did this sustain terrorism as a policy against India, despite hitting a historical low in terms of violent incidents in 2012-13, it also shifted the notion of victory as relevant to Pakistan.[12] There was no longer the need for Pakistan to indulge in major conflicts in an attempt to seek an immediate solution to its perceived grievances. Time was on its side, in a bid to test India's patience and resolve in J&K and beyond.

In the absence of a war where major gain or regain of territory, military surrender or withdrawal, loss of diplomatic objectives on the post-war negotiating table were unlikely to be achieved, the notion of victory became diffused. It could well range from the symbolic to the psychological. It could even end up being an element of information dominance, where the side

that presented a more compelling narrative, was likely to emerge as the victor, albeit for a certain duration of time, until the next round of events overtook them. Further, the changing character of conflict, especially in the domain of hybrid wars, lent itself to a degree of ambiguity, unless the results become all too obvious to discern. Pakistan's grand strategy of employing this form of warfare, where sub-conventional options gained a primary role, even as more conventional military forms of warfare provided support and deterrence, is a case in point.

In the case of a protracted struggle that Kashmir represents and where the eventual notion of victory may be decided years or even decades down the line, some incidents became important milestones in an attempt to sustain the hybrid war by Pakistan. These terror strikes that were aimed at reinforcing Pakistan's notion of victory by exposing India's helplessness, instead, ended up reversing the narrative. Two such incidents, at Uri in 2016 and Pulwama in 2019, deserve emphasis.

On September 17, 2016, terrorists from Pakistan struck at a brigade headquarter at Uri. The attack resulted in 17 fatal casualties and a greater number seriously injured.[13] A number of soldiers were targeted even as they were asleep in tented accommodation, residing temporarily as part of a scheduled change of battalions on completion of tenure. The strike was a setback for the armed forces as well as the country, given the manner and scale of the attack. Conversely for Pakistan, which considers waging its war through the instrumentality of terrorism, this was intended to be yet another successful attempt at tactically bleeding India, as part of its changing notion of victory. The aftermath of the incident was followed by statements on predictable lines. Official spokespersons in Pakistan denied any linkages with the incident. The ISPR asked for "actionable intelligence" in response to India's "unfounded and premature allegation". Simultaneously, statements referred to the rights of Kashmiris, in a bid to link the two distinct and different aspects.[14]

The duality of this narrative was fed through very different means of strategic communication within Pakistan. The media in Pakistan and especially the Urdu press preferred to seek a conspiracy in the incident. It was insinuated that Indian agencies had conducted the attack in order to blame Pakistan.[15] For the others, even as terrorism of any kind, irrespective of the cause was avoidable, their perception of India's provocations helped turn a blind eye to terrorism emanating from their country.[16] The success of the attack also strengthened the terrorist leadership and its ideological moorings, potentially augmenting its recruitment base and motivating its ranks.

On February 14, 2019, yet another sensational attack saw a suicide bomber of the JeM in an explosive laden car, crash his vehicle against a bus carrying Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) soldiers moving from Jammu to Srinagar, as part of a routine convoy move. This was the first such suicide attack by a locally recruited terrorist, suggesting a shift in Pakistan's strategy to further indigenise their campaign. It could also potentially allow Pakistan to shift the blame and reduce pressure that has consistently been building upon the country.

This incident was also accompanied by a carefully orchestrated campaign within Pakistan. As before, it followed a well-practised and choreographed sequence of offers and insights. Imran Khan, Pakistan's Prime Minister said that India should "stop blaming Pakistan without any proof or evidence". As in the past, he asked India to share "actionable intelligence". The rejection of Pakistan's role in the terror attack was also accompanied by a warning. "If you think that you will launch any kind of attack on Pakistan, Pakistan will not just think about retaliation, Pakistan will retaliate."[17]

On February 26, 2019, after India's strike against the JeM camp at Balakot and Pakistan's response the next day, a similar sentiment was voiced yet again. Khan indicated his deep understanding of what victims of terror undergo and therefore

shared the hurt of the people post the Pulwama terrorist attack. He indicated that it was not in Pakistan's interest to allow its soil to be exploited for attacks anywhere in the world. Having dismissed India's operation, he incorrectly stated that Pakistan had shot down two Indian MiG aircraft and both pilots were in their captivity.[18] This was a factually incorrect statement, as was clarified by Pakistan later.[19]

Imran's articulation of the way ahead suggested the need to "talk about our problems". However, as has been the case in the past, there were no indicators of the desire to initiate action against terror groups operating against India. This included pending cases after the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai. In the case of Pulwama, with JeM having taken responsibility for the attack, there was little in terms of "actionable intelligence" needed from India.[20] Despite this reality, the pretence of sincerity continued to shield the reality of subterfuge. As had been the case in the past, this remained the basis for Pakistan's narrative that accompanied each major terrorist strike as an element of its hybrid war against India.

In addition to this episodic narrative that accompanied individual terrorist acts, there also exists a deeper conflict with subcontinental historical realities in a bid to seek superiority and relevance. This artificial construct is created by relating centuries of invasions by Muslim kings with Pakistan's military iconology. In doing so, the Pakistani state has attempted to influence domestic popular opinion through a contrived reading of history. This endeavour employs religion to not only present a negative caricature of "Hindu" India but to also counter the disagreement emerging from within Afghanistan.

The inherent contradictions of Pakistan as a state, emerged from the "artificially induced hostility towards India" kept alive through half-truths and falsehood.[21] The Pakistani elite attempted to create an inherent sense of superiority that feeds from the notion of being the rightful inheritors of Muslim rulers, who

controlled much of the subcontinent for centuries. This deep-rooted psychology is evident from how Pakistan reinterprets history to suit its narrative and, in some cases, a deeply held belief. Pakistan's christening of their missiles after Muslim invaders into the Indian subcontinent is one such example. This includes names such as Ghauri, Ghaznavi, Babur and Abdali.

Interestingly, all these historical figures were Afghans and not Pakistanis, irrespective of how history is stretched. Mahmood Ghaznavi is venerated for his great victories against "Hindu" kings of South Asia.[22] However, what is often lost sight of is that he was an Afghan who raided the territories of what was India in those days and corresponds to present-day Pakistan and North-Western India. The narrative is therefore more a celebration of victory achieved by a Muslim ruler over Hindus and non-Sunni Muslims to include Shias and Ismailis, irrespective of where they came from.

The attempt at exploiting religion as a tool for psychological advantage that Pakistani leaders have attempted within their society and especially the army, is not only in relation to India, but also Afghanistan. Just as Pakistan attempted to obfuscate reality and gain psychological advantage with the use of names of Afghan military commanders to prove military superiority against India, simultaneously, a series of operations against local uprising, especially linked with Afghan rebels, were termed *Zarb-e-Azb*. This translates to a strike using the personal weapon of Prophet Mohammad, yet again in an attempt to differentiate the Pakistanis as good Muslims against the Afghans, who clearly were at the receiving end of this operation.[23]

India is not the only country which has witnessed the employment of hybrid war as a strategy by Pakistan. The direct and indirect use of it is also evident in Afghanistan, where the Afghan state and the US became its targets. Pakistan's strategy of employing hybrid war in Afghanistan has been characterised by a complex interplay of passive and active measures. It included

the employment of the Taliban and the Haqqani network to seek greater control over the country. This often involved targeting their partners, the US forces, which were otherwise Pakistan's allies against Al Qaeda. The killing of CIA agents through the Haqqani network is a case in point.[24] The policy of selective targeting of terrorists and appeasement of the US, even as the core interests of Pakistan were safeguarded, became the abiding policy guideline within the Pakistani establishment. This was accompanied by a couple of key elements of SC. First, the need for US support was premised on the Pakistani Army's continuing fight against fanatical sources, which could destabilise the nuclear armed state, resulting in a variety of doomsday scenarios. Second, Pakistan had done more for the US in its fight against terrorism than any other country, often at the cost of its soldiers. These arguments were repeated ad nauseam. The US understood that they were being played.[25] However, for them, the support that was available for targeting the Al Qaeda represented a greater benefit, when compared to the tacit support that was being provided by Pakistan to the Taliban. There was also a constituency within the US, which actually went along with the possibility of the Taliban's role in any future government in Afghanistan. Pakistan saw its notion of victory in continuing to remain the most important element in any future Afghan settlement through the delicate balancing act with the Americans. The US, on the other hand, saw it in retaining control over state structures and the steady defanging of the Al Qaeda along with the eventual killing of Osama bin Laden, which came as a bonus. Pakistan and the Taliban remained convinced of their ability to outlast the US in this protracted great game that was being played amongst allies rather than adversaries, a clear case of playing as an infinite player. In this endeavour, the ISI was the fulcrum of Pakistan's policy of duplicity. "This was the ISI in microcosm: an institution well practiced at manipulating the C.I.A. and the Taliban simultaneously."[26] Coll adds, "All along, it was clear

what the I.S.I. wanted from the United States, besides cash and arms: Pakistan sought greater influence in Kabul, to counter India's presumed influence …"[27]

Pakistan's ability to pursue this objective continued irrespective of US presence. Just like their experience in India, there were instances of perceived victory and setbacks for Pakistan in Afghanistan. The biggest setback was the refusal of the US to initially negotiate with the Taliban to allow a government, which was acceptable to Pakistan and had the support of the Taliban. However, over the years, lack of strategic foresight and fatigue on the part of the US gave a lease of life to the Taliban. This ensured that Pakistan's proxy, the Taliban, regained lost ground, with large tracts coming back under its control. Surprisingly, even as the Afghans could see the writing on the wall, US policymakers were yet again taken in by the rhetoric emanating from Islamabad. "The Afghans primarily blamed Pakistan. The sanctuary the Taliban enjoyed in Pakistan as they regrouped empowered them. Afghans wondered, reasonably: How could the United States fail to see the I.S.I. was up to its old tricks?"[28] For Pakistan, the ability to crawl back from the brink of disaster in Afghanistan strengthened its notion of victory, the domestic blowback notwithstanding. In contrast, for the Afghan state, the ability to control the government in Kabul, however imperfect it may be, despite Pakistan's support for the Taliban, can also be viewed as a victory that few were willing to bet on in the past.

Pakistan's strategy adopted against its Afghan adversaries was different, when compared with their experience in India. Here its hybrid means focused on keeping the Afghan security forces unhinged, reactive and perpetually on the defensive. The Taliban, through close support from the ISI and guidance of its military and diplomatic endeavours, continuously attempted to gain the upper hand in a bid to control the country. Unlike India, Pakistan considered Afghanistan its immediate sphere of influence. Therefore, the installation of a favourable government

was an essential prerequisite for Pakistan to allow its unhindered functioning. Steve Coll quotes, "The postwar regime in Kabul 'must be a pro-Pakistan … government that is inclusive of all Afghans'."[29] The information component employed against Kabul was built on a number of arguments. This included the sectarian bias that the Kabul government represented with a limited role for the dominant Pashtun tribesmen. This was further reinforced by religious considerations. The Taliban contended that the government in Kabul had failed to uphold the Sharia-based guidelines that were the basis for any legitimate rule. The influence and threat from Indian agencies within Afghanistan was yet another red herring constantly thrown, including disinformation that misrepresented the size and location of diplomatic presence. The US control of Afghanistan was described as a threat to Islam from non-believers, in a bid to rally the local population against both the US and its allies in Kabul.[30] This propaganda was not only employed extensively in Afghanistan, but also within the restive areas of Pakistan to seek funding and recruitment.

India's Response

India's response to Pakistan's employment of terrorism was based on a multi-pronged strategy. This included exposing Pakistan diplomatically, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, wherein terrorism, irrespective of its motivations, became unacceptable. This led to a number of groups such as the LeT and JeM as well as leaders such as Hafiz Saeed being proscribed by the United Nations and individually by countries such as the United States. It also became more difficult for Pakistan to undertake cross-border terrorism with the kind of impunity that existed prior to 9/11.

At the military level, the security strategy aimed at reducing infiltration across the LoC. This was ensured by establishing an anti-infiltration obstacle system, which included a fence, sensors and troop deployment oriented for limiting infiltration.[31] This

was accompanied by focused intelligence-based operations. These were carried out by a combined force of Rashtriya Rifles (RR), Army, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and local police, depending on their areas of responsibility. Over time, the army moved away from urban zones, concentrating instead on the peripheral rural belt. Major cities such as Srinagar saw the deployment of CRPF supported by the local police. The RR became the fulcrum of counter-terrorism operations. These initiatives led to reduction of violent incidents and terrorists had been pushed onto the back foot by 2012-13.

Purely from a military perspective, five incidents shaped India's military approach to Pakistan's employment of terrorism. When these are analysed collectively, a discernible pattern becomes evident. Over time, it reflects a hardening of attitudes and approach. There was also an incremental dilution of the self-imposed moratorium of carrying out cross-LoC strikes of a certain magnitude. Further, this was accompanied by a shift from covert to an overt muscular response to terrorism. It was also characterised by the growing acceptance of employing air power, despite its obvious implications of escalation. Over time, there has been a shift from its use on India's side of the LoC to areas beyond. In fact, the 2019 strike hit targets across Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), something that challenged the existing narrative of India being a soft state. The recent past has also witnessed the employment of a declaratory component, which is in contrast with operations carried out in the past by both sides. A closer analysis of each will elaborate this assessment.

The first incidence of India's muscle flexing post-Kargil came about after the attack on the Indian Parliament by Pakistan based JeM terrorists in 2001. This led to a national outcry and further saw the mobilisation of India's armed forces. However, this did not eventually lead to the launch of a military operation against Pakistan, presumably after repeated assurances by President Musharraf that Pakistan's soil would not be allowed to be used

by terrorist groups.[32] Thereafter, India pulled back its forces. One could argue that these assurances saw limited success in the absence of substantive reduction in support for terrorism on part of Pakistan.

The first major operation, which went beyond the routine scope of employing military hardware between the two countries post-Kargil, was undertaken during the tenure of Air Chief Marshal Krishnaswamy, while he was the Chief of Air Staff from 2001 to 2004. According to him, it was launched on receipt of a message from the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of "an adversary having sneaked up a mountain in our territory and occupied a part of it." Unlike Kargil in 1999, the COAS wanted the air force to take the lead and ensure eviction. Yet again, unlike 1999, both heads of their respective institutions met the defence minister and a go ahead was given. Within a space of a couple of days, a successful strike was orchestrated.

> The strike warranted the use of a type of aircraft that was based 1,500-km away, weapons at another base, an interim base for launching the strike and senior pilots for executing the mission at yet another base. Since every message was being monitored from across the border, we communicated only in person. No signals or orders were issued.[33]

Krishnaswamy adds that eight aircraft were brought through a circuitous route at the designated base and loaded for the mission and the strikes went through without a hitch. According to him, this may have just potentially avoided another Kargil-like situation.

Within a space of a couple of years, India had employed air power twice to facilitate eviction of Pakistani intrusions. While the first was undertaken during Kargil in 1999, the second remained under wraps for most of the period thereafter. However, the strike did confirm the possibility of yet another

option of dealing with Pakistan in cases where territorial intrusion was attempted. The cost-effectiveness of this option was borne out in the latter case and made the probability of similar attempts by Pakistan practically redundant thereafter. It reinforced the relevance and utility of air power, when employed under controlled conditions. In this case, it represented a target on India's side of the LoC. This moral high ground that the action utilised, became an effective insurance against any possibility of escalation.

The next incident that deserves analysis is 26/11 prior to more recent events. The attack by the LeT, given the complexity, logistic build-up required and piecing together of the intelligence picture, clearly reflected its handling by the Pakistani state. This was repeatedly conveyed by India to Pakistan.[34] It also emerged from the testimonies of David Headley.[35] However, despite the enormity of the incident and the desire to take military action in response, the retaliation did not take place. There are a number of reasons that have been ascribed to this decision. Perhaps the most elaborate enunciation of the same has been done by the former Foreign Secretary and NSA, Shivshankar Menon. This is despite the fact that, admittedly, he was in favour of an immediate military response at that time.[36] It is evident that the cost-benefit analysis done at that time by the government did not find the military option to be a suitable one. The former NSA also suggests that the diplomatic initiatives that were taken thereafter did bear desirable results. He, however, did admit to the unlikely possibility of future governments refusing to take military action. While there can be differences with the arguments in support of not taking military measures in 2008, his assessment of reactions thereafter did prove to be true.

A number of local military strikes against terrorists were undertaken across the LoC by the army thereafter.[37] This was often in response to border action teams from Pakistan operating across the LoC, in an attempt to seize the initiative. The response

in every case was swift, clinical and exemplary. However, both sides kept it under wraps. This changed in 2016.

The Indian response to Pakistan emerged at a number of levels. However, purely from the perspective of achieving a psychological and military advantage against Pakistan, this response can be identified distinctly at two. First, unlike in the past, where military actions on or across the LoC were purely an element of a local military campaign to gain tactical and moral ascendency, these were upgraded as part of India's strategic posturing. The most visible incidents that indicated this shift in strategy were the cross-LoC surgical strikes. In the first such instance, India responded to the Uri terrorist strike. This saw the army strike against terrorist camps at multiple locations across the LoC.[38] In yet another instance, as a result of the Pulwama suicide attack on February 14, 2019, the Indian Air Force hit a JeM camp at Balakot on February 26, 2019.[39]

The strikes were different from similar previous attempts for a number of reasons. First and probably the most important difference lay in the government taking ownership of the operation. This marked a paradigm shift from the past. The formal acceptance of the operation had a couple of advantages that were possibly the basis for the new policy. One, India openly communicated its intent and capability to punish terrorists across the LoC, or even the border as recognised by India, to the international community. In addition to the military component, the strategic messaging that accompanied the action was equally important. This could only be conveyed through an overt admission of the strike. Two, it served to embarrass the Pakistani Army for its obvious complicity in support of terrorism. Three, it set a precedence for India to retaliate against future terrorist strikes, thereby increasing the potential cost of support of terrorism by Pakistan. Four, the strikes raised the morale of the Indian population at large, which saw visible and punitive action on part of the state, which had often been termed as "soft". Five,

the public acceptance of the strikes forced Pakistan to enhance its preparedness along the LoC and beyond. It simultaneously exposed the vulnerability of terrorist launch pads or camps inside Pakistan, thereby raising the cost of defending them against a future strike. This also increased the psychological pressure on its leadership. Six, the nature and sophistication of the strikes raised the bar for military operations India was willing to undertake in future if the need arose.

At the second level, victory can only be claimed when military actions, under conditions of hybrid war, are accompanied by an equally sustained and visible SC. The connotation of such a campaign is not high decibel rhetoric, or even shrill propaganda, which can in fact become counterproductive to the actual success of the military by raising expectations regarding its realistic outcome. There are recent examples that can be analysed for further reinforcing this argument. The years 2016-2019 witnessed four visible military operations by the armed forces. The first was a strike against terrorists along the Myanmar border, second surgical strikes against terrorists' hideouts and camps across the LoC, third the military stand-off at Doklam and finally the air strikes against the JeM camp at Balakot. It would be an interesting case study to analyse the military reality of the operations and the accompanying SC campaign. All four military actions were distinct. Yet they collectively contributed to the perception and reality of India's capability and approach to the employment of military resources.

The actions, especially the one at Balakot communicated that India was willing to challenge conventional thinking and status quo in relation to provocation. The success of this endeavour emerged from the acceptance of India's right to self-defence against cross-border terrorism.[40] The sentiment of support, echoed post Pulwama terrorist attack, reinforced India's determination to enhance its level of deterrence.[41] Similarly, the outpouring of support domestically was evident, even as the government assured

suitable action after the terrorist strike. A similar determination to seek the return of the air force pilot captured in Pakistan was evident.

Despite these positives, certain limitations related to India's SC became evident after Balakot, suggesting a similar dissonance as was evident after the 2016 surgical strikes. While seeking a much-desired consensus on national security may be a utopian idea, hope for closing ranks at times of crisis is not.[42] All four examples cited above relate to the increasingly vocal and vicious accusations that tend to follow a major national security incident. It was therefore not surprising to read the reaction of an international analyst to a television debate after the Balakot strike. Sreemoy Talukdar quotes Michael Kugelman, who tweeted, "Today, for the first time, I was part of an Indian TV debate on the India-Pak crisis that also featured a Pakistani guest. My earmuffs were at the ready. Interestingly, there was more shouting among the Indian participants than between the Indian & Pakistani."[43]

Perhaps the most balanced and matter-of-fact description emerged from the army itself in the form of a press release, read out by Lieutenant General Ranbir Singh, the Director General of Military Operations, after the 2016 surgical strikes.[44] He provided inputs which gave the background to the incident, confirmed the incident, its limited scope and objectives. The background included terrorist attacks inside India to include the ones at Poonch and Uri, the infiltration attempts foiled, evidence of terrorist training and equipping within Pakistan in PoK and Pakistan's commitment of January 2004 to not allow its soil to be used for terrorism against India. This was followed by inputs of likely terrorist strikes inside India and therefore the decision to undertake surgical strikes "at several of these launch pads to pre-empt infiltration by these terrorists". The focus of the operation was clearly against terrorists alone. Having claimed "significant casualties" to terrorists, the operation was declared as "ceased", signalling its limited and precise objective.

A similar orientation was observed in the statement by the Foreign Secretary, Vijay Gokhale, released after the Balakot strike.[45] The statement provided a background detailing the incident at Pulwama and the casualties suffered by the CRPF. It further gave the background to the JeM, including it being proscribed by the UN and the involvement in previous attacks inside India. The provision of information of the training camp to Pakistan and its repeated failure to take action was underlined. Intelligence inputs of a fresh strike was revealed, thereby making it necessary to undertake a strike against the camp. The presence of terrorist cadres, their leaders and trainers, was indicated, as was the elimination of a large number among them. The statement reinforced India's determination to "taking all necessary measures to fight the menace of terrorism". This became the basis for the "non-military pre-emptive action specifically targeted at the JeM camp". The selection taking into consideration the need to avoid "civilian casualties". The limited objective of the strike and the specific targeting, yet again indicated the sharp focus of the action and the desire to limit escalation, as was the case in 2016.

In contrast, the Doklam stand-off was not a spectacular military operation, but one which displayed resolute national and military will, arguably against a stronger adversary in contrast to Pakistan. Despite the fact that India stood its ground against a bigger and more powerful country, the SC campaign accompanying it was subtle, sophisticated and facilitated the overall impact that was desired to be achieved.[46]

However, despite the coherence of messaging achieved in each instance, the MEA statement after undertaking the Balakot strike, allowed certain phraseologies to be employed that did not reinforce the existing narrative. One, it employed the term *fidayeen* twice, despite the fact that this glorifies the suicide action of terrorists, thereby seeking redemption for the act in the eyes of God.[47] The same statement also termed the terrorist as *jihadis*,

which is not the case. Here, again, the acknowledgement of their actions in the service of a legitimate religious activity took away from the reality of their deeds.

In each of these cases, both military power and an SC campaign were employed in concert. However, the instances highlight a varying degree of military success, with the potential for augmenting it through a well-thought-out SC strategy. This clearly suggests that military successes will remain an essential foundation in any hybrid campaign, however, its packaging through the accompanying SC campaign is equally important. The analysis of accompanying narratives reinforces the need to carefully relate SC to the end strategic objectives in mind.

It is the orchestration of SC that puts in perspective military operations, in a bid to not only retaliate against terror strikes, but also undertake punitive measures to cause damage to Pakistan's military establishment and morale. This becomes critical for a number of different consumers of this information. Within the country, the population at large acknowledges the proactive stance of the state, in response to the repeated employment of terrorism as state policy by Pakistan. The armed forces appreciate the recognition of their efforts and the sacrifices made. Pakistan's population gets an opportunity to receive a competing narrative that challenges the inputs being fed by its state machinery. Its army is placed in an embarrassing position to find itself exposed to the international audience, its own population and the political class, with which it competes for controlling power within the country. This strategy also challenges the notion of victory that Pakistan aims to achieve through the employment of its hybrid war against India. An effective SC campaign can reinforce the ability of a country fighting a long-term conflict, which is unlikely to be characterised by finite and spectacular successes on the battlefield. It also helps the people at large identify themselves with the idea and the reason that the government designates as a worthy cause to fight for.

Yet another facet of hybrid war that often tends to get neglected, given that it operates in the background of military events and often not even as an element of a nation's hybrid war, is the impact an ongoing military competition can have on the economy and social well-being of the country and its population. To put it more explicitly, can a country defeat its adversary on the economic battlefield by bleeding it of the resources that are needed to build the economy and uplift the population out of its poverty? Can the ability to do so in the long term, lead to the marginalisation of the ruling elite and force a change in behaviour?

A former Pakistan diplomat and an adjunct faculty at the Georgetown University and Syracuse University tends to think so. Touqir Hussain feels that the failure of a country's foreign policy is reflected in its friends "treating you not only as an ally but also as a threat. And you are being left behind by a changing world that is beginning to regard you as a problem. Pakistan may not have reached a point of isolation yet, but it is certainly stranded."[48] He goes on to give the example of China and India, countries which have increased their bilateral trade to $84.44 billion in 2017, despite their obvious security differences. This has been the biggest failure of Pakistan, wherein its security orientation has trumped the economy. He further cites Pakistan's debt at $85 billion and the forthcoming grey listing of the country by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as examples. Pakistan's policy of securitising its behaviour with India, instead of being seen as a military and psychological victory for Pakistan, must be seen as a victory for India. "This is exactly what India, often with the help of Afghanistan, wants us to remain trapped in to keep competing with it at the expense of economic progress, stability and human welfare in Pakistan."[49]

Does Touqir's argument fit into the hybrid war construct and can India be given the credit of engaging in it? There is little that is available in the open domain to suggest that there

exists a policy in India aimed at causing the economic ruin of Pakistan. Nor is there evidence to suggest that India connived to reorient Pakistan's focus to a policy of securitising its approach, at the cost of economic and social reform. Quite to the contrary, India has remained a consistent supporter of a simultaneous and composite approach to outstanding issues, a policy which is borne by India's foreign policy towards China, as the commentator himself indicates. Pakistan's state of economic decline, especially in relation to India, a country it instinctively compares itself with, does suggest that the flawed economic policies, accompanied by the adverse impact of terrorism, which was nurtured as an instrument of state, has affected Pakistan. The seemingly successful policy of pursuing hybrid war against India and Afghanistan, arguably with some success as compared with previous conventional wars, has left in its wake an indigenous jihadi cottage industry, propped and supported by the state. This was a blowback Pakistan was often cautioned against.[50] As a result, if the achievements of the hybrid war and the resultant notion of victory are co-related with the death and destruction that domestic jihadi terrorism has caused, perhaps the euphoria that many within the ISI might feel, could well be misplaced. Having seen the perceived success of the policy earlier, it would be prudent to analyse the potential failings of the same as well.

Cost of Misplaced Priorities

In the series of setbacks that Pakistan suffered, one that reflects the stigma that has come to represent the diplomatic blowback, was the decision to reintroduce Pakistan on the grey list, during the February 2018 meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). While for most other countries, that have been on the list in the past, it was a result of procedural limitations that had been noted by FATF or observers from bodies like the Asia-Pacific Group, an affiliated regional body. However, unlike such countries, the case of Pakistan was brought up due to its

failure to act against terror funding of groups within the country. Khurram Husain, comparing Pakistan with other countries on the list writes

> None of these countries takes pride in being a nuclear power. None of them harbours outsize ambitions and great game-like fantasies. And if any of them ever landed on the FATF grey list, it was most likely for institutional weaknesses in the regulatory framework, as well as legislation designed to curb terror financing and money laundering, not for harbouring groups and individuals who have been designated as terrorists by the United Nations for well over a decade.[51]

The reality of Pakistan's increasing diplomatic challenges were highlighted in a scathing reality check of existing policy by an editorial in the *Dawn*. It underlined the abandonment of Pakistan by both Saudi Arabia and China, two countries often considered "brothers." A relationship described as "higher than mountain, deeper than ocean and sweeter than honey" had been soured by the reality check of prevailing conditions.[52] The *Dawn* wrote, "It is now becoming increasingly clear that Pakistan is drifting towards international isolation mainly due to its policy of using groups designated by the world community as terrorist outfits as instruments of foreign policy."[53]

The stigmatisation of Pakistan in relation to terrorism has grown beyond the formal indictment in forums such as the FATF. It has become an integral part of its public image. This not only places the country in an embarrassing position but has also adversely affected its economy in multiple ways. The tourism industry has the potential to contribute significantly to Pakistan's economy. Based on the inflow of tourists in 2013, a reduction in domestic terrorist incidents saw the numbers increase threefold by 2016, contributing $19.4 billion to the economy, or 6.9 per cent of GDP.[54] Further the World Travel and Tourism Council

expects this to grow to $36.1 billion in a decade. However, this is likely to remain closely linked with the status of domestic terrorism in Pakistan, which from the tourism perspective, reflects in the travel advisories to citizens of various countries. As an illustration, the US has kept Pakistan on travel advisory Level 3, which encourages them to reconsider travel to the country.[55] The advisory from EU member states varies from "avoid travel completely", "avoid non-essential travel" to "avoid travel to certain areas".[56] These recommendations are prevalent at a time when tourism has increased substantially since 2013, which could well deteriorate over time.

The economic journey of India and Pakistan has been influenced by a number of factors that have contributed towards their respective trajectory. However, India's ability to isolate its economy from major disruptions such as terrorism and its impact on India's economic attractiveness, stands in contrast with conditions that have evolved in Pakistan. As an illustration, in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, Pakistan's per capita income in 1990 was $1,974.517 based on current prices (2011), while India was at $1,134.222. By 2010, India had crossed Pakistan with a GDP per capita at PPP terms at $4,315.596 as compared to Pakistan's $4,196.956. According to 2016 figures it stood at $6,570.616 for India and $5,235.478 for Pakistan. The overall size of economy does not even merit comparison in this context.

This short analysis suggests that Pakistan has developed strategic advantages in J&K through hybrid wars that largely emphasize on the sub-conventional dimension. It has thereby generated a more viable notion of victory but that has come at a substantial cost to the social fabric and economic well-being of the country. These elements, often manifesting as intangibles, could well challenge the very notion of victory that Pakistan has relied upon in its competition with India. The reason why eventual victory remains a remote possibility is the idea that drives Pakistan's struggle, which is flawed.

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6

The Case of China

India's history of conflicts with China is perceptibly different from that of Pakistan. The limited conflict of 1962 was the only major war fought between the two countries. And after the border skirmish in 1967, the two sides have successfully maintained peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). However, similar to Pakistan, changes can be discerned both in the character of conflict and the accompanying notion of victory therein. These changes have been accompanied by China's evolving approach to seek advantage through a military strategy that has more often than not relied upon non-military means to win wars without fighting them. This chapter briefly analyses this shift and attempts to provide a context to future challenges that may emerge from China. The objective remains the analysis of policies and strategies adopted by China, rather than a detailed historical assessment of events, which has successfully been done by a number of Sinophiles in the past.[1]

China was the undisputed victor of the 1962 war. This war, besides confirming the military edge enjoyed by China, created a psychological advantage that more than achieved the war aims, emanating from what it saw as fundamental reasons for employing force against India. Manjeet Pardesi lists these as the Tibet issue, border dispute and an attempt to contain China.[2] Resultantly, the proactive direction of India's actions along the border, as seen through the "forward policy" by China, were effectively blunted, pushing India towards what could at best be described as a five-decade dissuasive posture. Over a period of time, India

repeatedly reinforced its acceptance of Tibet as an integral part of China.[3] And finally, the border dispute though unresolved, has also seen China harden its position from its negotiating stance adopted in 1960 and subsequently in 1980-81 wherein a swap of territories was envisaged to settle the dispute.[4] Since then, China has brought in Tawang as a negotiating element in exchange for settling the Arunachal border with India.[5]

If seen from China's perspective, in addition to humiliating the Indian state militarily, it also achieved its notion of victory on the basis of parameters it had set out to achieve. Even as India scrambled to build a dissuasive capability, it took decades before which the political and military establishment regained the confidence to challenge China's military and psychological advantage along the LAC.[6] China's notion of victory in 1962 was deeply embedded in the traditional parameters of a victorious nation. The capture of territory and the military defeat of Indian forces arraigned along the border, was accompanied by their retreat. This reflected more the psychological collapse of the political and military leadership, rather than the inability of the armed forces to fight. The resolute military defiance was borne by events along the western sector of Ladakh in contrast to the area of Arunachal Pradesh in the East, which witnessed a strong defence of the border, confirming the intrinsic ability of the tactical leaders and the men under their command. In contrast, the political and senior military leadership failed in harnessing the national spirit and sentiment. They allowed poor decisions such as not employing the air force for military operations, despite an arguably superior capability that they possessed against China and interference in military matters to hasten the embarrassing defeat. Further, the defeat was witnessed through the employment of merely two and a half divisions, which were exposed to the actual war, even as the bulk of the army helplessly witnessed the collapse.

The military defeat of 1962 was redeemed to an extent in 1967 and 1987 by India, during the course of two incidents, where

India came out as having the better of military and psychological exchanges with the Chinese. The incident of 1967 was preceded by the 1965 Indo-Pak war, which saw China enhance pressure on India through false threatening accusations, even as the war progressed against Pakistan.[7] This was followed by unsavoury incidents in China, wherein Indian diplomats and in particular, K. Raghunath, who later became India's Foreign Secretary, were accused of spying. Raghunath was eventually recalled by the Indian Government. The specific military incident of 1967 took place at Nathu La, when the PLA objected to the erection of a fence along the pass by the Indian troops. The physical jostling that followed, led to the Chinese side opening automatic fire on the unsuspecting Indian troops in the open. This led to a number of Indian casualties and strong retaliation, which began with a physical assault on the PLA position. Despite the casualties suffered by the Indians which were estimated to be 200 (65 dead and 135 wounded), the Chinese suffered 300 casualties.[8] There was little doubt at the end of the border skirmish that the Chinese, unlike 1962, had the worse of the exchange, if one was to interpret the limited notion of victory under the prevalent circumstances. This is premised on three factors. One, China failed to militarily force the issue, despite a desperate attempt. Two, irrespective of having the psychological edge derived through the 1962 victory, events at Nathu La clearly exposed the myth surrounding the invincibility of the Chinese soldiers. Three, the leadership displayed by Maj Gen Sagat Singh, indicated an aggressive intent and vision that was sorely lacking in the Eastern Sector during the 1962 war. On balance, India had reasons to cheer, having stared down the Chinese, despite the loss just five years prior to this incident.

There was another incident other than 1967 after the 1962 war which brought the two countries eyeball to eyeball along the LAC. The second major incident took place in 1986-87 in the area of Sumdorong Chu valley, in close vicinity of the Namka

Chu valley. The Chinese intruded into the area and constructed a helipad by August 1986. India proposed a mutual withdrawal from the area. However, failing to convince the Chinese, a brigade-sized force was landed at the closest helipad at Zimithang in October 1986.[9] Operation Falcon, as the military endeavour was termed, angered the Chinese. Interestingly, it also annoyed certain elements within the government, who saw the series of events as unnecessary activism, which could lead to war. On its part the Chinese too warned India of a repeat of 1962, commencing a major build-up in 1987. In response Sundarji, the then Chief, ordered Exercise Chequerboard. The exercise challenged the coercive Chinese policy in the ensuing face-off. The heightened temperatures were lowered with the visit of the Indian External Affairs Minister to China in May 1987. This led to a steady drop in troop deployment on both sides and was followed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988, which became a landmark in improving relations between the two countries.[10]

An interview with Lt Gen B. S. Malik, who was the Brigade Commander of the formation deployed at Sumdorong Chu, during the crisis period of 1986-87, is revealing in its details.[11] Soon after the initial dissonance was noted, Malik, who was posted at the Military Operations Directorate of the Army Headquarters, was asked to move as the Brigade Commander designate at 24 hours' notice. Given this short lead time, Malik took over his new responsibility, even as he wore the rank of a Colonel, awaiting the formal notification of his promotion. Having the advantage of being posted at the Military Operations Directorate at Delhi prior to his move, even within the short period of time available, Malik familiarised himself with India's political position on the issue at the highest level. As a result, his actions benefited from an understanding of the issue in all its perspectives. His brigade deployed in the area, occupied important features in an area that was once the scene of bloody battles at Namka Chu in 1962. This was subsequently reinforced by two divisions, as

both sides faced off at the LAC. According to Malik, the Chinese occupied the very same positions, including the deployment of their mortars, as they had done in 1962. The intent was to force the withdrawal of Indian forces from the area. The attempts at resolving the issue led to two border meetings between both sides. The first, at the behest of the Chinese local commander did not yield any positive result. However, the second, held at Bumla, eventually became the reason for both sides withdrawing from their respective positions, with the Namka Chu River becoming the basis for the same. Lieutenant General Malik, on being specifically asked about India's intent during the incident, said that there was no doubt in his mind that the Indian Army was prepared to undertake whatever military measures that were required to enforce the mandate of safeguarding Indian territory. He further emphasized that China's eventual withdrawal was a result of their recognition of an adverse military situation against India in the sector, unlike 1962.

The incidents of 1986-87 were a repeat of 1967, at least in terms of psychological manoeuvring by both sides. China hoped to stare down the Indian side by recalling the events of 1962 and engineering a major build-up in support of their indicated intent of teaching India a lesson. However, in both cases, the armed forces stood firm, despite the psychological and military impact of 1962. It is not unexpected that these incidents largely remained localised in their military dimension, as this was the intent of both sides. However, what is surprising is the failure of the Indian military establishment and the government to better employ its psychological impact, given the country's resolute stance during both stand-offs. A few decades on, there is negligible mention or acknowledgement of the heroism of the soldiers and their commanders. This is especially the case since these incidents took place within the psychological space where the adverse impact of the 1962 war continued to rankle within the minds of the armed forces and the country. The reality of defeat of 1962 could well

have been diluted by the notion of victory of 1967 and 1986-87, had these experiences been employed as the basis for reflecting the reality of battlefield bravery and leadership displayed. Even if these were limited and finite military achievements, they could have served to reinforce the larger infinite competition at play between India and China, a concept that will subsequently be elaborated upon based on the behaviour and approach of the two countries over the years.

The period following these two incidents saw nuclearisation reduce the likelihood of a major war between India and China. This has been augmented by India's ongoing improvements in border infrastructure and force capabilities. This has simultaneously been accompanied by both armies displaying a level of maturity, where, for over five decades, there has not been a single case of exchange of fire along the LAC.

Unlike Pakistan, India and China have strengthened confidence-building measures. This has led to the establishment of protocols for disputes along the LAC, as well as normalisation of relations through deeper people-to-people exchanges, cultural ties, bilateral military exercises and an increase in bilateral trade. Certain areas of international diplomacy have also seen India and China share common positions in contrast to the developed world, to include fields such as trade and climate change.[12]

Recent Military Stand-offs: Interpreting Chinese Strategy

Before the specific border stand-offs between China and India are analysed to interpret China's military behaviour, it would be useful to analyse China's larger strategic thought as it has evolved in recent times. This provides a clear understanding of the relation between growing military capabilities and how these are likely to manifest in the near future.

The clearest enunciation of China's strategic concerns and priorities emerge from the 2015 White Paper.[13] Chinese concerns highlighted as part of its national security situation take into

account the shifting of "world economic and strategic centre of gravity ever more rapidly to the Asia-Pacific region".[14] In the backdrop of this observation, the increasing interest of the US in this region, evolution of Japan's security and military policies, the territorial disputes of the South China Sea, the need to eventually seek the reunification of Taiwan and maintenance of international security against terrorism in relation to East Turkistan and separatism in Tibet seem to remain primary areas of concern.

In this backdrop, China places emphasis on "winning informationalised local wars, highlighting maritime military struggle and military preparation for military struggle (PMS)." In doing so, China intends to focus on "Integrated combat forces" which will be "employed to prevail in system-vs-system operations featuring information dominance, precision strikes and joint operations".[15] There is also a clear shift while fighting land operations to inter-theatre mobility, modular functionality and joint operations. Similarly, both the navy and air force reorient themselves to look beyond the offshore and territorial concerns to open seas and air-space operability.

While this remains the larger Chinese military orientation, this section focuses more on border incidents with India and its interpretation in the context of China's Three Warfares Strategy.

Despite recent positive trends in India-China relations, which have helped reduce misunderstandings and strengthened the peace dividend, these do not take away from the recent rise in border stand-offs along the LAC and competition in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). There have been three major military stand-offs along the LAC from 2013 till 2017. These include the Depsang incident in 2013, Chumar in 2014 and the most serious stand-off that lasted a little over two months at Doklam in 2017.[16]

The Depsang incident came to light on April 15, 2013.[17] The reports suggested that 30-40 Chinese personnel had established 3-4 tents in the Depsang Bulge, southeast of Daulat Beg Oldi, approximately 19 kilometres inside Indian's LAC.[18] The incident

became a serious stand-off unlike a large number of patrol clashes along the perceived boundary of both sides, given the semi-permanent camp established by Chinese soldiers, something that had not occurred in the past. Further, instead of following the protocol laid down by both countries for such incidents, the Chinese side chose to dig in their heels, claiming the area to be their own, thereby prolonging the crisis. A surprised Indian side referred to the 2005 Protocol on Confidence Building Measures, which required both sides to de-escalate the situation. Article 4 of the Protocol read, "If the border personnel of the two sides come to a face-to-face situation due to differences on the Line of Actual Control, they shall exercise self-restraint and take all necessary steps to avoid an escalation of the situation."[19] The initial Chinese deployment was followed by the pitching of additional tents, resupply of the position before the mutual decision to withdraw on May 5, 2013.[20] The incident surprisingly happened a month prior to the arrival of Chinese Premier Li Kiqiang's to India on an official visit. The Chinese media remained silent on the issue and a cryptic statement was released by the foreign office, clearly limiting their reaction. The statement read:

> I will like to reiterate that Chinese troops have always acted in strict compliance with relevant treaties and protocols between two countries regarding protection of peace and security of areas along the LAC, and China is committed to protecting peace and stability of border areas as well as a negotiated settlement of the boundary issue left over from history ... China's troops have never crossed the line.[21]

The Northern Sector of the India-China border also witnessed an incursion at Chumar in September 2014. This area, unlike Depsang in 2013, had not been contested by China in the past and had remained under India's effective control.[22] The Chinese attempted to stop the building of a civil irrigation project in the

area under MNREGA. Unlike in the past where patrols backed off on coming face to face, Chumar saw a physical clash of troops. The incident also witnessed Chinese soldiers bring civilians from nearby villages in trucks to oppose the building of the irrigation channel. The response from the Indian side was more robust, unlike Depsang, and India's displeasure was conveyed by Prime Minister Modi to the Chinese President Xi Jinping, who was on an official visit to India, when the incident came to light.[23] Eventually, both sides withdrew from their contested location, to bring the stand-off to a closure. Unlike Depsang, Chumar saw the *Global Times* accuse India of provoking such incidents to seek advantage during talks with Chinese leaders.[24] However, the information campaign did not reach sharp, acrimonious levels, despite the differences visible along the LAC.

Amongst these three incidents, it was Doklam which became the most contentious, saw the most aggressive posturing by China and threatened to slide into a skirmish if not a conflict. The purpose of this analysis is not to disaggregate the legal or technical position taken by the two sides during the course of the stand-off at Doklam. Instead, it is an assessment of the military and informational elements that played out in a manner that had earlier been witnessed in relation to China in the context of South China Sea dispute, but not with regard to India. Both Depsang and Chumar provide a reference to this pattern in the recent past. The shift in strategy, which saw the emergence of these two elements that dominated the course of events, flags an important constituent of China's strategic behaviour, especially under conditions that may persist along India's borders and beyond in its areas of interest.

Prior to analysing the Doklam incident, it is relevant to flag its similarities with the Sumdorong Chu incident of 1986-87, in terms of the build-up and eventual resolution, despite situational differentiations. While both areas related to contested boundary claims and counter-claims, Doklam also involved a third party,

Bhutan. Conversely, in terms of strategic sensitivities, Doklam, given its distance from the strategic narrow land corridor linking the rest of the country with Northeast India, became that much more critical. While Doklam did witness a rapid reaction and build-up on both sides, it did not come close to the scale of forces mobilised by both sides in 1987. Despite these differences, the detection of Chinese intrusion, reaction by Indian forces, followed by the build-up on both sides and the eventual cooling down of the situation followed a similar trajectory. However, the information campaign pursued by China took place under different circumstances and adopted a very different pitch.

The importance of the Indian and Chinese reaction during the Doklam stand-off becomes relevant in light of the trend that it has been reinforcing since the Depsang and Chumar incidents. It is as yet unclear how China employs such border incidents as part of its larger strategic options against India. China's assertion of territorial claims and the possibility of it snowballing into a larger conflict along the LAC is also a possibility that cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty. However, in the absence of the same, the methodology that has been adopted, especially during the Doklam crisis certainly deserves closer examination. This is especially relevant since its echoes are found in China's behaviour in the South China Sea dispute, a stand-off which arguably held far greater strategic significance for China. It was also a battle of wits, which saw China face off with not only a number of smaller powers in the region, but also the US and the larger Western world, which was supporting smaller countries like Philippines on the issue. "Beijing's response to the unfavourable South China Sea arbitration outcome has highlighted an important aspect of its military strategy, the 'three warfares' (三战). Consisting of public opinion warfare (舆论战), psychological warfare (心理战), and legal warfare (法律战), the three warfares have been critical components of China's strategic approach in the South China Sea and beyond."[25]

There has not been any official acknowledgement of China's approach or policy adopted during the Doklam crisis. However, the unveiling of the "Three Warfares" policy in 2003[26] and its formal adoption thereafter, has since been evident during a series of strategic manoeuvres by China. The South China Sea dispute was its most recent case of implementing the military strategy, only to be reinforced by Doklam. Mattis suggests that the Three Warfares strategy is not a recent creation and references to it can be found as part of the political guideline since 1963, where its three elements: public opinion warfare, psychological warfare and legal warfare were employed as part of the larger combat element of political work.[27] He further argues that the PLA is a part of the Communist Party, with a clear mandate to serve its core interests. The need to safeguard the Party from any threat to its continued salience therefore becomes critical to the relevance of PLA. Given the diverse nature of threats, both domestic from fissiparous tendencies of separatists and external, of the kind that impinges on the perceived sovereignty of China, as witnessed in South China Sea and Doklam, the viability of a suitable defensive mechanism remains critical. It was felt that the PLA alone, despite its ambitions of evolving as a potent force responsible for fighting potential adversaries, was incapable of handling these challenges. This was therefore supplemented by adopting the military strategy of "Three Warfares", which could defeat adversaries without the need for a conflict. He adds that the reliance on "Three Warfares" emerged as one of the modules of PLA's strategy of warfighting by 2010. Further, the PLA concluded that the threat of nuclear weapons is unlikely to manifest in future wars and therefore "conventional forces and a potential adversary's mindset would decide whether deterrence and coercive diplomacy worked".[28] A more deliberate analysis of events during the Doklam stand-off and the Chinese response will provide a detailed understanding of the strategy at play.

Legal Warfare

The first reactions from China came from both the Foreign and Defence ministries. The narrative that guided these reactions, followed a distinct pattern, with all three elements of the strategy clearly discernible. The June 27, 2017 brief by the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, in the course of answering two questions clearly outlined the Chinese position. He indicated that Indian troops had "crossed into Chinese territory". He further reinforced the Chinese determination to safeguard its "sovereignty and interests". He added that there was evidence of "delimitation of the Sikkim section of the China-India boundary". Commencing with the very first briefing, the emphasis on these three issues remained the basis for China's information campaign against India. The legal prong was subsequently elaborated upon, with the 1890 agreement and exchange of letters with former Prime Minister Nehru forming the basis of the argument. On June 29, 2017, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson argued:

> There is clear legal evidence to support the definition of the Sikkim section of the China-India boundary. In accordance with article one of the Convention Between Great Britain and China Relating to Sikkim and Tibet (1890), 'the boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its effluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier, and follows the above-mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal territory.' From this we can see that Doklam belongs to China. The water-parting in the area where the Indian troops trespassed is distinct. It is an irrefutable fact that the Indian troops crossed into the Chinese territory. By doing so, they have violated the boundary convention and the commitment upheld by successive Indian governments.[29]

The essence of this agreement was and remained the core legal argument of the Chinese spokespersons throughout the stand-off. This was further supplemented by correspondence on the subject between Zhou Enlai and Nehru. The extract that was selectively quoted read:

> On March 22, 1959, in his letter to Premier Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister Nehru said 'the boundary between Sikkim, the protectorate of India and Xi Zang, China was defined by the 1890 Convention and demarcated by the two sides on the ground in 1895.

> On September 26 of the same year, when writing back to Premier Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister Nehru unequivocally stated "the boundary between Sikkim and Xi Zang, China was defined by the 1890 Convention. This boundary was demarcated in 1895. There is no dispute over the boundary between Sikkim and Xi Zang, China.'[30]

During the course of the stand-off, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons made 17 references to the 1890 convention as part of their answers to questions, reinforcing the legal basis of China's position.[31] This decision to repeatedly quote the convention suggested a well-conceived decision to reinforce what China saw as its legal stand on the issue. This was supplemented by the assertion that India had violated this treaty by crossing the boundary.

The legal argument was further reinforced by referring to historical control over the area by China and the physical occupation of the same. On June 30, 2017, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that Doklam was the "traditional pasture for border inhabitants living in Yadong, Xi Zang." Further he added that "China has been exercising jurisdiction over this area" and the Bhutanese paid "grass tax" to the Chinese to graze their cattle

in the area. In addition to the historical evidence, he referred to the more recent times wherein Chinese troops maintained their presence in the area through patrols, locals grazing their cattle and "production and living facilities" having been built there.[32]

Psychological Warfare

There were a number of issues that China emphasised during the 60-day stand-off to seek psychological advantage. Amongst these were references to China's resolute stand safeguarding its "territorial sovereignty" through "patrols" and "stationing of troops" in the Doklam area and backing up its actions through force if needed. The former line of argument retained resonance even after the mutual withdrawal of forces on August 28, 2018.[33] The threat or implied threat to use force was more sophisticated in the formal statement of the Foreign Ministry, as compared to China's Defence Ministry statements. As an illustration, "Ren urged the Indian side to give up the illusion of its delaying tactic, as no country should underestimate the Chinese forces' confidence and capability to safeguard peace and their resolve and willpower to defend national sovereignty, security and development interests."[34] This language and psychological posturing was even stronger in its employment by state-controlled media in China. An op-ed in the *Global Times* suggested that "China can take further countermeasures along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). If India stirs up conflicts in several spots, it must face the consequence of an all-out confrontation with China along the entire LAC."[35] The psychological rhetoric continued throughout the period with repeated references to the 1962 war, PLA's superiority, the threat to use force and the isolation of India, if and when military force was to be employed.

> They bragged that India has more troops in the area but they fail to realize that the PLA's strong capability to deploy troops can reverse the balance of power at the border within a day.

The PLA's long-range combat capability can also allow its troops in remote area to provide fire support to troops at the border. China's military spending is four times that of India where its GDP volume is five times that of India. The great gap will shape the actual pattern of power balance between the two countries at the border.

Back in 1962, India underestimated China's resolution to safeguard its territory. We hope India won't repeat this mistake.

India should by no means count on support from the US and Japan because their support is illusory. If India fancies the idea that it has a strategic card to play in the Indian Ocean, it could not be even more naïve. China does hold a lot of cards and can hit India's Achilles' heel, but India has no leverage at all to have a strategic showdown with China.[36]

Yet another attempt at psychological warfare was to threaten Sikkim and J&K in a purported quid pro quo by China. The *Global Times* attempted to relate India's assistance to Bhutan, with the possibility of China stepping into the disputed area of Kashmir at the request of Pakistan. It said, "if the Pakistani government requests, a third country's army can enter the area disputed by India and Pakistan, including India-controlled Kashmir."[37]

Public Opinion Warfare

A simultaneous attempt at both psychological and public opinion warfare was the bid to drive a wedge between Bhutan and to a lesser degree, Nepal and India. There were repeated references to Bhutan's sovereignty being infringed upon by India. There were further insinuations to India controlling Bhutan and Nepal's defence and diplomacy. Further it was suggested that a large number of Indians had migrated to these countries. It was indicated

that the challenge for both countries was to avoid becoming a state of India like Sikkim.[38] The Bhutan factor was also highlighted by the official Foreign Ministry spokespersons in their comments. On June 28, 2017, it was alleged that India did not show any respect for "Bhutan's sovereignty".[39] There was also an attempt to prove that China and Bhutan, through 24 rounds of talks, were close to resolving their boundary issue, which admittedly was yet to be "demarcated". Yet, strangely, according to the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, they had reached a consensus that Doklam belonged to China![40] The spokesperson did not clarify how two countries can reach a consensus on Doklam, without first coming to an understanding of the border. It is also despite the fact that the official communique from Bhutan issued prior to this press briefing disputed this claim. This was reinforced by the Indian foreign office in its statement, which stated: "Yesterday (June 29, 2017), the Foreign Ministry of Bhutan has also issued a statement underlining that the construction of the road inside Bhutanese territory is a direct violation of the 1988 and 1998 agreements between Bhutan and China and affects the process of demarcating the boundary between these two countries. They have urged a return to the status quo as before 16 June 2017."[41] The statements emanating from China's official spokespersons and the media consistently employed information as a tool to shape perceptions and enhance acceptance of its position on the dispute. This was attempted through a barrage of selective quotes, which reinforced China's position and made an attempt to give it a high moral ground to negotiate any future settlement.

Assessing the Success of Three Warfares Strategy

China's approach clearly reinforced the "Three Warfares" strategy, during the Doklam stand-off. The emphasis on all three elements was perceptible and employed repeatedly through a variety of mediums. This raises the obvious question regarding the effectiveness and success of the approach adopted by China.

The proof of China's success, or the lack of it, can best be gauged from the statements made on August 28, 2017 and thereafter, once both sides decided to disengage from the stand-off. While the Indian response described the disengagement as such, the Chinese spokesperson, despite repeated attempts at seeking clarity on the status of Chinese forces, remained ambiguous in the description of the situation, with repeated emphasis on "safeguarding territorial sovereignty".[42] It was equally significant to assess the achievement of stated or implied objectives of both sides.

Assessing the later aspect first, China had preconditioned "any meaningful talks between the two sides aiming at resolving the issue" to India's withdrawal of its troops, which was seen in violation of the 1890 agreement by China.[43] This stand, taken on June 29, 2017, continued to remain China's official position on the issue throughout the duration of the dispute. Despite this, it is evident that a series of negotiations did take place, which eventually led to an amicable settlement between the two sides. The opening line of the MEA statement released by India clearly indicated this.[44] Conversely, India's stand was based on China's attempt at changing status quo by building a road in an area near the tri-junction, which India considered disputed. India further evoked the 2012 understanding, which required the three countries—India, Bhutan and China—to resolve its location. A stop to road building by China was therefore India's precondition for a pullback from its position. This was achieved after both sides agreed to disengage on April 28, 2017, as confirmed by the statement of the MEA and a few days later by Sushma Swaraj, the External Affairs Minister on the floor of the Parliament.[45]

An important element of the strategy was to drive a wedge between India and Bhutan, an attempt that was clearly one of the intents of the psychological and information operation undertaken.[46] During the course of the stand-off both India and Bhutan stuck to their stated positions, which placed the onus of

changing the status quo at the disputed site on China. Despite the considerable pressure applied by China neither of the sides yielded ground and stayed their course on the issue. This is especially true for Bhutan, which found itself diplomatically challenged as perhaps never before on its boundary dispute with China. More importantly, the subtle tone of the official Bhutanese statement acknowledged certain important elements that could become the basis for future negotiations on the border dispute. First, it underlined "disengagement by the two sides", unlike the Chinese foreign office statement. Second, it re-emphasised the need to maintain "status quo", which indicated that the same had been changed. Third, it related status quo to all three countries, even as existing agreements between the three were referred to.[47] Did this imply that all future negotiations, as suggested by the 2012 agreement in relation to the tri-junction, would in the future involve India and Bhutan?

China also failed to elicit anything more than the measured statement by MEA in New Delhi, and the resolute, yet non-escalatory approach of the Indian Army in the disputed area. The inability to stare down Delhi only left the option of scaling up military operations, an option China seemed to have discounted, given the local position of advantage of Indian forces. In addition, the impending September 2017 BRICS meeting and the 19th Communist Party Congress in October 2017, were events that possibly overshadowed the incident at Doklam.[48]

The Chinese stance of reiterating the issue as a bilateral one between Bhutan and itself also became a consistent argument during the stand-off. It was also argued that China was free to construct in its area, just as India was and had undertaken construction in the past in areas claimed by China. This attempt at disinformation yet again proved to be self-defeating, when the Chinese repeatedly quoted the Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson not confirming the receipt of a letter from China informing the Indian side of the road construction. The Chinese

argument could be turned on its head by seeking the basis of the letter, if China considered the border in the region settled and the Indian side having crossed it illegally, as was the basis of the entire legal response. The letter was initiated, not once but twice, on May 18 and June 8, 2017, only if the Chinese considered the issue trilateral, between India, Bhutan and China.[49] Second, it could only be sent if China considered the need to inform the Indian side to avoid misunderstandings. However, the attempt failed since the letter aimed at merely "informing" the Indian side and not consulting them of Chinese road building in the area. Resultantly, the activity by China was resisted, given the change in status quo agreed upon by the three sides.[50] This was a case of selectively highlighting the 1890 agreement by China, even as the trilateral understanding on the border in 2012 was being sidestepped.

The Chinese strategy also failed to break the resolve of the Indian state. Despite repeated attempts at psychologically pressurising India, the fact that the army continued to remain entrenched at their positions was neither lost on the Chinese, nor most world capitals.[51] For once, there was a country which had stood up to China's attempt at browbeating on a territorial issue. Gary Ross, a US Defence Department spokesperson, urged "India and China to engage in direct dialogue aimed at reducing tensions and free of any coercive aspects" in an obvious reference to China.[52] The Japanese response was even more candid. The Japanese envoy in India, Kenji Hiramatsu asked parties concerned with Doklam not to "resort to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and resolve the dispute in a peaceful manner".[53]

When assessing the notion of victory in this case, given the Chinese ability to force its will on smaller neighbouring states, as was the case with Philippines during the South China Sea dispute in 2016, India, by the mere act of showing visible and resolute defiance, scored an important moral victory. The decision to

challenge the status quo of China's influence and domination of the Asian strategic landscape, which had not been done through the use of force even by the US, particularly in case of the South China Sea dispute, was not an isolated act that is likely to go unnoticed in the region. There may not have been too many aggressive voices against China's actions, given the influence that China wields, however, inputs shared through diplomatic channels suggest that India's actions had brought a degree of cheer, given the despondency that had set in after the South China Sea incidents. This was especially the case in Southeast and East Asia, which were uncomfortable, given China's ability to force its will amongst smaller countries within the region.[54]

Key Takeaways

The Doklam stand-off, offers certain important takeaways in terms of China's approach to areas not clearly demarcated leading to boundary disputes. First, unlike most other areas of dispute to include those divided by the McMahon Line, as was the case with India in Arunachal Pradesh, China chose to rely on a British era agreement of 1890 to fight its legal arguments. This was contrary to past contentions by the Chinese, wherein it rejected treaties and agreements of the colonial period, which were a reflection of "the British policy of aggression".[55] In contrast to this contention, the same logic was discarded while settling the border dispute along the same McMahon line with Myanmar by China.[56] Therefore, the legal element of the military strategy of "Three Warfares", has neither followed a principled stand nor a firm precedence, as case studies from the past suggest. The legal arguments are based on the most advantageous course of action under the circumstances, even if it requires articulating selective quotes, repudiating historical agreements, or recalling them if perceived in China's interest. Besides the McMahon line, which has been employed selectively to reach a settlement with Myanmar, even as its validity is rejected while negotiating with

India, take the example of the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. The agreement outlined the "basic policies of the People's Republic of China regarding Hong Kong". These included: the creation of a special autonomous region; only defence and foreign affairs remaining under China; creation of an independent executive, localisation of legislative and judicial powers; government of the Special Administrative Region would comprise of locals; social and economic systems would remain unchanged; Special Administrative Region would have a free port and special customs territory; the region would enjoy the status of an international financial centre; have independent finances; maintain independent relations with United Kingdom and other countries; and maintenance of public order would be the responsibility of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. This arrangement was to continue for a period of 50 years, commencing from 1984.[57] Contrary to the letter and spirit of this agreement, on June 30, 2017, the official Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Lu Kang said:

> As for the remarks made by those from the US and the UK, I want to stress that Hong Kong is China's SAR, and Hong Kong affairs belong to China's domestic affairs. The Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) clearly marks the transitional period off from China resuming the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. It's been 20 years now since Hong Kong's return to the motherland, and the arrangements during the transitional period prescribed in the Sino-British Joint Declaration are now history and of no practical significance, nor are they binding on the Chinese central government's administration of the Hong Kong SAR. The British side has no sovereignty, no power to rule and supervise Hong Kong after the handover. It is hoped that relevant people will come around to this.[58]

More specifically, in relation to the Doklam incident, in an instance of misrepresenting legal facts, the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson quoted the correspondence with Prime Minister Nehru to reinforce the legality of the 1890 agreement. A part of the same, Nehru had indeed confirmed his acceptance of the border with Sikkim. However, his quote used by the Chinese spokesperson was selective, with a clear aim of misleading the world at large. This selective text read:

> On March 22, 1959, in his letter to Premier Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister Nehru said 'the boundary between Sikkim, the protectorate of India and Xi Zang, China was defined by the 1890 Convention and demarcated by the two sides on the ground in 1895'.

> On September 26 of the same year, when writing back to Premier Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister Nehru unequivocally stated 'the boundary between Sikkim and Xi Zang, China was defined by the 1890 Convention. This boundary was demarcated in 1895. There is no dispute over the boundary between Sikkim and Xi Zang, China.'[59]

The spokesperson deliberately left out the inconvenient text of the letter, which put the location of tri-junction into question and which reinforced the critical tripartite nature of the dispute and the fact that the border with Bhutan was still unsettled. It read:

> This Convention of 1890 also defined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet; and the boundary was later, in 1895, demarcated. There is thus no dispute regarding the boundary of Sikkim with the Tibet region. This clearly refers to northern Sikkim and not to the tri-junction which needed to be discussed with Bhutan and Sikkim and which is today the contentious

area. And once more, let us not forget that the 1890 Treaty was an unequal treaty as Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan were not involved ...[60]

Even in 1959, Nehru rejected the Chinese argument and clarified that the boundary with Bhutan should also form a part of boundary discussions. Further, given India's guiding role in Bhutan's external relations, China's border issue with Bhutan also remained integral to the ongoing negotiations. Therefore, India's broad argument has not undergone any change since that period as should have been the case with China. Instead, the attempts to change status quo by building a road in the disputed area, which directly threatened India's security, became the basis for the stand-off between India and China.

Second, China's public opinion campaign came across as a carefully crafted, rehearsed and orchestrated part of the strategy at Doklam. This followed a pattern which was earlier seen during the South China Sea dispute. The nature of the campaign did not come as a surprise, as it was a facet of Chinese diplomacy and military strategy that was increasingly characterising the public information blitzkrieg. However, unlike the past, the strident tone of the rhetoric was at a distinct variance. The manifestation of this strategy has been seen beyond the limited confines of "public information" and more a reflection of China's "Sharp Power". A recent paper on the subject identifies a variety of tools that have been employed by China at the cost of billions of dollars to push its perspective through people-to-people exchanges, cultural activities and educational programmes amongst other forms of gaining influence.[61] It notes that China's foreign affairs spending had grown from RMB30 billion in 2011 to RMB60 billion in the 2018 budget. This marks a 15 per cent increase from the previous year, which is twice the increase in percentage terms in relation to the defence budget.[62] In contrast to this assessment, the Chinese would prefer to call these initiatives "soft power", or *ruan shili*, a

much more acceptable and respectable term.[63] The use of Xinhua billboard at Times Square to "broadcast a video 120 times a day for two weeks defending China's territorial ambitions over disputed rocks in the South China Sea", is an example of the power and nature of outreach undertaken.[64] David Shambaugh contends that China spends $10 billion to build its soft power as compared with less than $670 million by the US.[65] The onslaught of China's perspective, cultural or strategic is therefore not difficult to discern or analyse. Despite the fact that the unifocal and monochromatic perspective emanating from the propaganda machinery continues to lack the subtlety to have the requisite impact, yet China is unlikely to spare any effort in the direction of pushing its message through public information campaigns, both domestic and international. As Joseph Nye argues, Sharp Power is the "deceptive use of information for hostile purposes". He further describes it as a form of hard power.[66] Further, irrespective of its success in the limited objective that it may aim to achieve, according to Nye, it achieves little in enhancing its soft power. Therefore, China's approach towards Doklam and its information campaign may have scared certain small countries, which stood as bystanders, observing the strident tone of rhetoric emanating from China, however, it did little to win China friends and support during the course of the stand-off.

Third, in addition to the legal posturing and public information campaigns run by China, the shrill pitch of psychological warfare undertaken by China, including recalling the events of 1962, threatening revisit of the Sikkim agreement, raising the possibility of paying back in Kashmir and posturing through military exercises, all indicated a level of brinksmanship not seen in the recent past.[67] These were indicators of Chinese reactions, when challenged at a time and place which was not of its choosing. The methodology followed by China in pursuing this approach, followed a pattern which became discernible and predictable over a period of time. The tone and tenor of successive articulations

was balanced between the official spokesperson and state-controlled media represented by publications such as the *Global Times*. Among these, while the Foreign Ministry spokespersons remained moderate in their statements and answers to queries. In contrast, the media clearly took the lead in voicing open threats and dire warnings. As an illustration, on July 3, 2017, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, while responding to the Indian Defence Minister Arun Jaitley's statement that "India of 2017 is different from what it was in 1962", merely responded: "Just as China in 2017 is different from what it was in 1962".[68] However, the statements of July 4 in the *Global Times*, reflected a far more aggressive stance. The result of the 1962 war was an integral part of this threat.[69] The language included Indian soldiers being "kicked out" and India suffering "greater losses than in 1962".

Despite varying degrees of stridency evident from different sources, the broad content of messages that emanated from China, as well as their diplomatic representatives, remained similar, almost as if being dictated from the same script. While this gave the advantage of unity of purpose and coherence while making arguments, it took away from any particular ability to add intellectual muscle beyond the state narrative. Worse, in certain cases, faulty legal arguments were offered, with limited ability to innovate when caught off guard. The example of a discussion on CGTN, which saw the Chinese representatives query the Indian side for not responding to Chinese advance information on road building at Doklam, is a case in point. The experienced Chinese panellists were stumped when asked the reasons for advance information being provided on two occasions, if they did not consider the area disputed.[70] Further, raised voices and passionate arguments seemed a part of a well-rehearsed script that was merely being played out in front of the audience. Having heard one set of arguments was good enough and any further effort to seek greater clarity remained pointless, since the script rarely had the flexibility to accommodate ingenuity of interpretation. This included the media as well.

Fourth, unlike the Chinese claims of India gaining strategic proximity with the US, the Doklam stand-off suggests that India's border problems are at best likely to receive statements of support. However, the heavy lifting, if and when needed, will have to be done by India. Contrary to oft-repeated Chinese protestations of India's proximity to the US, Doklam may have allayed these fears to a great extent.

Fifth, the role of neighbouring countries or the lack of it, emerged clearly during the course of the stand-off. Even as Bhutan stood by India during the crisis, the emergence of diverse voices that will emanate from the evolving political structures that are likely to emerge, will only increase the challenges for India to compete with China for the space that was once taken for granted.

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7

The Future of Conflict

The challenge of attempting to evaluate the trajectory of future wars is not unique in the subcontinent and has remained a subject of discussion and analysis for scholars. This is despite the fact that an assessment of the future of war is fraught with the danger of almost always getting it wrong. Lawrence Freedman, in his book, *The Future of War: A History*, writes, "The reason that the future is difficult to predict is that it depends on choices that are yet to be made, including by our governments, in circumstances that remain uncertain." He adds that "history is made by people who do not know what is going to happen next."[1] Freedman describes in detail the unerring accuracy with which analysts, strategists, generals and scholars got their assessment about future wars wrong. The observations made could well be repeated in the present context as well, as the US experience informs. Robert Scales quotes Michael Howard to suggest that assessing future wars is not aimed at getting it right but to avoid getting it "terribly wrong".

The Factors

There are a number of factors which could be responsible for anyone to make mistakes in reading the future battlefield. For one, the evolution of mankind does not follow a consistent and linear trajectory. Therefore, what may be true of history at a certain stage, may not remain so in another. While this observation may go against the logic of learning from history, however, the past alone is not a guarantee of the present or,

for that matter, the future. Two, the very basis of any worthy adversary's plans is bound to be based on a new paradigm that challenges status quo. If that be the case, change is inherent in any form of confrontation, especially if one of the sides remains open to the idea of achieving surprise. Three, the pace of technological revolution is likely to impact the character of war faster than it possibly has in the past, with changes not only taking place in areas that are known, but also in the known unknown. Evidently, the rate and pace of change as a result of technological innovations is outpacing any previous period in history. A comparison of the information revolution with the industrial is one illustrative example of the same. Four, even as an adversary looks for different paradigms, a country's own war plans are made by leaders who remain most comfortable in the past and least with the future. As a result, the echo of battles fought in bygone eras continues to mistakenly influence thinking of future wars. There is limited scope for open ideas that challenge the status quo, especially in steeply hierarchical organisations. Five, even if one does successfully detach from the past, the future tends to be viewed through the prism of the present. As a result, the resultant image is bound to reflect a comfortable and identifiable reality. The inherent inability to detach the mind from the present often makes it incapable of looking at the future. Six, conflicts are a multidimensional phenomenon. However, the thinking on them is often unidimensional. Even this singular dimension is derived from the perspective of a soldier, often isolated from the subsidiary but equally critical elements of war. As an illustration, how do resources, economy or societal churnings influence a future conflict? These are not questions that routinely form the basis for mapping future conflicts. Seven, even if other elements of analysing future wars come together, the impact of an individual's influence on decision making cannot be predicted. Given the same situation and circumstances, two different people at the helm of affairs could come to a very different decision

on warfighting. This could be influenced by individual character or the ability or inability to assess that of the adversary. These are possibly just some of the factors that challenge the ability to prepare for future wars. There could be many more, which are equally relevant.

If these be some of the challenges, does it even seem relevant to attempt an analysis of future conflicts in India's context? Should these pitfalls and challenges not deter attempts which can completely take the country and the armed forces along an unintended tangent? As history has proved so often, that is indeed a possibility. However, not planning for the future is probably an option that could potentially have worse consequences. While the former raises the possibility of going wrong, the latter is a guarantee to being stranded in a perpetual state of status quo. It is like standing at a busy cross-section of a road, hoping to take the right turn when the time comes. Only the possibility of being hit by a speeding tanker is far more real than eventually making the right choice. The best option under these circumstances is therefore to make a reasoned and considered decision.

The US experience in this regard, as also that of India, has not always been positive, despite the unique strategic culture each of them bring in their own way to the analysis of warfighting. It is not important to analyse the examples of their failures from the past since these can always be found to critique a thought process. It is more important to understand the processes that have been employed to attempt the achievement of a judicious solution. It must also be kept in mind that no future plan can remain etched in stone, be it for the frailty of the human mind, advent of new technology or the ingenuity of an adversary. Therefore, even as a future course is charted, the potential to conduct course correction must remain inherent in the evolutionary or revolutionary path.

The first example of attempting to prepare for the future battlefield comes from the US. Major General Scales, in charge of the US Army's "Army After Next" project, recalls their

failure to operationalise their concepts related to organisations, doctrines and technologies. The US created an "early lock-in", which essentially led to the premature operationalisation of inadequately developed technologies. This led to their failure to create the desired result. Similarly, "Army XXI", a second project some years later, attempted to look at near-term solutions which only reinforced past structures and methodologies of fighting resembling the Desert Storm era, which was clearly outdated under changing circumstances. This was a case of *late lock*. In contrast, an interim idea, Objective Force, came up with an interim solution between "Army After Next" and "Army XXI". This led to the introduction of the Stryker eight-wheeled vehicle mounted with a machine gun as part of the light brigades. It proved to be the *right lock*, in contrast to the other initiatives.[2] This provided the US land forces the requisite protection, mobility and firepower, three ingredients critical for winning the battles that they were required to fight the new age adversary.

Closer home, the Indian Armed Forces undertook futuristic understanding and preparation for combat in 1975.[3] As part of this endeavour, the Indian Army modernisation was spearheaded by the then Lt Gen K. V. Krishna Rao (later Chief of Army Staff), with Major General Sundarji who also subsequently became the Army Chief. The committee, constituted to include some of the most distinguished soldiers of the army, produced a forward-looking report, which visualised the time period till the year 2000. The reforms undertaken as a result of the findings of the report transformed the army into a modern, efficient and effective fighting force, which could employ manoeuvre to outpace and out-think the adversary in a fast-paced battle. In a period of just about two decades, the army had raised most of its mechanised forces, aviation corps and a strike capability, which created a window of opportunity against Pakistan, just prior to the nuclearisation of the subcontinent. The attrition that

the obstacle ridden plains of Punjab in Pakistan had forced upon the Indian offensive force, was sidestepped by the ability to reach the heartland of the adversary. The changes that came about not only revolutionised the organisational structures of the army, it also simultaneously evolved a mindset which adopted offence and manoeuvre as two sides of the same coin.

Borrowing the terminology from Scales, this was the right lock moment for the Indian Army, which innovated and evolved in the wake of a landmark victory against Pakistan in 1971 and successful nuclear tests in 1974, instead of a military defeat, which is usually the reason for soul searching by armed forces.[4] The Indian Army continues to largely be structured based on the guidelines of this period. However, this right lock of the 1970s and 1980s, may not necessarily remain so in perpetuity, given the changing circumstances under which conflicts were likely to take place. Four elements stand out as important determinants that are likely to influence any future transformation.

The Hybridisation of War

First, the changing character of conflicts is reflected in states increasingly fighting non-state actors and proxies, rather than other state powers directly as combatants. This in turn influences the manner in which wars or, more appropriately, conflicts are being fought. The Centre for Systemic Peace, in its report for 2017, reinforces this trend. The report suggests that the increase in the number of conflicts and casualties peaked during the Cold War, given the rivalry between the two superpowers. With the break-up of the Soviet Union, there was a perceptible decrease in these numbers. The recent increase in conflicts and casualties is a result of Islamic radicalisation and the desire to employ force in its pursuit.[5] The epicentre of conflicts within the Middle East and the AfPak region reinforces this reality. The study further indicates a decrease in state on state conflicts.

Shift in Key Constituent of Hybrid Wars

The impact of this trend is further evident in the role played by different constituents employed by state and non-state actors, as well as the inter-se relationship between them. The term hybrid warfare has gained currency in the recent past. However, the history of warfare suggests that wars have always been hybrid, though with a varying emphasis on components employed. Further, with the passage of time, advancement in technological capabilities, additional constituents have been added to the options available for prosecution of war.[6] The reduced emphasis on conventional options, with a simultaneous increase on sub-conventional and non-traditional means is evident from an assessment of more recent conflicts. This trend remains part of an ongoing continuum, even as the jury is out on its ultimate effectiveness. Examples of employment of hybrid means includes the case of Pakistan targeting both India and Afghanistan. Within the scope of operations in Afghanistan, the US and Afghan state have both been at the receiving end of Pakistan's pursuit of what it considers its national interest. Similar orchestration of resources has also been seen in the Middle East.[7]

Technology

Technology was always a driver for military change. From the advent of a sword, bow and arrow, catapult, chariot, gunpowder, sea-faring vessels, small arms, artillery, tanks, rockets and precision guided missiles, battles and wars have been influenced by revolutionary and evolutionary changes. As mentioned earlier, the change being witnessed and likely to be seen in the future, does not only highlight technology as a new driver for change. It is also the rate of pace of change, military and beyond, that could transform human conflict. Some aspects of technology are already making their impact in our daily lives. Among the most path-breaking innovations on the horizon are artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and blockchains. Each of these have the potential

to impact warfighting beyond possibilities that can perhaps be comprehended as of now. The limitation to assess the future actions of an individual in their personal capacity or as part of a larger organisational structure was a constraint in assessing future actions. Resultantly, this constrained potential options as well. AI may well find possible ways of clearing some of this haze through analysis of individual and organisational actions. This can result in better forecasting future options. It can also enhance the critical element of battlefield transparency. Dealing with terrorist threats is yet another field that has remained a challenge for governments the world over. Robotics and AI have the potential of preserving human life while dealing with terror threats and maintaining a stand-off distance while neutralising life-threatening targets. The possibilities are immense, as is the impact these technologies are likely to have on the hybridised conflict zone.

Information Revolution

The shuffle within the constituents of hybrid wars has perhaps been most perceptible as a result of the information revolution that has transformed the modern battlefield and shaped the evolving notion of victory. It has transformed the ability to inform, influence, recruit, fund and sustain the protracted duration of conflicts. This has often been supplemented by an active attempt to galvanise public opinion and reorient its energy and focus towards short-term or even long-term objectives. Information has not only been employed as a tool by states, as seen in the case of China right through the Doklam conflict, but also by non-state actors. The example of Daesh (also called Islamic State), is a recent and startling example of how a non-state actor can exploit the informational domain to its advantage, thereby achieving a distinct advantage over its adversaries. The rise and spread of the group remains unparalleled in the modern-day history of the world and its information campaign played a major part in creating the image that helped the group achieve its objectives.

India's Future Security Challenges

In the backdrop of these trends, what are the security challenges likely to be faced by India, which could define its security preparedness? The most obvious and perhaps the biggest challenge remains external threats from across borders. This manifests itself in the form of conventional state-on-state wars. India fought its last major conventional war in 1971 with Pakistan. The fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Bangladesh is fast approaching, which was created as a result of this war. The most significant conventional military spike thereafter led to the Kargil conflict in 1999. India fought four major wars with Pakistan and China between 1947 and 1971, a span of 24 years. In contrast, over nearly fifty years since the 1971 war, Kargil remains the pinnacle of the escalatory ladder that India scaled. India's other major security challenge has been internal, though often supported by external players.

India has been involved in fighting insurgencies and terrorism since 1955. The involvement of the state and its security forces has remained consistent since then. There have been crests and troughs in the levels of violence over the years. The inclusion of additional sub-conventional conflict zones has added to the list of internal security challenges faced by the state. This began in Northeast India and spread to the Naxal areas, Punjab and J&K. At different stages of these sub-conventional conflicts, both China and Pakistan have attempted to seek strategic advantage against India, through their direct and indirect support to violent groups. China's role and scope of activities was perceptibly lower and became relatively insignificant after the 1970s. However, Pakistan has remained active through its involvement in most insurgencies of the Northeast, Punjab and more recently and most significantly in J&K.

The trajectory and frequency of major wars and sub-conventional conflicts, as highlighted above, are suggestive of a shift in the character of threats and challenges faced by India.

This trend is also relevant to most countries which are threatened by the changing matrix of hybrid threats, which has witnessed an emergence of sub-conventional means to seek political ends. In the backdrop of these security challenges, two factors need careful analysis. The nuclearisation of China, Pakistan and India is one and the manifestation of transformed hybrid threats, as relevant to India in particular, is the other.

Impact of Nuclearisation

An important series of events had a noteworthy impact on the evolving character of war in the subcontinent. China became a nuclear power in 1964. India conducted its first test in 1974 and both India and Pakistan became nuclear powers in 1998. The Sino-Indian war took place two years prior to China's nuclear power status. The last major Indo-Pak war took place three years prior to the 1974 tests. The Kargil conflict followed less than a year after the 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. The nuclear tests and weaponisation of the three countries involved, does not suggest that major conventional conflicts can be ruled out. However, it does indicate that its scope and intensity has reduced with the passage of time, as is evident from the Kargil conflict. However, much like the initial years of nuclearisation of major powers such as the US, Soviet Union and China, the subcontinental experience suggests that while conflicts can take place, they are unlikely to spiral into larger conflagrations.

The approach to situations of the kind experienced in Kargil must not only be derived from the conflict itself, but also similar experiences elsewhere in the world. The Sino-Soviet skirmish in 1969, though not of a similar scale as the Kargil conflict, did witness two nuclear powers engaging in a limited military conflict. The fact that China, despite clearly being the weaker side, decided to take on the Soviet Union, an established and a superior nuclear as well as a military power, deserves analysis. The actions of Mao emerge from a combination of factors. These

included both domestic issues and foreign policy alignments. On the domestic front, Mao saw the conflict as a useful diversion in light of the disturbances unleashed in the wake of the "Cultural Revolution", which was peaking during that period. The clash served the purpose of pushing attention and blame for economic and social issues beyond the borders. Similarly, the clash also helped silence the pro-Soviet lobby in China, thereby allowing Mao to progress his policy of creating a switch from a pro-Soviet to pro-US policy soon thereafter.[8]

On the external front, China was keen to break from the shadow of Soviet leadership and seek the requisite technology and influx of monetary resources to augment its flagging economy. The US seemed the best option under the circumstances to achieve these objectives.[9]

The Cuban missile crisis took place in October 1962, 13 years after the first Soviet nuclear test in 1949. Khrushshev's decision to locate offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba triggered a situation that almost brought the two nuclear powers on the brink of an exchange of missiles. It was the mature handling of the situation from both sides, after the crisis began, and the determination to not repeat the mistakes of the past leading to previous world wars that averted the disastrous possibility of a nuclear exchange. However, the very creation of the situation, despite understanding its possible outcome, reflected brinksmanship of a variety that could have had grave consequences, even if it was the result of a trigger-happy or stressed-out soldier at the tactical level. The lesson learned by both powers stood them in good stead right through the Cold War years.

Both cases represent conflict or a near conflict situation between nuclear powers. The Sino-Soviet conflict did witness exchange of fire and resulted in casualties on both sides. Conversely, the US-Soviet showdown averted war, however, its consequences could have been far worse if it had snowballed into one. The case of Pakistan and India, while different from the US-Soviet conflict,

bears closer relation to the Sino-Soviet skirmish, which was the result of a border dispute. It also stemmed from conditions that can be related to Pakistan's motivations for conflict with roots in both internal and external factors.

In the case of Pakistan, Kashmir has become the basis for its army's raison d'être and a core domestic issue for the army. It sustained its size, logic for existence and religious zeal to bind the force together, as also join the country in times of crisis. The receding levels of terrorism in Kashmir and the perceived threat from India could directly impact the Pakistan Army's cash cow. It could also further dilute the disinterest of the international community with Kashmir, which seemed to have placed the issue on a back burner, leading to Kargil. And finally, the new-found enthusiasm of the nuclear state gave it the confidence to take on India in a conflict, which from Pakistani perspective, was likely to remain localised and well below the threshold of a major war.

The case in favour of linking the roots of any conflict with domestic issues and foreign policy is well established. However, Michael Harowitz makes an interesting argument in relation to the behaviour of newly established nuclear powers. He suggests that nuclear states which acquire the capability are more likely to reciprocate to military challenges rather than states which have learnt to adjust to this reality over a period of time.[10]

Both in the case of China and Pakistan, as well as Soviet Union and India, the aggressors as well as the defenders, acted militarily, despite the possession of nuclear weapons. The aggressor China did so five years after its nuclear tests in 1964 and Pakistan a mere year after its tests in 1998. The Soviet Union reacted with force, despite a gap of 20 years after it tested its nuclear weapons and India after just one.

Despite these similarities, Pakistan is further different from the China of 1969 in a number of ways. The most striking is Pakistan's continued attempts at pursuing its hybrid war against India, despite the 1999 showdown. The lessons that should have

been learnt in the aftermath of the conflict, as other nuclear powers did in their case, seem to have been limited to Pakistan lowering its military provocations, rather than eliminating them. In the process, the possibility of escalation and the constant shadow of nuclear weapons remains a challenge.

Recalibration of Conflict

One is eager to conclude that the experience at Kargil may have brought home critical lessons for Pakistan with regard to conflict resolution. The reality reflects contradictory trends. The absence of a major conflict does suggest receding confidence in its effectiveness. This indicates that Pakistan may draw upon its not so satisfactory experience of the Kargil conflict. As a result, there is evidence of a conscious attempt to avoid the possibility of this very situation, despite occasional provocations by elements within Pakistan.[11] Instead, there is greater reliance on employing such elements of hybrid war that reduce the possibility of a conflict and yet, serve the larger strategic ends of the country. The nature and form of these provocations have since changed. The emphasis has shifted to sub-conventional and non-conventional elements of an evolving hybrid conflict.

Despite this shift in the selection of constituents, the ongoing conflict continues to remain a clash of wills of opposing forces. As highlighted earlier, the nuclearisation of the subcontinent all but reversed the salient element of major conventional wars. The 1999 Kargil conflict came as a surprise. However, even this remained constrained to the LoC sector of Kargil and within the limited scope of force employment and escalation. The futility of war from Pakistan's perspective, further reinforced the limited utility of conventional forces in forcing or even facilitating a quick decision to contentious issues. Conversely, the hybrid war that Pakistan pursued thereafter gave it the ability to fight against India, despite the capability differential between the armed forces and the economic size of the two countries. The existing trajectory

of the two economies seem to suggest that this differential may well increase. However, the elements of hybrid war being pursued provided the necessary leverage despite this increase.

Pakistan's hybrid war against India was spearheaded by a sub-conventional component—terrorism in J&K. This ensured that Indian forces remain preoccupied through an outsourced adversary, the disturbance within the state remained a psychological barrier for India's global ambitions and Pakistan was allowed to bask in a contrived notion of victory that could not be achieved through conventional wars. Simultaneously, this effort was supported by terror funding through a variety of sources to include fake Indian currency notes, drug money, state funding and misuse of donations and charities.[12] The most potent component of Pakistan's hybrid war remained the speed and scope that technology facilitated to not only spread the messages of subversion and hate, but also of misinformation, crafted through information campaign specialists, led and guided by state agencies like the ISI and the ISPR. The ability to employ technology to disseminate narratives across a wide cross-section of people allowed subversion to attain very high levels of effectiveness. It also facilitated mobilisation, disruption and dissonance within the society that became a challenge for any hierarchical state apparatus to handle. The conventional forces deployed along the LoC acted in support of the sub-conventional employment of terrorists, in facilitating infiltration, keeping the Indian Army engaged along the LoC and retaining focus on the artificial instability. Pakistan's strategy created a protracted and low-cost alternative to earlier attempts at forcing a quick and short-term solution to existing differences with India. Pakistan's employment of hybrid war could thus be related to its strategic choice of remaining in perpetual conflict with India.

Does China's strategic competition with India qualify as a hybrid war? The jury is probably still out on that. For one, China has not directly employed conventional force against India with

no bullet having been fired between the two sides since 1967. Two, the sub-conventional domain despite being active, has not witnessed a direct employment of terrorism or undeniable support for an insurgency since the 1970s. One could argue that the refusal to allow UN sanctions against the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and the support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism actions could be seen as indirect support for terrorism employed against India. However, this could be a stretch when seen from the perspective of China's actions being classified as hybrid war. Three, the creation of a trade surplus, accusations of cyberattacks and military stand-offs of the kind witnessed at Doklam, may still not qualify as hybrid war. Having said that, there is little doubt of the existence of strategic competition with India. This competition is again hybrid in nature, comprising a number of constituents, with armed forces more an element of gaining psychological superiority rather than military victory on the battlefield. China also employs an elaborate information campaign, legal arguments, diplomatic manoeuvring, economic influence, cyber invasiveness and subversion as a tool to influence state or public opinion.[13] This has been illustrated through a detailed analysis of China's *Three Warfares* by Liang and Xiangsui, on military strategy earlier in the book. China's competition with India is not the same as Pakistan's existential crisis that fuels conflict with India. China's choices remain informed and calculated on the basis of its perceived interests. Therefore, the hybrid competition is a strategy to retain its military, economic, technological and geopolitical advantage.

This highlights the employment of a hybrid strategy by both Pakistan and China, though pursued through varying components applied in pursuit of different objectives. If the ongoing hybrid warfare and its future contours are placed on the spectrum of conflict, it becomes apparent that future conflicts are likely to be fought in the lower one-third, with the upper second and third segments represented by an all-out conventional war or a nuclear

war, remaining unlikely. This conclusion is based on the premise that the possible objectives that Pakistan or China may consider worthy of the risk of war, to include major territorial gains, destruction of war-waging potential, or imposition of conditions that cannot be achieved through negotiations, do not seem feasible under the mutually destructive nuclear arsenals, conventional deterrence or dissuasion as the case may be in relation to Pakistan or China. Further, these can be better achieved through a hybrid strategy that retains or builds their relative strength, even as India's comprehensive power can be constrained.

Pakistan and China's decision to employ the hybrid strategy with limited focus on conventional military strength and greater reliance on sub-conventional means enhanced through the information revolution, indicates the pursuit of a strategy that needs to be contextualised as a framework. This becomes relevant from the perspective of evaluating response options that could possibly be applied not only in a reactive scenario, but also to seek proactive strategic advantage over time.

Interpreting Conflicts

In the case of Pakistan, there is evidence of two different stages of conflicting approaches being followed over the years. Both can be seen within the ambit of hybrid wars. The first represents a period of conflict which commenced from the 1947-48 war and continued until the 1971 war. During this period, every major military endeavour by Pakistan was spearheaded by a major conventional war, supported by other constituents, to include the use of proxies. This changed with the support of terrorists in Punjab in the 1980s. However, the full impact of the change in approach was witnessed in J&K, where sub-conventional operations took centre stage, even as conventional muscle became a subsidiary element in the hybrid strategy. If these contrasting approaches of Pakistan are co-related to the concept of finite and infinite games, the logic of Pakistan's decision can be understood

better. It also indicates the possible course of action likely to be followed in future, based on the choices that Pakistan has, and the best-case scenario its hybrid strategy tends to provide.

The case of China represents a far more subtle and sophisticated strategic competition with India. China has carefully avoided open and obvious direct violation of legal conventions and agreements. Actions attributable to China represent a play in the grey zone. Instead of attempting to repeat the 1962-episode, China employed the psychological impact of recalling the defeat of 1962 and the simultaneous growth in every dimension of its comprehensive power, including military and economic, as an ominous reminder of its military capability and the increasing power differential that could be used to recreate episodes which could have equally debilitating consequences, as experienced in the past. There is an attempt to seek advantage and influence, preferably without employing force, even as its shadow looms in the background. This approach is visible in the Indian Ocean Region, India's neighbourhood and along the LAC.

Can this behaviour of both Pakistan and China become the basis for assessing their approach in the future? There is a behavioural trend line that is evident in case of both countries, and this does indicate a shift, which if left unaddressed, could lead India to prepare for a war that may never be fought.

In order to explain the logic of Pakistan's course of action, an interesting theoretical construct, which is as much a strategic approach as it is philosophical, provides an innovative foundation to understand the existing and future contours of war or strategic competition. James P. Carse wrote a book with the title, *Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility* in 1986. The author contextualised his approach to the concept of finite and infinite games, in terms of how these are played, its rules, participants, conduct, termination and more importantly the reason for choices made by players. Carse disaggregates existing attitudes and behavioural patterns on the basis of

an approach, which is especially relevant in an environment where individuals and nations interact with each other through proliferating instruments of communication and competition, having become habitual to faster response times and accompanied by the expectation of faster decisions. Just like the nature of war remains consistent, even as its character changes, the underlying concept of finite and infinite games also remains consistent, even as players tend to employ different elements to play it. Prior to relating the construct to specific examples, an attempt has been made to highlight the fundamental rules that define finite and infinite games, as interpreted by Carse.[14] The pillars of this theory become the basis for interpreting competition and conflict in the geopolitical arena, which, as the analysis will suggest, remains similar to human behaviour, both in the corporate boardroom and war-rooms. This is primarily because decision making in all these cases is led and guided by a common factor, which is the human mind.

According to Carse, the finite game is played for the purpose of winning, while the infinite game is played *for continuing the play*. In a finite game, players not only volunteer to play, they must also be chosen to do so. In infinite games, *any volunteer can choose to play* the game. Boundaries in terms of spatial, temporal or those defined by time are the constraints of a finite game. Instead, in an infinite game, players *play with boundaries*. Much like the boundaries, the rules of a finite game are fixed, however, these *can be changed* during the infinite game with the aim of perpetuating it. Rules of an infinite game are like grammar, which is used to perpetuate conversation or discussions. Finite games can be played within infinite games, but not in the reverse order. Surprise is employed in a finite game as an instrumentality to bring the game to a close. Contrary to this, in an infinite game, players continue to play *in the expectation of surprise*. Therefore "to be prepared against surprise is to be trained. To be prepared for surprise is to be

educated." Death is the termination of a finite game, even if it is the death of the player in the game. However, in an infinite game, death is a means of perpetuating the game.[15]

Simon Sinek, a thought leader, provides his interpretation and elaboration of finite and infinite games. His approach towards game theory and the interpretation of finite and infinite games is useful, especially when applied to organisations and individuals in terms of defining their approach. He explains its impact on the two sides that tend to play this game differently. In a finite game, the players are known, as are the rules and objectives. This can be related to any sporting game, which is played between two teams of a fixed number of identifiable players, who come on to the sports field of prescribed dimensions and play by designated rules. The team that outscores, outruns or out-times the other depending upon the game, is declared the winner. This is a finite game. An infinite game can be played between known and unknown players. In this game, rules can be changed and the aim is to keep playing by perpetuating it. This game is stable when one finite player plays another finite player. Similarly, the game continues to remain stable when an infinite player is pitted against another infinite player. Simon uses the example of the Cold War in this regard, where the game continued until one player, in this case the USSR, fell by the wayside. This happens when a player no longer has the resources or the will to continue. In essence, the US won by default. He goes on to suggest that a disharmony arises when a finite player is pitted against an infinite player. This time around, while the finite player is playing to win, the infinite player is playing to continue the game. In such conditions, it is more likely that the finite player, having failed to achieve a quick victory, will withdraw, given the inability to bring the game to a close in a prescribed time frame. The rules of the game are never told to the finite player incorrectly, he chooses to read them as such, despite the innumerable examples of similar misinterpretations by similar big players in the past.

Further, finite players tend to look at short-term tangible targets, which can make it simpler for them to declare victory, even if it is the incorrect notion of victory. The US declaration of victory in the Second Iraq War is a case worth examining. The declaration of victory was followed by chaotic conditions and loss of thousands of lives. It subsequently led to the creation of a vacuum within a failed state that facilitated the same being filled by the Daesh. It also led to Iran gaining unprecedented influence, a situation that the US would have liked to avoid under all circumstances. This was certainly not the aftermath of victory the US had possibly hoped for.

Simon suggests that a vast majority of companies continue to play the finite game in the business world as well. They often tend to react to their competitors in a bid to copy what they feel is a good idea, without being sure of its ultimate relevance to them. This he describes as the difference between players who pursue their purpose, cause or belief, which is the "why" of what they do. This is closely linked to the values of a company, organisation or country, which are largely intangible and difficult to measure. The finite players in contrast, pursue the "how" and "what" or their interests. This is largely tangible and easy to measure. It includes short-term results or increase in output over a certain period of time.

An attempt has been made to relate the core idea of both these ideologues with the strategic space that India finds itself in. On the face of it, according to the philosophical approach towards life or an element of life, such as the one put forth by Carse, political leaders find themselves in a dilemma of structuring their priorities and showing results within a finite time frame, under pressure from their support base, impatient for tangible and visible results. This is possibly the reason why a number of leaders tend to adopt the finite approach. The short-term perspective of terminating the game, addressing the immediate and obvious vulnerabilities of an opponent, veils the inherent

failure of an approach, which as time and space indicates, are like considering the horizon as the end of the landmass, a typical flaw underscored by Carse. This is similar to the advice often given to impatient hill climbers, who tend to consider every subsequent crest as the peak and the pinnacle of their achievement. However, the solution to the problem lies within the characteristics of an infinite game, given the fact that it allows a number of finite games to be played within its realm as its sub-sets. This suggests that even in an environment influenced by immediate results, an infinite approach can succeed by allowing a number of finite elements within its larger scope.

Before specifically co-relating India's external challenges both on its western and northern borders, it would be useful to analyse the conceptual co-relation of these conflicts with the concept of infinite and finite games. It is argued that the success of any strategy being pursued by India or for that matter by potential adversaries, can only work if it follows the tenets of an infinite, rather than finite game. In order to prove the same, the theory will be related to the last 70 years of conflict experienced by India, and thereafter to the changing character of present and future wars.

Pakistan fought four wars with India in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and to a limited extent in 1999. During all these wars, there was an innate desire on Pakistan's part to remain a finite player, driven by the desire to fulfil its flawed framework adopted at the time of partition in 1947. This made Pakistan look for a conventional war in the quest for a quick victory, with an aim of resolving outstanding disputes with India. This strategy shifted with a protracted struggle commencing in 1988 in Kashmir, with the benefit of more than a decade of experience in Afghanistan and closer home in Punjab. The adoption of a hybrid strategy, with the primary focus of the conflict remaining on a long-duration sub-conventional conflict, which challenged the finite constraints of time, should have logically reversed the trend of

past defeats for Pakistan. This is especially the case, wherein, this is accompanied by a number of other elements like subversion, religious indoctrination, long-term funding and employment of informational technology to disseminate and proliferate ideas faster than ever before.[16] Despite the seemingly obvious notion of victory that this provided to Pakistan, the long-term reality is likely to prove equally elusive, just as the past endeavours suggest. This is because of the limited success Pakistan achieved with the concept of enlarging or pushing boundaries. The limitation of playing within fixed geographical boundaries of a war, aimed at finding a quick solution, was overcome through this strategy. However, Pakistan's leaders forgot to challenge the more important boundaries which were always ideational. As a result, even as the physical domain became infinite, the ideas that governed the conflicts remained constrained by the inability to challenge limits. A more detailed analysis of this contradiction will reinforce the reasons for the future failure of Pakistan's inability to succeed against India, despite adopting a hybrid strategy.

Pakistan's innate frustration accompanying the desire to compete with India, irrespective of the arena of competition, did not allow it to emerge a victor and this is unlikely to change in the future. Pakistan's strategy, despite the adoption of hybrid war, is symptomatic of missing the woods for the trees. If related to an insurgency environment, it closely resembles the self-defeating act of fighting every individual insurgent and mistaking him for the insurgency itself. In the process, the failure to address the cause, the idea that drives the movement, eventually leads to the defeat of a counter-insurgent force. This is primarily because it is an idea that fuels a steady stream of volunteers, willing to fight the infinite conflict. They will almost certainly outlast the blind slashing of shadows, fuelled by anger and fury. Further, the zeal to achieve victory for territory and reclaim what is perceived as having been lost, becomes a deadweight. This in turn restrains Pakistan from celebrating its own genius, which could have led

to the real victory that can only come to an infinite player. This resultant end-state could have been closer to the success of a developed society in terms of its human development index and per capita income. Pakistan, despite moving the physical horizon of time and space through its hybrid war against India, failed to expand the idea of its progress. The driving vision remained constrained by the constant erosion of a futuristic vision. In substantive terms, this failure reflects in the regressive trajectory of the Pakistani state since its independence. Rohit Saran writes, "An average Pakistani was richer, lived longer and lived more safely than an average Indian for almost two decades after 1947, which is roughly the time democracy was absent in Pakistan."[17] According to Saran, it was at the time of Pakistan's foray into fuelling terrorism in its neighbourhood that its descent into chaos began. "An average Pakistani today earns 15% less than an Indian whereas in 1985 Indians were 15% poorer … On an average, a Pakistan citizen consumes 24% less energy (used to be 10% higher), lives a shorter life and is less educated than an Indian. Even Bangladesh, which was a poorer part of Pakistan for 24 years, has marched ahead on all markers of social progress."[18]

Perhaps the most scathing attack of Pakistan's policy towards India and its support for terrorism came from its three-time former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif. Sharif contended in an interview with a prominent newspaper *Dawn* that Pakistan had isolated itself. "Despite giving sacrifices, our narrative is not being accepted. Afghanistan's narrative is being accepted, but ours is not. We must look into it."[19] He related Pakistan's isolation to its policy of employing terrorism as state policy. "Militant organisations are active. Call them non-state actors, should we allow them to cross the border and kill 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me. Why can't we complete the trial?" He adds, "We could have been at seven per cent growth (in GDP), but we are not."[20] Sharif is possibly right. Pakistan in its bid to achieve a victory against India, lost the war in favour of its people.

Let me attempt to specifically relate it to a finite and infinite player. For Pakistan and its successive leaders, the desire to play the role of a Caliph, ordained to bring victory on the battlefield of geopolitics, remained the fundamental guiding thought. Given the contradiction of this action, every act was theatrical, with performances never moving beyond the limited scope of role play. Through each role play, Pakistan's leaders remained in search of a "title" that victory against India would bestow upon them. This was fuelled by their quest for revenge. Not one leader amongst them, especially the military dictators, successfully overcame the allure of playing others (the people of Pakistan) for this elusive title, instead of playing for others to continue the game with India.

Pakistan consistently failed to recognise that the continuation of the game could only happen through development and progress. It could only attain progression along this path, achieved through the empowerment of the population and not by arming it. The chimera of *Jannat* (heaven), often defined by ideologues in the most finite ways, to include the 72 virgins and all heavenly pleasures, became symbolic of an alternate reality that was easy to interpret and communicate to the gullible, especially when blinded by contorted ideologies. The misinterpretation of Islam and more specifically jihad has been a common tool applied to misguide people into the fold of violence. Unlike the false prophets of the faith and countries aiming to exploit falsehood, even the concept of jihad is not about violence against people of other faiths. It can be as much an act of internal or external efforts to become a better Muslim.[21]

China's approach to dealing with military and non-military competition reflects a strategic thought that is not only different from how Pakistan competed with India, but also from how most of the Western world perceives conflict and competition. This is not to say that China has not or will not employ more traditional tools of conflict, however, the thought process emanating from

Beijing, increasingly seemed to echo the infinite game theory. This can be seen from both official versions of Chinese strategy, as well as individual expression of the subject.

A recent book, *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character of Conflict*, underscores the changing character of conflict and competition.[22] The chapter on China in the book digs deep into contemporary writing on the subject of *Gray Zone* warfare,[23] as also more traditional Chinese writings, which resonate the sentiment.[24] This includes concepts of *Wei Qi*, *Art of War*, *Wu Zi*, more recently *Unrestricted Warfare* and "three warfares". A similar sentiment is propagated in the book *Unrestricted Warfare*. Interestingly, the authors emphasize on the need to push boundaries of traditional thinking on warfare, a sentiment that Carse develops as a characteristic of infinite players. They write:

> In summary, it means all boundaries which restrict warfare to within a specified range. The real meaning of the concept of exceeding limits which we propose is, first of all, to transcend ideology. Only secondarily does it mean, when taking action, to transcend limits and boundaries when necessary, when they can be transcended, and select the most appropriate means (including extreme means).[25]

Liang and Xiangsui in their analysis argue for a limitless battle space, which becomes the playground for competitors. The expanding horizons also relate to the components of the state and society involved in the competition and conflict, as well as the scale of instrumentalities that can be brought to bear on an adversary. Their contention that beyond-limits warfare erases the "distinction between what is or is not the battlefield" brings every segment of society into play. As a result, they consider "social spaces such as the military, politics, economics, culture, and the psyche" also as battlefields.[26] Further, it is not surprising when the authors conclude that the confrontation could emerge

as much between soldiers, as it could between ordinary people or experts. This echoes the principle of voluntary participation in an infinite game by Carse, in contrast with selective participation in a finite play, as would be the case wherein the participation was limited to enlisted forces.

The Indian experience during Doklam further reinforces the Chinese model. The employment of all three elements of warfare were not only perceptible, it was also evident that China was willing to prolong the strategic competition over time, in a bid to seek a more advantageous position. In many ways, this has been a reiteration of Chinese policy followed in the past, which saw time, and the prolonging of existing disputes, a means of gaining strategic advantage.

Notes

1. Lawrence Freedman, "The Future of War: A History," *Public Affairs*, New York, 2017, pp. xviii-xix.
2. Robert H. Scales, "Forecasting the Future of War," *War on the Rocks*, April 9, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/04/forecasting-the-future-of-warfare/, accessed on April 26, 2018.
3. For an elaboration of the Krishna Rao Committee Report, see Vivek Chadha, *Even If Ain't Broke Yet, Do Fix It: Enhancing Effectiveness Through Military Change* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2016), pp. 48-53.
4. A number of cases of military change come to light that were undertaken after defeats on the battlefield. The Indian example of changes after the 1962 war and the US attempt at transforming its forces post-Vietnam are two such examples.
5. Monty G. Marshall and Gabriella Elzinga-Marshall, *Global Report 2017: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*, Centre for Systemic Peace, Vienna, August 27, 2017, pp. 25-27, http://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/GlobalReport2017.pdf, accessed on March 5, 2018.
6. See Michael J. Mazzar, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College Press, 2015), p. 3.
7. A detailed assessment of hybrid war has been done in a publication of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, which assesses six case studies to capture the prevailing trend of hybrid wars. See Vikrant Deshpande (ed.), *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character of Conflict* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2018).

8. See Dimitri Ryabushkin, *Origins and Consequences of the Soviet-Chinese Border Conflict of 1969*, http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16_2_ses/03_ryabushkin.pdf, accessed on February 13, 2018, pp. 76-81.

9. Ibid.

10. Michael Harowitz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict: Does Experience Matter*, https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/uploads/Horowitz_The_Spread_of_Nuclear_Weapons.pdf, accessed on February 13, 2018.

11. See S. Krishnaswamy, "Why theatre commands is an unnecessary idea," *The Indian Express*, August 16, 2018, https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/why-military-theatre-commands-is-an-unnecessary-idea-5308890/, accessed on January 28, 2019.

12. See Vivek Chadha, *Pakistan's Hybrid War in South Asia: Case Study of India and Afghanistan*, in Vikrant Deshpande (ed.), *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character of War* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2018), pp. 37-61.

13. For a detailed assessment of hybrid warfare see, Vikrant Deshpande (ed.*)*, *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character of War*, Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2018. More specifically the book deals with the Pakistani and Chinese approach to hybrid warfare. Vivek Chadha*, Pakistan's Hybrid War in South Asia: Case Study of India and Afghanistan*, pp. 37-61 and Abhay K. Singh, *Expanding the Turbulent Maritime Periphery: Gray Zone Conflicts with Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 141-72.

14. See James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility* (New York: The Free Press, 1988). The following prognosis of Carse has been summarised from the first chapter of his book, which provides the fundamental arguments for the following discourse.

15. Ibid.

16. An article analysing it, when viewed in the immediate and limited finite frame of a hybrid strategy comes to this very conclusion, a limitation resulting from the failure to better understand the constraints of a finite strategy. See, Vivek Chadha, "Pakistan's Hybrid War in South Asia: Case Study of India and Afghanistan," pp. 37-61, in Vikrant Deshpande (ed.*)*, *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character of War* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2018).

17. Rohit Saran, "Five wars that Pakistan lost: And why India shouldn't let it lose another one," *The Times of India*, August 16, 2018, https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/#, accessed on August 16, 2018.

18. Ibid.

19. Cyril Almeida, "For Nawaz, it's not over till it's over," *Dawn*, May 12, 2018, https://www.dawn.com/news/1407192/for-nawaz-its-not-over-till-its-over, accessed on May 30, 2018.

20. Ibid.

21. "Jihad: A misunderstood concept from Islam—What Jihad is, and is not," The Islamic Supreme Council of America, http://islamicsupremecouncil. org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/5-jihad-a-misunderstood-concept-from-islam.html?start=9, accessed on December 17, 2018.

22. Vikrant Deshpande (ed.), note 13.

23. See Michael J. Mazzar, note 6; Hal Brands, Paradoxes of the Gray Zone, *FPRI*, February 5, 2016, https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/02/paradoxes-gray-zone/, accessed on June 13, 2018. "Report on Gray Zone Conflict," International Security Advisory Board, January 3, 2017, https://www.state. gov/documents/organization/266849.pdf, accessed on June 13, 2018.

24. Abhay Kumar Singh, note 13, pp. 141-67.

25. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999), p. 180.

26. Ibid., p. 206.

Conclusion

If the future of conflict and competition with Pakistan and China is indeed more likely to reflect the tenets of hybrid war, with variations that have been illustrated in the book, then the options that will emerge for India must relate to every facet of it. From diplomacy to higher direction of war and warfighting to strategic communications, the conceptualisation, planning, execution and follow-up actions in all these areas, must all relate closely to the changes that are influencing how nations are likely to contest others.

The importance of hybrid wars, whichever name that these may be called by, remains the most important factor driving future conflict and competition. If this is indeed the case, the decision making and aspects related to implementation discussed in the first part of the book are bound to be impacted by this reality. Diplomacy, which has remained one of the strengths of India's external outreach over the years, given the institutional framework that binds it together and brings a sense of continuity, will have to reinvent itself to the challenges of hybrid warfare and reality of infinite competition that may already be in play. Hitler said, "When diplomacy ends war begins" and it may have been true in his times. However, the reality of emerging conflicts clearly suggests that war and diplomacy, as they have both been redefined, are likely to persist in a simultaneous time-zone. This was evident during the Kargil conflict, as it was during the Doklam crisis, Chinese protestations aside.

Examples beyond the Indian shores also reinforce this reality, with every hybrid conflict indicating a simultaneity of effort in the military, diplomatic and related spheres that may

characterise a conflict. This indicates that unlike in the past, when components of a state's response mechanism to include military force, diplomacy, economic pressures, subversion, terrorism, etc., were relatively more distinct in their application, the ongoing and future conflicts suggest an ongoing shift. "The line between politics and conflict is becoming increasingly blurred."[1] This could result in military men being a part of diplomatic outreach and more obviously, diplomats going well beyond their traditional domain to seek decisions in national interest. It further implies that individual services will be forced to operate in a far more cohesive and homogenous environment, dictated more by virtue of the emerging circumstances, rather than their individual preferences. The importance of this shift does not emerge as much from various individual constituents of hybrid war such as cyberattacks, but more from the collective impact these could have. This is all the more relevant, given the limited role military force may play in the traditional sense, unlike what was witnessed in the past. If this is indeed the reality of future wars, then these may well be guided less by "War is the continuation of politics by other means" and more by hybrid wars where force and politics will coexist simultaneously to achieve strategic objectives.

The recent past has confirmed that India's past reluctance to raise bilateral issues at international fora has undergone a change. In contrast with previous experiences, India has raised issues related to cross-border terrorism, financing of terrorism, nuclear proliferation repeatedly. This has achieved a degree of success in exposing Pakistan's role in these activities. However, it will remain a challenge for Indian diplomacy to take the current narrative beyond the scope of identifying Pakistan as a perpetrator. The next step will require the creation of consensus, despite the roadblocks placed by China, in favour of more substantive punitive action. The placement of Pakistan on the Grey List in the FATF is a case in point.[2]

In this context, China's Gray Zone conflict strategy is an attempt to blur traditional boundaries associated with warfighting.[3] This is reaffirmed by the formal employment of Three Warfares as a method of warfare, in the pursuit of strategic success through its thoughtful application. The ability to convert defeat in the South China Sea arbitration case against the Philippines into a victory, acknowledged by the legal victor itself, is a recent case where China's influence over smaller neighbours came to the fore. It was equally revealing to note the effectiveness with which China was able to occupy islands in the region and thereafter create military infrastructure on the same, despite assurances to the contrary.[4] Each element of the Three Warfares strategy has a direct co-relation with diplomacy. In fact, these elements are as much a part of China's military strategy, as of diplomacy. Further, the employment of coercive diplomacy is not a new tool employed by countries. However, the elements used to ensure its effectiveness make this a far more efficient mechanism.[5]

If diplomacy has evolved with time, how is the higher direction of war likely to change? Some of the challenges posed by the changing character of war are highlighted by Lieutenant General H. S. Panag. He says: "It is this hybrid war where the armed forces have to operate over the entire spectrum of conflict simultaneously that will pose the future challenges to the military leadership. More so, when we are fighting the fourth-generation war in J&K, training to transform to the third generation with a mindset of the second generation."[6] Not only does Panag point towards an outdated approach to new-age warfare, he also highlights structural weaknesses such as armed forces not having a say in national decision making, absence of a formal National Security Strategy, weak jointness including the absence of a CDS and theatre commands. Interestingly, he underlines the challenge of an "information deluge" instead of "fog of war". The limitations underlined by Panag are reinforced by Stephen

Dayspring. He stresses that "Hybrid warfare requires a high level of unified purpose and direction in order to be conceptually possible, let alone effective."[7]

The Kargil conflict may have ultimately witnessed cohesive decision making in times of crisis. However, this remains a challenge under more routine conditions. Unlike in the past, when crisis management could attain victory during times of war, a similar response mechanism is unlikely to work against long-drawn-out hybrid wars. Unlike conventional wars that India has fought in the past, modern-day hybrid wars don't necessarily have a beginning or an end. It would not be out of place to suggest that Pakistan's hybrid war against India is a continuum. This challenges the very concept and functioning of the existing higher defence model, which has performed best when faced with an obvious and an overt threat. Mr Naresh Chandra's account of the failure of national structures during the IC-814 hijackings to the author, the well-documented weaknesses noticed during 26/11 and more recent instances of crisis management in J&K suggests that existing higher defence management models are likely to come under increasing strain during circumstances guided by conditions of hybrid war.[8]

The changing character of war is most evident in the sphere of SC. Hybrid wars, given their nature and components employed, are increasingly focusing on the ability to create a narrative in support of actual or intended actions. SC has become equally relevant for fighting existing perceptions through counter-narratives. Recent examples of the employment of SC by China and Pakistan have shown that building perceptions has become a critical element of achieving the desired end state. Be it the South China narrative or counter-narrative, the Doklam information barrage, Pakistan's narratives about persecution of Muslims in India and more specifically Kashmir through doctored and misleading content, SC has taken centre stage in the pursuit of strategic objectives.[9]

Since SC is often a concealed endeavour undertaken in a number of spheres simultaneously, its eventual impact is lost sight of in the routine crisis management approach of the state machinery. Structures and systems, which do well in times of challenges like Kargil, may not be as adept at countering a steady stream of narratives that become a seemingly normal daily routine. It would be best to illustrate this with an example of one of the most acute challenges faced by India. However, despite this recognition, given that it does not emerge as a sudden crisis, efforts to fight it have remained inadequate.

There is a persistent prevalence of pollution within most population centres of India. Despite this widespread recognition, it is not the focus of attention that an epidemic is, which has an acute impact for a short period of time in a given area. The administration tends to react sharply to an epidemic, since it is easily identified by the enormity of its impact. It leads to the galvanisation of all possible resources to fight it off, often successfully. Conversely, the growth of pollution slowly envelopes the very same area. Despite this reality, administrations often fail to check its spread, repeated warnings notwithstanding. Ultimately, it requires the onset of catastrophic circumstances for a state to take action and the population to cooperate.[10] This may well be the case despite losing more lives due to the impact of pollution when compared to an epidemic.

The impact of SC when employed to radicalise and alienate sections of the population is very similar to that of pollution in an area. Even as its prevalence is realised, the decision to take the requisite steps is not considered critical enough, often until it is too late. Again, much like pollution, the adverse effects of SC can only be understood by leaders who are willing to invest in the long-term well-being of their society.

This book is as much about the Kargil conflict, as it is about its aftermath. The emphasis remained on procedures and structures, rather than the war effort by the two countries.

Events recalled and chronicled were primarily for the purpose of deriving a comparative analysis in three specific spheres: diplomacy, higher direction of war and SC. The changing character of war and the accompanying notion of victory, has made the task of successful policy implementation in all three domains that much more challenging and complex. While the possibility and preparation for war as we knew it may not become obsolete, however, the simultaneous preparation for the war that wages in our midst, presents the real challenge for decision makers.

The dilemma is neither new nor is it the first time that its impact is being analysed. The shift from the war of the industrial age to the conflicts of the information age remains a subject for intense debate. One of the most interesting illustrations was its co-relation with finite and infinite games, which has been discussed at length in the book. However, in this concluding section, the shift and its implications can be highlighted further through the analogy of the games of Chess and Go.

John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt in their book, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age,* make this comparison with reference to Chess seen as a representation of war in the West (as also in India) and Go, which better relates to the information age, a game more popular in what they call the Orient.[11] Though, for the purpose of this book, the reference to China would be more appropriate. Chess is a game played on 64 squares, with different pieces having their specific characteristics and therefore importance in the game. The King, though not versatile in its movements, remains the piece that decides victory and defeat. It is protected by the Queen, Bishops, Knights, Rooks and Pawns. These pieces occupy two rows each at both ends of the board. The space between them is used for manoeuvre and seeking a position of advantage. The objective remains checkmating the King after killing or rendering the opposing pieces redundant in the battle.

The authors rightly relate this to conventional wars fought in the past, while Go better represents conflict in the information age. It is played on a board with 19 by 19 grid lines and with 361 intersections. Unlike Chess, the game commences with a clean board and the players have the liberty of placing their pieces, represented by white and black colour, on any intersection. Given this liberty, unlike conventional wars, there is no particular direction that represents the adversary. Nor is any area controlled by either side to begin with. All pieces are alike with no distinct powers or capabilities for any specific piece. The pieces can only be placed once on the board and do not move. However, if surrounded, these can be removed from the board. The aim remains placing pieces in a way that secure areas can be carved out through the placement of individual pieces. However, if placed judiciously, these individual pieces can create a matrix that hives off areas of control. "It is more about developing web-like links among nearby stationary pieces than about moving specialised pieces in combined operations."[12] The game represents merging of boundaries, fluidity of action, levelling the playfield with members which are equal in terms of their powers and prowess. The ability of a player to master this game better relates to the modern-day competition of the information age.

This example has lessons for states struggling to come to terms with the changing character of conflicts and the evolving notion of victory. The finite play of Chess is fast being overtaken by the relatively more infinite game of Go.

Notes

1. Jayant Prasad, in an interaction with the author on June 21, 2018, at IDSA, New Delhi.
2. Shahid Karim and Usman Hayat, "Pakistan on FATF's grey list: what, why, and why now?" *Dawn*, July 6, 2018, https://www.dawn.com/news/1418143, accessed on February 6, 2019.

3. For a brief overview of Gray Zone strategy see, "Competing in the Gray Zone: Countering Competition in the Space Between War and Peace," *CSIS*, https://www.csis.org/features/competing-gray-zone, accessed on February 6, 2019.

4. Ouyang Yujing, Director General of Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, PRC, "An Interview on China's Construction Activities on the Nansha Islands and Reefs," *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada*, May 27, 2015, http://ca.chineseembassy.org/eng/zt/cpot/t1267437.htm, accessed on July 9, 2018.

5. Michael J. Mazzar, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College Press, 2015). The authors analyse case studies of both China and Russia to reinforce their argument of how coercive diplomacy has been employed, pp. 81-96.

6. Lieutenant General H. S. Panag, "Military value system has not changed," *Blogs, Times of India,* January 7, 2018, https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/shooting-straight/military-value-system-has-not-changed/, June 21, 2018.

7. Stephen M. Dayspring, "Towards a theory of hybrid warfare: the Russian conduct of war during peace," Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2015, https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/47931/15Dec_Dayspring_Stephen.pdf, accessed on June 21, 2018, p. 38.

8. Josy Joseph, "Save national security from the establishment," *The Hindu*, September 22, 2016, https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Save-national-security-from-the-establishment/article13988956.ece, accessed on February 6, 2019.

9. Chayan Kundu, "Fact Check: Pakistan again uses fake images to target India," *indiatoday.in*, October 1, 2018, https://www.indiatoday.in/fact-check/story/fact-check-pakistan-uses-fake-images-to-target-india-1353133-2018-10-01, accessed on February 6, 2019.

10. A relevant example of the adverse impact of pollution converting to a catastrophe was the London smog of 1952. Its onset during a few days of December saw the direct deaths of 4,000 people and many more getting affected thereafter as well. It led to drastic measures being put in place, including the Clean Air Act of 1956.

11. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1997, pp. 10-11.

12. Ibid., p. 11.

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The Kargil conflict was fought 20 years ago. However, it continues to remain relevant for strategic analysts, military historians, academics, armed forces personnel and diplomats. This book, delves into the structures, planning processes and procedures adopted while pursuing diplomacy, higher direction of war and strategic communications, on both sides of the Line of Control during the Kargil conflict. In doing so, existing arguments are challenged and alternative conclusions drawn. This includes the debate around the decision not to cross the LoC during operations, the decision making process involved with the employment of air power and limitations of existing strategic communication structures of the armed forces, as observed during the conflict.

The second part of the book employs Kargil and the succeeding 20 years, as the basis for analysing the changing character of war. This includes a study of its implications on the notion of victory and shifts needed while pursuing diplomacy, higher direction of war and strategic communications. It also introduces the concept of finite and infinite game theory to conflicts in the sub-continental context, in an attempt to contextualise it through a fresh perspective.

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