1 Introduction: the importance of the Kargil conflict

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In the spring of 1999, Indian soldiers patrolling near the town of Kargil about 5 miles on their side of the Kashmir Line of Control (LoC) were ambushed by assailants firing from unseen positions high atop frozen peaks of the Great Himalayan mountain range. After several weeks of confusion, Indian officials realized the intruders were not Kashmiri militants, as they initially had thought, but well-trained troops from Pakistan's Northern Light Infantry (NLI), and that the infiltration was much larger and better organized than previously assessed. India then mounted a major military and diplomatic campaign to oust the intruders. After two months of intense fighting at altitudes ranging between 12,000 and 17,000 feet, during which both sides lost several hundred soldiers, Pakistan ordered its forces home, and the crisis ended.[1] Although no territory changed hands – as it had done in previous Indo-Pakistani wars – the Kargil conflict was a landmark event. Occurring less than a year after India and Pakistan openly tested nuclear weapons, Kargil dispelled the common notion that nuclear-armed states cannot fight one another. Like the only other direct military clash between nuclear powers – the Sino-Soviet conflict over Damanskii (*Zhenbao* to the Chinese) Island in the Ussuri (*Wusuli*) River starting in March 1969 – the Kargil conflict did not

[1] Some Indian and American analysts call Kargil the fourth Indo-Pakistani war. Certainly, for the soldiers fighting along the LoC, it was a war. But we prefer to call it a "conflict," or a "near war." The scale and intensity of the fighting exceeded even the high levels of peacetime violence along the Kashmir LoC, where fierce artillery duels and ten-person-a-day body counts have been all too common. However, the 1999 engagement was confined to a small section of mountainous terrain in Indian-held Kashmir; only a small fraction of each side's soldiers and weapons was used; and both tried to reduce the risk of escalation by pursuing limited political and military objectives. Moreover, because probably about 750 to 950 soldiers died in the heights near Kargil, this conflict did not meet the classical definition of war as an armed conflict with at least 1,000 battlefield deaths, as per J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War, 1816–1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972). John H. Gill provides details on Kargil casualty assessments in chapter 4 of this book.

come close to causing a nuclear war.[2] However, we now know that Indian troops were within days of opening another front across the LoC and possibly the international border, an act that could have triggered a large-scale conventional military engagement, which in turn might have escalated to an exchange of recently tested Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons.

Why this study matters

Until now, the debate between those who are optimistic about the operation of nuclear deterrence and those who are pessimistic about the effects of nuclear proliferation was waged largely on theoretical terrain.[3] Observers made assumptions about how new nuclear weapons states should behave, but were unable to provide much empirical evidence to support or falsify competing claims.[4] The Kargil conflict offers scholars and policymakers a rare opportunity to investigate how a pair of countries equipped with nuclear weapons entered into, interacted during, and then concluded an armed conflict. Written by analysts and practitioners from India, Pakistan, and the United States, *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* draws extensively upon primary sources, including interviews with Indian, Pakistani, and US government officials and military officers who were actively involved in the fighting and management of the conflict. The level of cooperation from the Indian and the Pakistan governments was unprecedented. In particular, the Pakistani military, which previously had not even acknowledged its role in the conflict, was instrumental in helping us create a detailed account of what happened on the Kargil heights and in the capitals of the concerned powers.

[2] However, it is now known that the risk of an escalatory Sino-Soviet war was a real possibility. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) assessed after the March 1969 border fighting caused several hundred deaths, that "the potential for a war exists," and that even if Moscow did not launch a conventional attack against Chinese nuclear and missile facilities, as it then was contemplating, "escalation of the conflict will be a continuing possibility." CIA, "The USSR and China," declassified National Intelligence Estimate, 11/13-69, 12 August 1969, pp. 6, 9, available on the CIA-Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) website, www.foia.cia.gov/default.asp. For background on the crisis, see Lyle J. Goldstein, "Do Nascent WMD Arsenals Deter? The Sino-Soviet Crisis of 1969," *Political Science Quarterly* 118, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 53–79.

[3] Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz offer the most recent articulation of this debate, in Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: Norton, 2003). Earlier rounds of the debate are discussed in Peter R. Lavoy, "Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation," *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 695–753.

[4] Lavoy, "Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation."

Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia is the first rigorous, comprehensive, and objective case study of the causes, conduct, and consequences of the Kargil conflict. It differs significantly from the existing literature on the conflict, in which the most widely cited study, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*, is the product of an independent Kargil Review Committee, appointed by the Indian government and chaired by the respected Indian defense analyst, K. Subrahmanyam. Drawing extensively on Indian intelligence and military sources, this committee sought to establish why India failed to detect the massive infiltration across the LoC. When it tried to discern the motivations, assumptions, and objectives of Pakistani planners, however, it resorted to "enemy images" that obscured the true strategic objectives, perspectives, and behavior of the adversary.[5]

Other Indian narratives on the conduct of the Kargil conflict offer important insights but share this bias because they rely almost exclusively on reports from Indian officials and troops.[6] Breaking with the tradition of past Indian service chiefs who generally have refused to write about the military campaigns in which they were involved, former army chief General V. P. Malik has produced the most recent and by far the most controversial Indian book on the Kargil conflict. Labeling the event a "strategic and tactical intelligence failure," Malik has come down hard on the shortcomings of the intelligence agencies, provoking strong responses from Indian intelligence officials and journalists.[7]

The Pakistani literature on Kargil is even more one-sided. For a long time, there had been no official Pakistani governmental or military account of what took place on the Kargil heights – in part because the story of how Pakistani troops occupied and then withdrew from this territory quickly became intertwined with the civil–military dispute between former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and former President Pervez Musharraf, who during the Kargil affair was Sharif's army chief. The

[5] Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000).

[6] Prominent examples include Y. M. Bammi, *Kargil 1999: The Impregnable Conquered* (Noida, India: Gorkha Publishers, 2002); Amarinder Singh, *A Ridge Too Far: War in the Kargil Heights 1999* (Patiala: Motibagh Palace, 2001); Ashok Mehta and P. R. Chari, eds., *Kargil: The Tables Turned* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001); Praveen Swami, *The Kargil War* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2000); Harinder Baweja, *A Soldier's Diary. Kargil: The Inside Story* (New Delhi: Books Today, 2000); and Jasjit Singh, ed., *Kargil 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 1999).

[7] General V. P. Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2006), 77–112; B. Raman, "Gen. Malik on Gen. Malik," *South Asia Analysis Group*, no. 1788, 5 May 2006, www.saag.org/papers18/paper1788.html. Also see Praveen Swami, "Resolving the Kargil Conundrum," *The Hindu*, 6 May 2006, www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2006050604971100.htm&date=2006/05/06/&prd=th&.

few detailed articles and media analyses that have been published in Pakistan are fundamentally flawed in their assumptions about the depth of infiltration and the number of irregular militants involved in the occupying force.[8] Pakistani defense analyst Shireen Mazari has published a quasi-official account of the Kargil operation, but its value is uneven because of her attempt to reconcile recently available information about the Kargil operation with self-serving statements by Pakistani authorities.[9]

The publication of former President Musharraf's autobiography in 2006 has clarified several contentious issues, such as Pakistani concerns about the Indian military buildup in Kashmir in 1998, the scale of the cross-border intrusion (over 500 square miles) into Indian-held Kashmir, and the timing and location of the Pakistan army's six briefings to the prime minister on the operation between January and June 1999.[10] However, this book actually has deepened several other controversies, such as the likelihood of an Indian offensive in early 1999 (Musharraf claims that a "planned offensive" was "preempted" by Pakistan's Kargil operation), the identity of the occupying forces (called *mujahideen*, or freedom fighters by Musharraf), and, at the time of Nawaz Sharif's 4 July 1999 agreement to an unconditional withdrawal, the military situation on the ground (deemed "favorable" and "strategically advantageous" to Pakistan).[11]

Treatments of the conflict by American scholars and former US policymakers generally overemphasize the strategic roles and risks of nuclear weapons in South Asia.[12] Lurking around every corner of this Indo-Pakistani crisis, American commentators saw the risk of nuclear use and validation of their arguments about nuclear instability in South Asia and, more generally, the perils of nuclear proliferation.[13] These concerns, while certainly understandable, contribute to a selective reading of the

[8] One notable exception is Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict 1999," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, 147, no. 2 (April 2002), 24–30.

[9] Shireen M. Mazari, *The Kargil Conflict 1999: Separating Fact from Fiction* (Islamabad: Ferozsons, 2003).

[10] Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 87–98.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] See chapter 5 in this book by Bruce Riedel; as well as Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); and Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, and Jamison Jo Medby, *Limited Conflict under the Nuclear Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001).

[13] A partial exception is Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India–Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), which appropriately downplays the risk of nuclear war during the Kargil episode and in five other recent Indo-Pakistani crises, but greatly exaggerates the impact of nuclear weapons on Pakistan's calculations to undertake the Kargil operation.

initiation and termination of the Kargil conflict, which exaggerates warning signs and generally ignores evidence of caution and restraint. Moreover, these accounts fail to bring to light the motivations, political assumptions, and detailed military planning behind Pakistan's daring Kargil incursion – subjects this book elucidates in print for the first time.

One claim in the American literature on Kargil is that the intrusion was a "limited probe" strategy to challenge India's conventional deterrence.[14] In reality, the Kargil campaign was a very different kind of military operation, which is best described as a "*fait accompli*" strategy. Alexander George and Richard Smoke discuss each of these strategies in their classic *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*. A limited probe occurs "when the initiator creates a controlled crisis in order to clarify the defender's commitments."[15] In the spring of 1999, the Pakistani leadership had no doubt about India's commitment to defend its territory along the LoC, and it certainly did not want to create a major crisis. Rather, it tried a "quick, decisive" military operation to take key mountain peaks across the LoC before the Indians could organize an effective defense or counterattack.[16]

As Feroz Hassan Khan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Christopher Clary point out in chapter 3 of this book, the planners of Kargil believed that a military *fait accompli* across the LoC could not be reversed because of the unique high-altitude terrain in the Northern Areas of Kashmir. They further judged, as George and Smoke would expect, that this strategy was the least risky under the circumstances. James J. Wirtz and Surinder Rana show in chapter 8 of this book that the Kargil operation was launched when the weaker party played down the extreme risks inherent in the effort to benefit from surprise because of the prospect of achieving gains that otherwise were beyond its grasp. Although the Kargil operation turned into a major military crisis, this was not the intent of its planners. Moreover, the fact that they were so poorly prepared to deal with a major military crisis provides further evidence that they did not intend to create a crisis to test India's deterrence commitments.

Controversies clarified

Because the Indian, Pakistani, and American authors of this book conducted extensive fieldwork and graciously subjected their analyses to

[14] Ganguly and Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry*, 152.
[15] Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 540.
[16] *Ibid.* 536–537.

multiple rounds of review and refinement, they were able to identify and overcome implausible stories, gaps in evidence, and contradictory interpretations. There are at least five important, controversial issues on which this book brings forth major, original findings.

Mujahideen *cover*

First, prior to our research, it was widely believed that *mujahideen*, or civilian "freedom fighters" involved in a Muslim war or struggle, played a significant part in the Kargil intrusion – a falsehood caused by the initial confusion of India's civilian and military intelligence services, a carefully planned Pakistani denial and deception campaign, and opportunistic Islamic militant groups. The Indian Kargil Review Committee, which was highly dubious about the role of militants in the conflict, still concluded that "the regular/irregular ratio may well have been in the range of 70:30, if the overall numbers are taken into account."[17] Our interviews with Pakistani and Indian ground commanders revealed that local civilians played only minimal reconnaissance and logistical roles in the operation. In fact, numerous Pakistani officers and soldiers told us they did not encounter a single civilian combatant during the conflict.

Eight years after the event, Pakistan still officially maintains that freedom fighters and not the Northern Light Infantry conducted the cross-LoC intrusion. Former President Musharraf states in his 2006 memoir that the "freedom fighting mujahideen occupied the Kargil Heights that the Indian army had vacated for the winter."[18] Three reasons can be offered to explain why Pakistan concocted the *mujahideen* cover and why it maintains this façade even today. First, until the Kargil operation, the Pakistan army did not consider the Northern Light Infantry at par with regular troops. Being locals of the area, most NLI soldiers came from villages near the LoC, which even today do not have the legal status as being a full part of the Pakistan nation-state. Therefore, it was easy for

[17] Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 97. V. P. Malik has written that well into the conflict, the heads of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) believed that the composition of enemy forces was 70% *jehadi* militants (*mujahideen*) and 30% Pakistan regulars. After Malik challenged this assessment, the NSCS secretary reversed the estimate to 70% Pakistani regulars and 30% militants. See Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 111; and the detailed treatment of this issue by C. Christine Fair in chapter 9 of this book.

[18] However, he creates some ambiguity by admitting that he had ordered "FCNA to improve our defensive position in coordination with the freedom fighters to deny access to the watershed by India," and that "five battalions [were involved] in support of freedom fighter groups." Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 87, 91.

government officials to refer to these soldiers as freedom fighters as opposed to regular army troops.

A second explanation, as the FCNA commander told CCC researchers in 2003, was that the army never intended to turn the *mujahideen* ruse into a cover story. NLI troops, who are often deployed to isolated posts for months at a time, prefer to wear tracksuits and light, athletic outer garments (usually clothing left over by Western climbers and then resold in local markets) instead of Pakistani army jackets that feel heavy and unwieldy to them. FCNA says the Indians first claimed that the occupiers were Kashmiri *mujahideen*. The Pakistan army intended for Indian intelligence initially to believe that these soldiers were civilian combatants – for this would create confusion and delay India's eventual military response, perhaps until well into the summer, after which there would be little time for India to mount a suitable counterattack before the fall snows stopped the fighting. But when the Indians persisted in believing that the intruders were *mujahideen*, Pakistan simply continued the deception because it compounded Indian confusion and took on a whole life of its own in the Pakistani media. As the FCNA Commander told us, "We are not obliged to clarify to the enemy."[19]

This still begs the question as to why Pakistan maintained the façade after NLI soldiers had been captured and proof of their involvement was abundant. As strange as it may seem, the reason rests largely in the legality of the position. The Pakistan government concluded that it could not have admitted occupation by Pakistani troops across the LoC because the area was demarcated under the 1972 Simla Accord and covered under the 1949 Karachi Agreement, and Pakistan's admittance of the cross-LoC operation was judged in Islamabad to be tantamount to admitting aggression. The legal context differed significantly from that of India's 1984 Siachen military occupation, which India had been able to justify because Siachen was a contested area that was not demarcated with the rest of the LoC. To the Pakistanis, however, Siachen violated the Simla Accord, as pointed out in chapter 2 by Zafar Iqbal Cheema. Although Siachen was still a major Pakistani grievance, Pakistan's Foreign Office believed that an admission of regular troops crossing the defined LoC would be difficult to justify internationally. In its assessment, continuation of the *mujahideen* story, along with a narrative that defensive positions were improved, would preserve some degree of plausible deniability.[20]

[19] Maj. Gen. Nadeem Ahmed briefing, 12 January 2003.
[20] Interviews with Pakistani officials knowledgeable about various Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) deliberations in May and June 1999.

Pakistan's perpetuation of the *mujahideen* deception may have provided a thin veneer of legal deniability and a face-saving formula, but in the end it severely damaged Pakistan's credibility both inside and outside South Asia, as C. Christine Fair discusses in chapter 9. It also altered the standing of Kashmir insurgency. Instead of being regarded internationally as a "freedom struggle," the Kashmir insurgency came to be seen after Kargil (and especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States) as "terrorist" activity. If Pakistan had hoped the Kargil operation would stimulate international focus on the Kashmir issue, this was not the intended result.

Asymmetric warfare

The second controversy we clarify relates to the provocative title of the book, *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia*. Many Pakistanis will take issue with the assertion that the LoC operation was an asymmetric military strategy, claiming instead that "nibbling of the posts" is a time-honored practice of conventional forces not only in Kashmir, but also at many other times and places where armies meet. This contention is true in part: the Kargil intrusion was only the most recent in a long series of military maneuvers in the Northern Areas that began in 1947, escalated in 1965, and saw Indian troops cross the LoC and establish military posts in the Chorbat La sector in 1972, the Siachen Glacier area in 1984, and the Qamar sector in 1988.[21] However, the Kargil operation was quite different too. In terms of the scope, scale, and objectives of the plan, it dwarfed other attempts to alter the territorial disposition of forces in the Northern Areas. But more significantly, it embodied the three features that have come to define asymmetric conflicts.

First, the Kargil conflict was a classic case of asymmetric warfare because the relative balance of power of the forces involved differed so vastly. The fact that India had a two-to-one advantage in soldiers over Pakistan (1 million to 500,000) had little bearing on the planning or conduct of the Kargil gambit. In fact, Musharraf boasts in his autobiography of Pakistan's ability to tie down disproportionately large numbers of Indian forces on the Kargil heights: "Considered purely in military terms, the Kargil operations were a landmark in the history of the Pakistan army. As few as five battalions in support of the freedom fighter groups were able to compel the Indians to employ more than four divisions," deplete artillery sources from strike formations, and force them to "mobilize

[21] Information provided in a Pakistan Defence Attaché briefing document, dated 14 August 1999, Washington, DC.

their entire national resources, including their air force."[22] Even though Musharraf concedes that India recaptured several posts, he takes pride in the fact that such a small number of Pakistani troops forced India to expend vast military and economic resources, which in itself was seen as a victory. As Rizvi points out in chapter 13, this David and Goliath dynamic has been a persistent theme in Pakistani strategic culture. In a full-scale war the strategy of tying down large numbers of forces makes sense as it would deplete troops from other sectors, which Pakistan could exploit; however, this strategy invited disaster in 1999, for India had abundant resources to escalate the conflict vertically and even horizontally.

Second, the Kargil operation could only succeed through the use of asymmetric strategy and tactics, but this ultimately caused its undoing. Weak states sometimes can prolong and ultimately win wars against stronger states if they employ asymmetric strategies to deflect or mediate the stronger state's use of its material advantages in resources,[23] but time is generally not on their side. As Wirtz and Rana explain in chapter 8, Kargil was a classic case of a weak opponent perceiving great incentives to surprise its stronger opponent using military means (concealment, cunning, deception) that the stronger opponent would not expect. The Kargil planners believed that a combination of surprise, military *fait accompli* on superior terrain, and a well-considered denial and deception strategy would inhibit India from dislodging the occupying troops before the onset of winter, which would freeze the forces in place, thus enabling Pakistan to restock its forward posts and lock in its territorial gains across the LoC. What the army leadership did not foresee was India's will and capacity to "conventionalize" the unconventional conflict. Gill explains in chapter 4 that because Pakistan was unable to sustain its asymmetric strategy, India was able to apply its vast military resources to force key posts to fall. Initially Pakistan beat back Indian assaults, forcing India to bring in more troops and firepower, but relentless attacks on the outposts were too much for the NLI troops. The capture of Tololing broke the myth that ground once lost on such heights could not be regained and entirely changed the battle scenario. If Pakistan's strategy in Kashmir during the 1990s "succeeded" in using militants to tie down Indian forces in a costly counterinsurgency campaign, Kargil ultimately tested India on its strong suit: its conventional military superiority.

[22] Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 93.
[23] Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Third, Kargil can be seen as an asymmetric conflict because Pakistan was willing to sacrifice such a great deal – the lives of its NLI soldiers, tactical military advantages that could have been exploited in a major war,[24] and its international reputation – in order to achieve the smallest of victories in the contest for Kashmir and its perceived struggle for existence with India. Much like suicide bombers today forfeit their lives in the interest of a supposed greater cause, Pakistan historically has been willing to sacrifice virtually every resource at its disposal in order to sustain the Kashmir dispute. Musharraf is quite categorical about the value of Kargil in upholding this cause: "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."[25] This episode should be a lesson to India and the international community that Pakistan would be willing to sacrifice even more than it did in 1999 to defend its stake in Kashmir and more generally protect its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The role of nuclear weapons

The impact of nuclear arms on the Kargil crisis is another big controversy. The debate revolves around three competing narratives. First, US officials assert that Pakistan made some nuclear preparations at the later stage of the conflict and generally tried to manipulate the fear of nuclear war to alter the territorial status quo in Kashmir. As Bruce Riedel writes in this book and former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott states elsewhere,[26] President Clinton received credible, unambiguous intelligence of Pakistani nuclear preparations shortly before meeting with Nawaz Sharif in Washington on 4 July 1999. As a result, Clinton demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Pakistani troops from across the LoC and refused to allow Sharif to leave the negotiations with a victory that might validate nuclear brinksmanship in the post-Cold War era. Second, Pakistani authorities flatly deny readying their nuclear arsenal for use,[27]

[24] In our numerous discussions with Pakistan army officers not directly associated with the Kargil operation, the strongest criticism was that Pakistan squandered its ability to conquer large portions of militarily significant territory in the Northern Areas, which military intelligence had shown to be one of its greatest wartime opportunities. Not only did Pakistan gain precious little, but India recognized its weaknesses in the area, redoubled its defenses, and turned the northern LoC into yet another area where it now had the military advantage.

[25] Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 98.

[26] Talbott, *Engaging India*, 161–162.

[27] Musharraf called the claim "preposterous." See *In the Line of Fire*, 98.

suggesting that US intelligence might have confused conventional military movements at the Sargodha Ammunition Depot for nuclear-force preparations.[28] Third, knowledgeable Indians state that neither side prepared for nuclear war, but claim that Pakistan's goal was to wage low-intensity warfare in Kashmir under the nuclear umbrella. Then Indian army chief General V. P. Malik asserts: "There was a strong belief that Pakistan's demonstrated nuclear weapons, in May 1998, were sufficient to prevent the escalation of the situation in Kargil to a full-scale conventional war. The military high-command, headed by Pervez Musharraf, was confident about Pakistan's 'nuclear shield.'"[29] Until now, no evidence has emerged to settle this debate.

Our research illuminates five major points about the role of nuclear weapons before, during, and after the Kargil conflict. First, Pakistani planners were not motivated by a calculation that the risk of nuclear escalation would deter India from counterattacking. As explained by Cheema in chapter 2 and Khan, Lavoy, and Clary in chapter 3, other considerations – the local terrain, the military balance in Kashmir, and domestic civil–military relations – shaped the decision to advance across the LoC. Second, neither Pakistan nor India readied its nuclear arms for employment. If some preparation occurred in Pakistan, as US officials insist, the nature and purpose of that action is unclear. Our research confirms Musharraf's claim that "in 1999, our nuclear capability was not yet operational."[30] The push to operationalize Pakistan's deterrent for the most part took place *after* Kargil. Third, although some Pakistani officials issued veiled statements that could have been interpreted as nuclear threats,[31] neither side tried to raise the risk of nuclear escalation to win the crisis. The statements that were made were *ad hoc* individual initiatives – not part

[28] Lt. Gen. Khalid Kidwai, Director General of Strategic Plans Division (SPD), made this observation in discussions with the author in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on 20 December 2005 and 14 June 2007. The ammunition depot, located in the Kirana Hills near Sargodha, has been in focus for several reasons. This was the suspected location of the Chinese M-11 missiles supplied to Pakistan in the early 1990s. Also, both the Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) conducted nuclear cold tests in the Kirana Hills in the 1980s.

[29] Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 272.

[30] As Musharraf explains, "Merely exploding a bomb does not mean that you are operationally capable of deploying nuclear force in the field and delivering a bomb across the border over a selected target." *In the Line of Fire*, 98.

[31] Most importantly, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad said in an interview on 30 May that while Pakistan desired peace, "we will not hesitate to use any weapon in our arsenal to defend our territorial integrity." Then on 30 June Pakistan's Senate leader, Raja Muhammad Zafarul Haq, stated that Pakistan would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if required: "The purpose of developing weapons becomes meaningless if they are not used when they are needed to be used."

of a coordinated Pakistani signaling campaign to deter Indian military escalation.[32] Fourth, as indicated by the author in chapter 7 and Rodney W. Jones and Joseph McMillan in chapter 14, the fear of nuclear war did drive the international community to end the crisis as quickly as possible and prevent Pakistan from claiming a victory that could validate a defense strategy based on nuclear threats and military aggression. Fifth, as argued by Basrur in chapter 12 and Rizvi in chapter 13, some nuclear learning took place after Kargil, but the lessons India and Pakistan drew from the crisis did not significantly lessen the likelihood of another military crisis or the prospect of it escalating out of control – as the world witnessed all too clearly during the 2001–2002 military standoff. In this case, India and Pakistan displayed better nuclear discipline than during the Kargil crisis, but came much closer to fighting a major conventional war, which had a greater risk of going nuclear.

The potential for military escalation

A fourth controversy this book helps to clarify is the issue of how close Pakistan and India came to turning the Kargil conflict into a major conventional war. Indian army chief V. P. Malik has written that India came very close to enlarging the Kargil fighting in the middle of June 1999. It is well known that Prime Minister Vajpayee had ordered Malik to restrict military operations to India's side of the LoC and the international border. But with intense fighting in all sectors and not a single battle won by India, and a growing number of senior defense officials now urging the government to allow Indian forces to cross "the border/LoC," Malik ordered his senior commanders on 18 June to "be prepared for escalation – sudden or gradual – along the LoC or the international border and be prepared to go to (declared) war at short notice."[33] When two days later Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif threatened that "many more Kargil-like issues can crop up" if the Kashmir dispute was not resolved,[34] India's senior-most defense decision-making body, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), concluded that "we had to be prepared for an escalation."[35] Based on interviews with senior Indian officials involved with this decision, it appears that India would have opened up other military fronts, thus turning the Kargil clash into a major war, had

[32] Information based on multiple interviews with senior Pakistani civilian and military officials, 2003–2005. These statements were made at the height of the conventional conflict.
[33] Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 146–147.
[34] "Sharif Warns of More Kargil-like Situations," *Times of India*, 21 June 1999.
[35] Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 148.

Indian soldiers not recaptured later that very day the vital Tololing-Point 5140 mountain complex in the Dras sector, from which Pakistani troops had been able to interdict India's military buildup and troop movements with impunity.[36] Had India's 56 Mountain Brigade not won the five-day, hand-to-hand contest for Tololing – which turned the tide of the battle because Indian forces were now able to operate inside of Pakistan's defense perimeter and recapture several other military posts – India's leadership would have been forced either to acquiesce to Pakistan's control of territory across the LoC or to escalate the conflict and run a real risk of nuclear war and international opprobrium.

Viewed from Pakistan, however, the prospect of a wider war seemed very different. The army leadership assessed that India was in no position to launch an all-out offensive on land, air, or sea; that India's major formations were bottled up inside Kashmir, leaving no capability to attack elsewhere, and, more seriously, leaving the field open for a counteroffensive which could choke the Kashmir Valley; and that the NLI troops could not be dislodged from their mountain positions.[37] Meanwhile, Pakistan's 19 Infantry Division was repositioned from its Mangla encampment for either a counterattack or a defensive stand against possible Indian incursions across the LoC. The reinforcement and redeployment of troops along the LoC were clear indications of preparations for possible military escalation.[38]

This stark contrast of strategic thinking in India and Pakistan – and the consequent movement of military forces – indicates that each side had great difficulty in assessing the other side's intentions and capabilities. This factor in itself is a potential cause for military escalation. Ironically, India's tactical successes, beginning with the capture of Tololing, halted its plan to escalate elsewhere along the LoC or perhaps across the international border. Had India not achieved these victories (and had the international community been less involved), the conflict probably would have slipped out of control, thus marking the first Indo-Pak crisis to escalate to a major war with the eventual risk of a nuclear exchange.

Implications for the 2002 military crisis

The way in which the Kargil conflict ended and the military lessons that were learned (or not learned) by India and Pakistan in 1999 sowed the seeds for another major military confrontation just three years later. A fifth

[36] Interviews with senior Indian defense officials, New Delhi, May 2005; and *ibid*. 148–149.
[37] Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 93, 96.
[38] Interviews with Pakistani military officials, 2003.

contribution of this book thus is to show how the learning process from Kargil reinforced India's planning for limited war and Pakistan's resolve to deter this through aggressive conventional-force deployments, and, if required, the employment of conventional and possibly even nuclear weapons. Interviews conducted by the CCC research team with civilian and military officials in India and Pakistan show beyond a doubt that each side came away from the Kargil conflict believing that it had an escalation advantage in 1999 and that this advantage would carry over into a future military engagement. In other words, each side had learned the wrong lesson from the Kargil crisis.

Kargil did not dampen the intense rivalry between India and Pakistan. In the aftermath of the crisis, new nuclear and conventional war-fighting doctrines were initiated. India announced a draft nuclear doctrine in August 1999. And on 25 January 2000, the Indian defence minister and army chief each announced a new "limited-war doctrine," which paved the way for India to devise new military measures in response to future crises in Kashmir. Further, Indian officials began to speak more openly about punitive actions in the form of preemptive strikes against alleged Pakistani training camps in Kashmir.

Almost as soon as normalcy returned to the Kargil mountain peaks, therefore, Indian and Pakistani troops began preparing to fight the next war. While insurgencies continued unabated in the region, after 1999 any terrorist event became a potential trigger for a serious military crisis. For example, a 13 December 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament became the catalyst event for a nine-month military standoff, bringing South Asia once again to the brink of major war. The 2001–2002 military mobilization provided India with a real chance to test its limited-war doctrine conceived in the aftermath of Kargil. After this tense military standoff, the Indian army added a new strategic component – called Cold Start – to its limited-war doctrine. Because India's military mobilization in 2001–2002 was so slow that Pakistan had plenty of time to counter-mobilize and allow international diplomacy to intervene, the Cold Start concept was devised to enable India to strike promptly and decisively in response to a triggering event without waiting for a larger mobilization and or diplomatic intervention.

The Kargil conflict in context

This introduction and the following fourteen chapters explain how and why Pakistan and India started, fought, and terminated the 1999 Kargil conflict; the impact this event has had on the political, social, and military life of each country; the influence of outside powers, especially the

United States; and the lessons learned, or – more ominously – not learned, by key groups within the Indian and Pakistani governments, armed forces, and societies. More generally, our "anatomy" of the Kargil conflict provides unique insights into the evolving nature of South Asia's enduring political–military rivalry and the effects and limitations of the nuclear revolution in the post-Cold War world. Our findings in these two areas, which will enable readers to rethink and refine many conventional arguments, are described more fully in the remainder of this chapter – after this section in which the Kargil conflict is put into the historical context of the longstanding India–Pakistan strategic competition.

Historical roots of warfare

The Kargil operation was another in a series of failed attempts to resolve Indo-Pakistani disputes through force or diplomacy. Prior to 1984, neither country placed much emphasis on military action along the northern portions of the Kashmir Line of Control. The rugged terrain and harsh climate of Ladakh (the northern section of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is divided into two districts: Kargil and Leh) significantly complicated military operations, which not only raised the costs and limited the size of any military offensive, but also dramatically diminished the strategic utility of the remote region. William Moorcroft, the first European to cross the Himalayan mountains in 1819, described this area – which at the time was contested not by India and Pakistan but by Russia, China, and Britain – as a series of narrow valleys "of extreme sterility and barrenness," generating commerce "of no great value or interest," and situated between gigantic mountains "ordinarily towering to a height which surpasses that of the pinnacles of the Alps."[39] This situation has not changed much. In addition to the cold weather, heavy snows, and rugged terrain, the thin air of the Northern Areas produces a wide range of physiological effects and illnesses, which severely complicate military operations and make Ladakh a most unlikely battlefield.[40]

[39] William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab from 1819 to 1825*, 2 vols. (1841; reprint, Oxford University Press, 1979), 259, 266, 346.

[40] All of the soldiers interviewed by the author who operated along the northern LoC before, during, or after the Kargil conflict commented on the intense physical stresses caused by the harsh climate and terrain and the phenomenon of thin air (produced by low barometric pressure), and generally remarked that the latter was the most dangerous and disorienting condition they had to confront during their high-altitude warfare operations. On the unique challenges of high-altitude battlefields, see Marcus P. Acosta, "High Altitude Warfare: The Kargil Conflict and the Future," Master's thesis, Monterey,

But it did become a battlefield of major political and military significance on several occasions in the past sixty years. The first armed conflict in the Northern Areas took place shortly after the partition of British colonial India into independent India and Pakistan in August 1947. In what is now called the First Kashmir War, Indian forces fought a combination of Pakistani troops and Pathan tribesmen for control of the Kashmir Valley and the Northern Areas. After a year of intense fighting, Pakistan secured the territory to the east and north of the Kashmir Valley (from Mirpur up to Muzaffarabad, Chilas, and Gilgit, and across to Skardu and Khapalu), and India gained possession of the valley and the mountainous territory to the west through the towns of Dras, Kargil, and Leh.[41] Prior to the Kargil operation, the most recent conflict in this area occurred in 1984 when Indian military forces successfully occupied the disputed Siachen Glacier in the northernmost area of Kashmir.[42] The loss of well over 100 square miles of territory – even in this desolate, barren, and practically uninhabitable region – was a deep scar for the Pakistani military, and in particular for the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA), which was responsible for the defense of this sector. Map 1.1 shows the entire area of the previous princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.[43]

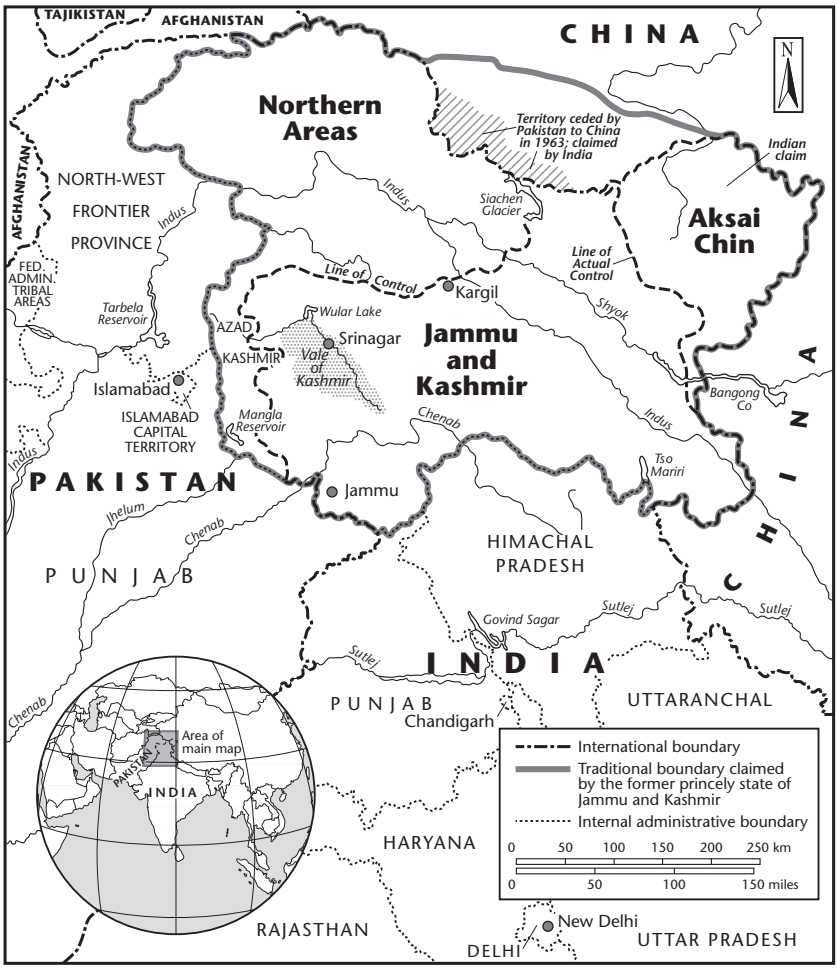
After the Siachen operation, any perceived vulnerability along enemy lines was to be surveyed, probed, and, if possible, attacked. From the late 1980s onward, both the Indian and Pakistan armies launched daring operations to seize opposing posts – and tried to retrieve those they had lost to the enemy. Nonetheless, certain vestiges of tacit restrain remained. Opposing troops often coordinated access to common drinking water and occasionally exchanged symbolic gifts on major holidays. More significantly, both sides continued to engage in a partial winter retreat, vacating forward posts which were too difficult and dangerous to maintain during the harsh winter months. When the snow would melt in the spring and the

Calif.: US Naval Postgraduate School, June 2003, 11–26. The odd optical conditions of this environment were described in a nineteenth-century British travelogue: "In this thin, dry air, far-away objects appear quite near; mountains sixty miles away might be heaps of stones forty yards off, and *vice versa*. There is no atmospheric effect to give any idea of distance." E. F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet: A Narrative of Recent Travel in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Gilgit, and the Adjoining Countries* (1893; reprint, Karachi: Indus Publications, 1980), 43.

[41] See Sudhir S. Bloeria, *The Battles of Zojila, 1948* (New Delhi: Har-Ananad, 1997).

[42] India claims that its occupation of Siachen was a preemptive measure, executed only after India received intelligence of a Pakistani plan to seize the glacier. Most Pakistanis deny that any such plan was contemplated. For background, see Lt. Gen. V. R. Raghavan, *Siachen: Conflict Without End* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002).

[43] Kashmir Study Group, *A Way Forward* (February 2005), www.kashmirstudygroup.net/awayforward05/p4_jamukashmir.html.



Map 1.1 Jammu and Kashmir

strategic mountain passes again would become usable, opposing troops would reclaim and restock their mountain posts, and another season of artillery shelling and counter-post operations would resume.

As military tensions and low-scale conflict simmered along the northern stretches of the LoC, the rest of Kashmir erupted in violence in 1989. Decades of Indian mismanagement of the Jammu and Kashmir state – including rigged elections in 1987 – spawned a mostly indigenous insurgency, which Pakistan's security apparatus gradually exploited for its own

ends.[44] The dispute over the political and territorial status of Kashmir, which had occupied a back burner in bilateral relations since 1965, reemerged as the core source of Indo-Pakistani tension. India initially was forced to deploy an estimated 150,000 army and paramilitary troops in operations to counter the insurgency and prevent militants from infiltrating across the LoC, with that number more than doubling by the end of the decade.[45]

The dangerous decade

From the mid-1990s, opposing forces along the northern parts of the LoC increasingly mounted artillery attacks to convey pointed messages to the other side. Such exchanges resulted in extensive civilian casualties and the disruption of normal life on both sides. Pakistan was especially affected in the Neelum Valley. Shelling and small-arms fire from India's dominant positions on the eastern bank of the Neelum River blocked civilian and military resupply to Pakistani positions. Pakistan's 10 Corps, which has operational control over most of the LoC, sought to mitigate the interdiction of the Neelum Valley by returning the favor in areas where Indian lines of communication were vulnerable – most notably, along the Srinagar–Leh highway (NH-1A) near the towns of Kargil and Dras.

The Kashmir conflict entered a dangerous new phase when India conducted a series of nuclear explosive tests on 11 and 13 May 1998 in the western state of Rajasthan. Indian officials insisted that the tests were not intended to apply a new form of military pressure on Pakistan, but authorities in Islamabad were not comforted, and, by the end of May, Pakistan had conducted its own nuclear tests. Under intense pressure from the international community, India and Pakistan began broad-ranging bilateral consultations in October 1998, culminating in a historic bus ride by Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to Lahore on 20 February 1999. In a widely celebrated Lahore Declaration, Vajpayee and Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif agreed to "intensify their efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir" and pledged to "refrain from intervention and interference in each other's internal affairs."[46] As Timothy Hoyt explains in chapter 6 of this book, the

[44] For background, see Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan, and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947–2004* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2006), 163–171; and Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 143–160.

[45] Tim McGirk, *The Independent*, 17 September 1991, cited in Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 157; Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 68–70.

[46] Lahore Declaration, 21 February 1999, available at www.indianembassy.org/South_Asia/Pakistan/lahoredeclaration.html.

Lahore process led many observers – and many in the Indian government – to conclude that nuclear weapons had fundamentally transformed the India–Pakistan relationship.

It was in this tense environment – after Siachen, after a decade of the Kashmiri insurgency, after the nuclear tests, and concurrent with bilateral political talks – that the Kargil operation was planned and executed. Sometime after late November 1998, a handful of officers at the highest level of the Pakistan army decided to retake the tactical initiative along the Line of Control. The main actors in the planning of the Kargil operation were the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Pervez Musharraf, Chief of General Staff (CGS) Lieutenant General Muhammad Aziz Khan, 10 Corps Commander Lieutenant General Mahmud Ahmed, and General Office Commanding (GOC) of the Force Command Northern Areas Major General Javed Hassan.[47]

Indian forces in the Kargil sector regularly vacated their posts during the winter. The planners of the Kargil operation decided to seize these posts in March and April 1999 – well before they could be reoccupied by Indian troops. This infiltrating force of over a thousand Pakistani troops, none of whom were *jehadi* militants, executed an elaborate denial and deception campaign, completely avoiding detection by Indian patrols. The intruding forces were almost entirely drawn from the local area – NLI combat battalions logistically supported by Chitral and Bajaur Scouts – thus eliminating a large troop buildup, which would alert Indian military intelligence. To maintain secrecy, the intruding force operated mainly at night and during adverse weather conditions, used effective camouflage and concealment, restricted radio transmissions to the minimum, and operated in small groups. Civilian clothing and radio transmissions in Balti and Pashtu languages were a deliberate part of a larger Pakistani strategy to create the impression that the intruding forces were *jehadi* militants, thus enabling the Pakistan army to retain surprise and secrecy for as long as possible. Troops in mufti also provided an element of deniability when surprise was lost, allowing Pakistani officials to disown the operation even after the militants withdrew back across the LoC. Pakistan's military planners maintained strict secrecy about the Kargil plan, and excluded other parts of the government, including the navy, air force, and the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID), from the decision-making loop. A compulsion for secrecy, initial exclusion of key national security institutions, and the *jehadi* deception, all of which were deemed necessary for the plan to succeed, significantly limited

[47] Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict 1999."

Pakistan's options when it was forced to respond to India's counterattack and international political pressure.

The 1999 crisis

In many respects, the Kargil gambit was a victim of its own success. By the end of April 1999, the intruding force had occupied approximately 130 posts in the Dras, Mushkoh, Kaksar, Batalik, and Chorbat La sectors of Kargil, covering an approximate area of 65 miles in depth and 5 to 6 miles in width. Some of the captured positions directly overlooked National Highway 1A, which ran between Srinagar and Leh, and were in a position to interdict the road with artillery and long-range small-arms fire. This far exceeded the original plan to seize 25 to 30 posts in a much smaller swathe of territory closer to the LoC. As Major General Nadeem Ahmed, who took command of FCNA after the Kargil conflict, told us, "mission creep" was a major problem. There was a "compulsion" to push patrols forward, and thus "we got a little overstretched." "In the mountains, you cannot do anything more than is planned," Major General Nadeem remarked.[48]

The Indian army first learned about the intrusions through unofficial sources on 3 May 1999 and four days later confirmed that some intrusion had taken place.[49] The Indian army's initial attempts to retrieve the heights, which they initially believed were held by Kashmiri militants, were rebuffed. As information moved up to senior command levels, Indian officials soon began to realize that things were more serious than they initially had estimated. Local commanders maneuvered their forces to detect and engage the intruders and launched patrols to determine

[48] Briefing by FCNA Commander Maj. Gen. Nadeem Ahmed to CCC research team, 12 January 2003.

[49] Like nearly all aspects of the Kargil conflict, the actual start of hostilities is controversial. V. P. Malik, India's army chief in 1999, has written that because Indian field units were slow to report enemy engagements to command elements, and because Indian intelligence agencies believed the enemy to be militant *jehadis* rather than Pakistani soldiers, senior Indian civilian and military authorities did not have a clear understanding of events until the third week of May. Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 105–112. In its quasi-official report on the conflict, the Kargil Review Committee stated that two local shepherds first observed the enemy in the Jubar Hill area of the Batalik sector on 3 May and that 3 Punjab battalion confirmed the intrusion on 7 May. The first recorded combat was on 6 May, when a 12 Jat patrol was ambushed in the Turtok sector. Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 98–99. Pakistani officers indicate that the first hostile encounter actually occurred on 30 April. Nadeem briefing, 12 January 2003. In interviews with the CCC research team, Indian military sources confirmed that this indeed was the first military contact, but explained that it went unreported in India because of a battalion command decision.

the extent of the Pakistani intrusion. Due to poor intelligence, non-acclimatized troops, a shortage of high-altitude equipment, and coordination difficulties, Indian troops suffered heavy casualties during this initial stage of the conflict.

The Indian army launched a major counteroffensive during the third week of May 1999, codenamed Operation *Vijay* (Victory). On 26 May, the Indian air force commenced air strikes in support of ground troops, vertically escalating the conflict. To intensify strategic pressure on Pakistan, Indian troops began mobilizing to war locations in other parts of the country, which included the deployment of troops along the India–Pakistan international border. The Indian navy was deployed against an unprepared Pakistan navy, and also positioned itself for a blockade around Karachi, an event that could have been disastrous especially because its energy reserves were then dangerously low.[50] In the mountains, Pakistani planners had assumed that the Zojila Pass, India's main access route from the Kashmir Valley to the northern LoC in Ladakh, would remain blocked with snow from mid-November to early June, as it normally does. However, in 1999 the Zojila Pass opened in early May, thus facilitating the Indian army's early induction of troops, supporting units, and logistics necessary for the counteroffensive (including 19,000 tons of ammunition).

After several failed attempts to dislodge Pakistani forces from the mountain heights, India achieved its first military success during the third week of June when it captured a pair of posts along the Tololing Ridge in the Dras sector. The Tololing complex was Pakistan's deepest penetration in the Dras sector and strategically the most significant. From high atop their mountain posts Pakistani soldiers could interdict India's buildup along Highway 1A, severely restricting the movement of Indian soldiers to other posts along the LoC. After nearly a week of intense hand-to-hand fighting, India's 56 Mountain Brigade captured point 4590 on 17 June and then point 5140 on 20 June, thereby taking control of the entire Tololing Ridge. This achievement was a turning point for the counteroffensive, because now that Indian troops had a foothold inside Pakistan's linear defenses, they could more deliberately clear out the other lightly defended and poorly positioned outposts scattered along the ridgelines. Ultimately, Pakistan's tactically weak defense plan combined with inadequate manpower, equipment, and logistical support made sustaining

[50] Briefing by Commander P. K. Ghosh, Indian navy, to CCC research team, Institute for Defence and Strategic Analyses, New Delhi, India, 30 September 2002. See also Anil Bhat, "Full Steam Ahead," *Rashtriya Sahara English Monthly* (Delhi), December 1999, 54–57.

the intrusion practically impossible against sustained Indian attacks.[51] Several more posts were captured in the Dras, Batalik, and Mushkoh sectors before combat operations concluded and Pakistani forces began their withdrawal on 12 July.

As the Indian military reclaimed more territory, Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif found himself under increasing international pressure to pull back all Pakistani forces from the Indian side of the Line of Control. After a rushed and uninvited visit to Washington, DC on 4 July, Sharif signed the Washington Declaration with President Clinton and agreed to vacate the captured territory. On 11 July, the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the Indian and Pakistan armies met at the Attari border checkpoint, where the Pakistani DGMO agreed to commence a sector-by-sector withdrawal the following day and complete it by 16 July, a date that later was extended by a day at Pakistan's request. Pakistanis insist that this ceasefire was not implemented in good faith, and that their forces along the LoC suffered casualties throughout July. Indians counter that the use of force was only authorized to counter resistance or to attack positions where Pakistani troops remained deployed across the LoC after the ceasefire had expired. All remaining pockets were cleared on 25 July, and, on the following day, the Indian DGMO declared at a press conference that all Pakistani intrusions had been vacated in the Kargil sector, thereby marking an official end to the conflict.

The Kargil conflict is significant not only for what happened, but also for what did not occur in 1999 and in subsequent years. Rather than moving toward mutual deterrence secured through arms control, as the United States and the Soviet Union did after the Cuban missile crisis, India and Pakistan suspended all dialogue after Kargil, ramped up their production of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems, and accelerated preparations for conventional war, which nearly occurred in January 2002 and again in May 2002.[52] The behavior of India and Pakistan during and after the Kargil conflict, therefore, offers important new insights about the political–military behavior of competing states equipped with nuclear weapons and engaged in an enduring rivalry. Kargil also illuminates new realities about the conflict-management strategies of international actors when confronted with the risk of a regional

[51] For critical analyses of Pakistan's operational tactics at Kargil, see Acosta, "High Altitude Warfare," 35–41; and chapters 2 and 3 of this book.

[52] The near war of 2002 is the subject of another CCC book project: "Crisis and Escalation in South Asia: The 2002 India–Pakistan Military Standoff" (book manuscript in preparation).

war between nuclear-armed adversaries. These general findings are taken up in the remainder of this chapter.

Enduring rivalry in South Asia

Our analysis of the Kargil conflict reveals much about the nature of India and Pakistan and the long-term political–military competition that has set them apart for every year of their existence as independent nation-states. The India–Pakistan competition is a classic example of an *enduring rivalry*, a conflict between two states that persists over decades and produces multiple militarized disputes, which punctuate the otherwise tense relationship.[53] In general, enduring rivalries are characterized by a "persistent, fundamental, and long-term incompatibility of goals between two states," which "manifests itself in the basic attitudes of the parties toward each other as well as in recurring violent or potentially violent clashes over a long period of time."[54]

Our in-depth study of the Kargil crisis raises new insights about three important facets of the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan: (1) the asymmetric power relationship between the two states and the preventive military strategies the weaker side has pursued to gain political and military advantages without provoking escalation to large-scale war; (2) the strategic cultures, state ideologies, and enemy images each country holds, which combine to complicate mutual understanding and exacerbate the regional security dilemma despite decades of war and peace, crises and cricket matches; and (3) the role of outside powers in the rivalry, especially in the current security environment, in which the risk of conventional war now carries with it the risk of nuclear weapons use.

Power asymmetry and preventive military strategies

Occurring less than a year after India and Pakistan conducted nuclear explosive tests and declared themselves nuclear weapons states, the Kargil conflict is often portrayed as the first major nuclear crisis in South Asia. But it also can be seen as one in a long line of "preventive" military gambits pursued by Pakistan to offset the growing power imbalance with India and to improve its negotiating position in the longstanding territorial dispute over Kashmir.

[53] See T. V. Paul, "Causes of the India–Pakistan Enduring Rivalry," in *The India–Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T. V. Paul (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3–24.

[54] Zeev Maoz and Ben Mor, *Bound by Struggle: The Strategic Evolution of Enduring Rivalries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 5.

Apart from the original military struggle for Kashmir that ran from 1947 to 1948, the 1965 India–Pakistan war was the outcome of the Pakistan army's first military campaign to seize Kashmir. Following India's large-scale military buildup in the wake of its humiliating defeat to the Chinese army in the North East Frontier Agency (now the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh) and the Aksai Chin region of Kashmir in November 1962,[55] President Ayub Khan and his young foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, calculated that the window of opportunity was closing to rebalance the relationship and rectify the status of Kashmir. Bhutto warned Ayub that India's massive rearmament effort meant that within two or three years India's military power would be such that "Pakistan would be in no position to resist her." Assuming that India's "ultimate objective" was nothing less than the "destruction" of Pakistan, Bhutto argued that the time to "hit back hard" was "now," to make it virtually impossible for India to embark on a total war against Pakistan for the next decade.[56] Believing that secrecy and surprise were essential for success, Ayub established a covert planning cell, the Kashmir Publicity Committee, to develop *Operation Gibraltar*, Pakistan's military gambit to cut Kashmir off from India, without consultation with the army's General Headquarters (GHQ) or the army corps commanders. *Gibraltar* was a glaring tactical failure, and because the result of the war was a military stalemate, Pakistan as the aggressor suffered a strategic defeat.

Pakistan suffered its next – and greatest – military reversal in December 1971, and with it the loss of East Pakistan, which became the independent state of Bangladesh. This twin military and territorial loss was a crushing blow to Pakistan's national security establishment. But rather than inducing major soul-searching, the defeat confirmed – to this very day – the prewar image of India as a hostile neighbor intent on either destroying Pakistan or turning it into a weak, subservient vassal state.[57] Hasan-Askari Rizvi indicates in chapter 13 that important lessons were drawn after the war, but these did not change Pakistan's images of itself or its neighbor. Pakistan learned that India could not be defeated in any future conventional war, and that if a war were to occur, Pakistan could not count on the

[55] India's 1962 war with China is analyzed in Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); and India's postwar defense buildup is described in Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defence Policies 1947–1965* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 192–207.

[56] These excerpts from a Bhutto memo to President Ayub Khan, 27 May 1965, appear in Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 83–89.

[57] On Pakistan's misunderstanding, mistrust, and antipathy toward India preceding and following the 1971 war, see Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 35–53.

United States, China, or any other allies to prevent its military defeat. Therefore, Pakistan proceeded down the path toward nuclear weapons, and eventually adopted a low-intensity conflict strategy to pressure India in Kashmir. In certain respects, the Kargil operation was a last-ditch attempt to salvage this strategy after the ground realities in Kashmir began to shift back in India's favor during the summer of 1998.

Pakistani planning for the Kargil infiltration exhibits at least three significant similarities to the military motives and calculations that preceded the 1965 war. First, in each case, only a handful of army officers took part in the initial planning of the military operation. Other elements of the national security establishment that are generally involved in major military planning were excluded, including the Foreign Office, the air force and navy, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, the army corps commanders, and even the army's own central military planning organization, the Military Operations Directorate. Decision-making was compartmentalized for each operation because of the leadership's conviction that mission success could be achieved only through strict secrecy. Along with this consideration, however, there probably was a desire to avoid debate and criticism of plans that already had been approved at the highest level. The consequence was that important planning assumptions went unchallenged, and, in each instance, the Indian government and the international community responded in unforeseen ways.

The second similarity between the 1965 and 1999 military operations was Pakistan's obsession with "preemptive defense." As FCNA Commander Major General Nadeem told the CCC research team in January 2003, Pakistani planners undertook bold military maneuvers before the Indian army, which was believed to have similar ambitions, could launch its own land grab across the LoC, as they had done in the Siachen Glacier area in 1984.[58] In each instance, concerns about the growing imbalance of military forces with India – in Kashmir as well as more generally – induced the Pakistani leadership to mount a daring military operation before the window of opportunity would be forever closed. Based on our interviews with the Kargil planners, this "now-or-never" mentality appears to have reinforced both a sense of urgency and a conviction to bypass normal planning channels, deflect criticism of planning assumptions, and avoid debate on the operational plan.

The third similarity between *Operation Gibraltar* and the Kargil operation is the resort to asymmetric means to achieve strategic success. In enduring rivalries, the weaker party often initiates war against the strong

[58] Nadeem briefing, 12 January 2003.

adversary if its key decision-makers believe that they can achieve their political and military objectives through the employment of a limited-aims/*fait accompli* strategy.[59] As noted above, neither the conventional military imbalance with India nor the existence of offsetting nuclear capabilities dissuaded Pakistani planners from launching the Kargil infiltration because they believed that the combination of surprise, military *fait accompli* on superior terrain, and a well-considered denial and deception strategy would impede India from dislodging the troops occupying Indian territory before the onset of winter, which would freeze the forces in place, and thus enable Pakistan to restock its forward military posts and make permanent its territorial gains across the LoC. What the Pakistan leadership did not foresee, either in 1965 or in 1999, was India's determination to "conventionalize" the unconventional conflict. Whereas Pakistan's strategy in Kashmir relied upon supporting militants to tie down Indian forces in a costly counterinsurgency campaign, the 1965 and 1999 gambits ultimately tested India on its strong suit: its conventional military superiority.[60] Will Pakistani defense planners modify their military plans after Kargil to minimize the risk of escalation, or are they condemned to repeat the strategic mistakes of 1965 and 1999? This important question is discussed throughout the book.

Mutual misunderstanding and the security dilemma

The Kargil conflict does not make sense without an appreciation of the deteriorating security dilemma in South Asia during the 1990s. Although the bilateral peace process suddenly picked up momentum with Prime Minister Vajpayee's dramatic bus ride to Lahore in February 1999, the Pakistani armed forces had grown increasingly alarmed by India's expanding military presence in Kashmir and along the Line of Control. As related in a 2003 interview by Lieutenant General (retd.) Mahmud Ahmed, the officer who directed the cross-LoC occupation as Commander of the Pakistan army's 10 Corps, "The Lahore process was to India's advantage, not to Pakistan's advantage. Vajpayee himself talked

[59] T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 35.

[60] Recent research demonstrates that weak states generally can prolong and ultimately win wars against stronger states if they employ asymmetric strategies to deflect or mediate the stronger state's use of its material advantages in resources. Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*. In 1965 and 1999, however, Pakistan was unable to sustain its asymmetric strategy, and switched to a conventional military strategy similar to India's, thus allowing India to make the most of its conventional military advantages for relatively quick victories.

differently after returning from Lahore. There was nothing substantial in building trust or removing suspicion."[61] Mahmud and the three other primary Kargil planners were convinced that India's hostility toward Pakistan was a permanent fact of life in the subcontinent. Thus when they picked up clues that India might be planning its own offensive military operation across the Line of Control in the summer of 1999, and when they realized how vulnerable their defensive lines were in the Northern Areas (which featured undefended gaps as wide as 10 and even 30 miles), they decided to take preemptive military action.[62] As Mahmud put it, "It was the reinforcement of India's Northern Command [which is responsible for policing the LoC] and other Indian military deployments in northern Kashmir that sharpened the focus on these gaps." "Put yourself in my shoes," Mahmud stated emphatically. "These yawning gaps presented great vulnerabilities. It was my neck if India tried to take advantage of this situation."[63]

Even the planners of the Kargil intrusion now acknowledge their miscalculation. The Indian army's lackadaisical policing of the heights along the LoC, poor intelligence preparations, and great confusion after contact with enemy forces all indicate that New Delhi had no plans to attack Pakistani positions in the summer of 1999. So why did the planners of Kargil have so much mistrust of Indian intentions that they completely misinterpreted India's military reinforcements along the LoC? The answer lies deep in the evolution of the India–Pakistan enduring rivalry, in which each side has adopted very negative interpretations of each other's motives and objectives and very benign interpretations of their own motives and objectives. Even though many Indian and Pakistani mutual perceptions are wrong, or at least partially flawed, they are rarely modified by the course of events, even over long periods of time. Developments that reinforce negative stereotypes are given great prominence; those that do not are discounted. Several authors of this book cite reasons to explain the cycle of mistrust, misunderstanding, and animosity that has generally characterized the India–Pakistan rivalry and more specifically shaped the behavior of each side during and after the Kargil crisis.

Intensifying regional misunderstanding, antipathy, and security dilemma are the seemingly indelible images each side holds about itself and about the other. India and Pakistan each see themselves as both the

[61] Lieutenant General (retd.) Mahmud Ahmed, interview with the author, 16 January 2003.
[62] Cheema describes the various indicators of possible Indian offensive military action in chapter 2 of this book. See also Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 90; and Mazari, *The Kargil Conflict 1999*, 29–32.
[63] Mahmud Ahmed interview, 16 January 2003.

more just and the more aggrieved party in their enduring rivalry. This is so because the rivalry has turned into an ideological conflict as much as a power competition. The legacy of Partition, Hindu–Muslim tensions, the secular–Islamic schism, and the disconnect between authoritarianism and democracy all fuel the rivalry and endow it with an unending array of ideological grievances that can be activated by nationalist and populist leaders.[64] Substantive issues (such as Kashmir, Siachen, other border disputes, tensions over water distribution, etc.) that could be resolved with a leap of imagination are made significantly more difficult to resolve because of the deep and multifaceted ideological conflict. This also partially explains why India and Pakistan have been more willing to resort to force rather than negotiated conflict resolution to settle their bilateral disputes.

International responses to South Asia's strategic rivalry

As discussed by Bruce Riedel in chapter 5, Hoyt in chapter 6, and Jones and McMillan in chapter 14, the international community, particularly the United States, was much more concerned about the risk of nuclear escalation during the Kargil crisis than were the local actors. After the crisis, President Clinton's national security advisor, Sandy Berger, observed: "India and Pakistan don't know much about each other's capabilities, red lines, doctrine. I think the closest we came to a nuclear conflict, other than the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, was in 1999, the last time these two nations clashed over Kargil."[65]

US officials and other international leaders viewed Pakistani actions as a dangerous source of instability in the post-1998 nuclear environment. In a nonnuclear environment, such activity along the Line of Control and in Kashmir may well have not aroused the degree of international concern as was witnessed in the summer of 1999 (and again for much of 2002). After all, India's occupation of the Siachen Glacier region in 1984 hardly aroused any international attention. Pakistani planners appear to have ignored the impact of the nuclear tests on the international community. They felt the Kargil operation, while large, was mostly "business as usual." This assumption, like many others, proved false. Moreover, an important outcome of the Kargil crisis, discussed by Rajesh M. Basrur in chapter 12, Rizvi in chapter 13, and Jones and McMillan in chapter 14,

[64] Vali Nasr, "National Identities and the India–Pakistan Conflict," in Paul, ed., *The India–Pakistan Conflict*, 178–201.

[65] Cited in Aziz Haniffa, "Pressure Must Also Be Put on India to De-escalate," *India Abroad*, 14 June 2002, 16.

was that the LoC became sanctified in the collective mind of the international community – again, not an outcome the Kargil planners had intended when they initiated the occupation in late 1998 and early 1999.

As I demonstrate in chapter 7, although India and Pakistan went to great lengths to prevent the Kargil crisis from erupting into full-scale war, the international community also played a significant role in defusing the conflict. The United States and other countries – notably Britain, Russia, China, France, and Saudi Arabia – all put strong pressure on Pakistan to withdraw its forces from Indian-controlled territory in Kashmir and urged both sides to end the military confrontation over Kargil. Taken together, these actions validate a previously undefined element of the nuclear revolution: that foreign powers will become actively involved to manage crises involving nuclear-armed states, to reduce pressures for military escalation, and to discourage any state from leveraging the fear of nuclear war to change the territorial and political status quo. I call this the "non-proliferation hypothesis" of the theory of the nuclear revolution (described below). Or, to consider the matter from a regional perspective, this new condition might be portrayed as an "independence–dependence paradox," in that India and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons at least in part to increase their independence from outside powers, but this strategy ironically has made them more dependent on the United States and other countries, which are compelled to play an active role in managing regional nuclear crises.[66]

The nuclear revolution reconsidered

This book offers a rare empirical analysis of the theory of the nuclear revolution, the argument advanced by numerous scholars and practitioners that the advent of nuclear weapons has fundamentally altered the relationship between military force and national security. The theory posits that the possession of nuclear forces causes mutual vulnerability between rival countries, which therefore must cooperate with one another to ensure their own security and probably even their survival. For several decades, the only real nuclear rivalry was between the United States and the Soviet Union. Thus scholars derived expectations about the operation of nuclear deterrence and other effects of the nuclear age almost exclusively from analysis of this Cold War

[66] Feroz Hassan Khan coined this term in "The Independence–Dependence Paradox: Stability Dilemmas in South Asia," *Arms Control Today* 33, no. 8 (October 2003), www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_10/Khan_10.asp.

competition.[67] Now we can closely examine the details of a brand-new case to assess the main propositions of the theory of the nuclear revolution.

The theory's first proposition is that any country armed with nuclear weapons will accept that military victory is impossible in a competition with another nuclear-armed state and thus avoid direct military conflict. Second, neither competitor will attempt to use the fear of nuclear war as a lever to change the territorial or political status quo. Third, each country will not initiate or intensify bilateral crises, especially those that could escalate to war. Fourth, the status quo will be easy to maintain because neither side will be willing to accept even minor territorial or political losses for fear that they will signal to the adversary a lack of resolve to follow through on nuclear-deterrent threats. Fifth, political outcomes will not be closely related to the relative conventional or nuclear military might of the adversaries. Often presented as the sixth and final proposition of this theory is that nuclear-armed adversaries are likely to pursue arms control and confidence-building measures to stabilize their strategic competition.[68]

War under the nuclear shadow

Our analysis of the Kargil conflict has important, nuanced implications for the theory of the nuclear revolution. Kargil obviously demonstrated that Indian and Pakistani leaders were willing to run the risks associated with a direct military skirmish, even though the fighting occurred just a year after they detonated nuclear explosives and declared themselves nuclear weapons states. This runs counter to a strict model of nuclear deterrence, which considers the absence of war between nuclear-armed states to be an "ironclad law."[69] However, even staunch nuclear-deterrence

[67] Deterrence theorists generally have overlooked China's nuclear rivalries with the United States and the Soviet Union. Notable exceptions are Goldstein, "Do Nascent WMD Arsenals Deter?," Lyle Goldstein, "When China Was a Rogue State: The Impact of Chinese Nuclear Weapons on US–China Relations in the 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary China* 12, no. 37 (November 2003): 739–764; and Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain and France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Stanford University Press, 2000).

[68] The first five expected outcomes are identified in Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 1–45. The sixth expectation is more controversial, but for reasons described in this book quite relevant to the strategic rivalry between India and Pakistan. To be sure, there are many variants of deterrence theory, as Jervis points out in chapter 15 of this book. For background, see Paul Stern, Robert Axelrod, Robert Jerris, and Roy Radner, eds., *Perspectives on Deterrence* (Oxford University Press, 1989); and Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[69] See Devin Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 184.

proponent Kenneth Waltz acknowledges that nuclear powers can become entangled in limited conflicts. But he observes that these are exceptions to the rule: "For fear of escalation, nuclear states do not want to fight long and hard over important interests – indeed they do not want to fight at all."[70]

The Kargil case thus is consistent with a looser perspective on nuclear deterrence, which recognizes that the armed forces of nuclear powers can fight each other, but only where their vital interests are not at stake. In this respect, Indian defense analyst Raja Menon anticipated a key finding of our study: "The Kargil crisis demonstrated that the subcontinental nuclear threshold probably lies territorially in the heartland of both countries, and not on the Kashmir cease-fire line."[71] Two chapters of this book document the decisive steps taken by India and Pakistan to keep the Kargil conflict limited. Gill focuses on the military dimension of the crisis in chapter 4 and I analyze the conflict-management strategies of India, Pakistan, and other concerned states in chapter 7.

Nuclear threats to the status quo

As for the theory's second proposition, Hoyt writes in chapter 6 that several Indian and Pakistani officials did make menacing statements about the use of nuclear weapons during the Kargil crisis. But he explains that these threats were not meant to manipulate the fear of nuclear war in order to change the territorial or political status quo. Nor were they carefully planned governmental warnings about the likely consequences of certain adversary courses of action. Rather, they are best seen as off-the-cuff remarks made by emotional politicians in the heat of the crisis. Obviously, even that kind of communication is not consistent with the responsible nuclear custodianship expected by deterrence optimists, but Hoyt argues that this mostly reflected the Indian and Pakistani governments' newness to nuclear diplomacy; for they did not repeat this reckless rhetoric during the more serious 2001–2002 military standoff.[72] Moreover, apart from a few unauthorized instances of nuclear saber rattling, Feroz Hassan Khan explains that Indian and Pakistani policymakers displayed remarkable restraint during the Kargil crisis by not

[70] Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 37.
[71] Raja Menon, *A Nuclear Strategy for India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000), 116.
[72] On Indian and Pakistani signaling behavior during the 2002 crisis, see Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Nuclear Doctrine, Declaratory Policy, and Escalation Control," in *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia*, ed. Michael Krepon, Rodney W. Jones, and Ziad Haider (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2004), 101–118.

signaling their military capability and resolve through ballistic missile flight tests, something they had done both before and after the 1999 crisis.[73] Gill (chapter 4) and I (chapter 7) further observe that continuous contact between the Indian and Pakistani governments through formal and informal channels played an important role in the military restraint displayed by each combatant.

Several proliferation pessimists allege that a key premise underlying Pakistan's calculations for the Kargil operation was the logic of the "stability–instability paradox," which posits that a stable strategic nuclear balance makes escalation from a low level of conflict to the nuclear level highly unlikely, and thus paradoxically permits offensive military operations at a low level.[74] Although Hoyt believes that this logic was implicit in Pakistani thinking, he concludes that it was not central to Pakistan's Kargil adventure. In chapter 3 of this book, Khan, Lavoy, and Clary agree, and further argue that Pakistan's repeated resort to asymmetric military means to resolve the Kashmir dispute with India has little to do with the strategic nuclear balance, as pessimists claim. Rather, Pakistan has been drawn to asymmetric strategies on the belief that India would refuse to negotiate a "just" solution to the Kashmir dispute – that is, an outcome that meets Pakistan's minimal political and military objectives.[75] The planners of Kargil assumed that India would not respond to what they considered to be localized military maneuvers on superior terrain with military escalation, and even if it did, Pakistani troops, together with pressure from allies, would be able to neutralize any possible Indian riposte.[76] They were sorely mistaken.

[73] Feroz Hassan Khan, "Nuclear Signaling, Missiles, and Escalation Control in South Asia," in Krepon, Jones, and Haider, *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia*, 75–100.

[74] Scott Sagan makes this point in Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 97. See also Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India–Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 96–97; and Michael Krepon, "The Stability–Instability Paradox, Misperception, and Escalation Control in South Asia," in Krepon, Jones, and Haider, *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia*, 2–24. For a good critique, see S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia is not like Cold War Europe," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 127–152.

[75] A more recent statement of this perspective is Peter R. Lavoy, "Pakistan's Kashmir Policy after the Bush Visit to South Asia," *Strategic Insights* 5, no. 4 (April 2006), www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2006/Apr/lavoyApr06.asp.

[76] As former FCNA Commander, Maj. Gen. Nadeem, told the CCC research team: "Had the Indians taken an offensive in Kargil, they would have met a properly prepared Pakistani defense. The Indians would have gotten embarrassed." Nadeem briefing, 12 January 2003. Indian commentators, including the army chief at the time, V. P. Malik, dismiss this claim. The issue is taken up in chapters 3 and 4 of this book.

Crises under the nuclear shadow

Nuclear states are not expected to initiate military crises according to the theory of the nuclear revolution; though this is exactly what Pakistan did in early 1999. The planners of Kargil did not believe that their secret land grab across the Kashmir LoC would trigger a serious political crisis, much less a major military conflict. It seems odd in retrospect, but the key Pakistani assumption underpinning the plan was a lesson drawn from India's occupation of the Siachen Glacier in 1984: in the high-altitude terrain along the LoC, territory gained is territory retained. But once the scope of Pakistan's infiltration into five sectors across the LoC was discovered in May 1999, India sent two additional army divisions and a sizable portion of its long-range artillery into the Kargil-Dras sector to reclaim the mountain peaks. Indian aircraft also conducted high-altitude strikes against Pakistani positions on the Indian side of the LoC. This step constituted a major escalation because aircraft had not been used in combat roles since the India–Pakistan 1971 war.

However, New Delhi then did what nuclear optimists would expect: it refrained from escalating the crisis horizontally across the LoC or the international border, even though this restraint came at a high price: many Indian soldiers died trying to dislodge the well-defended NLI troops from their high mountain posts. Islamabad also took important steps to prevent military escalation. It did not induct reserve ground forces to reinforce NLI-occupied positions. Nor did it permit the Pakistan air force to engage Indian aircraft across the LoC or to bomb India's Bofors howitzers, which were instrumental in turning the tide of the battle, but also were concentrated in relatively defenseless positions around Indian Highway 1A. In many respects, Kargil quickly turned into a bilateral exercise in mutual restraint.

Preservation of the territorial and political status quo

Several authors of this book offer evidence in support of the fourth proposition of nuclear-deterrence theory. Although Pakistani forces temporarily altered the territorial status quo in Kashmir, they could not translate their initial tactical success into a long-term strategic advantage. One problem was Islamabad's brazen insistence that the infiltrators were *mujahideen*, even though India and the rest of the world eventually learned that practically all were Northern Light Infantry troops. As Fair documents in chapter 9, this decision handicapped Pakistan during the latter portion of the conflict and turned all international parties against it. Looking across the border, Wirtz and Rana show in chapter 8 that after

India had failed to anticipate and deter Pakistan's intrusion and after its intelligence agencies could not detect the makeup and scope of the occupation, all Indian national security organizations pulled together in a near-frantic campaign to force Pakistan's rapid withdrawal. After weeks of hesitation and confusion, India mounted a determined effort to evict the intruders prior to the onset of winter weather, which would close mountain passes, impede air operations, and literally freeze each side's forces in place – an unacceptable outcome for New Delhi because it would signal a lack of national resolve in the region's first military crisis of the post-1998 nuclear era.

Significance of the balance of conventional and strategic forces

Neither the conventional nor the nuclear-force balance between India and Pakistan played a discernible role in the conduct or outcome of the conflict. The theory of the nuclear revolution is thus partially born out again by our case study. In what might be one of the more controversial findings of the book, our research shows that neither government shied away from a larger war because it believed its military forces were inferior to those of the other side – or because it feared the consequences of nuclear war. Saeed Shafqat shows in chapter 11, as do Khan, Lavoy, and Clary in chapter 3, that mounting political complications at home and abroad led the Pakistan government to adopt a policy of restraint even though it believed – mistakenly – that the presence of nuclear weapons and the involvement of the international community would prevent India from escalating to general war.

However, as we now know from interviews with Indian officials and from the publication of V. P. Malik's book on Kargil, the Indian army lobbied to open up other military fronts to raise the coercive pressure on Islamabad, to divert Pakistani resources, and to lessen the losses to units that were attempting to scale Tololing, Tiger Hill, and other NLI-held mountain peaks in the Kargil-Dras sector. Praveen Swami observes in chapter 10, as does Gill in chapter 4, that despite intense military pressure to escalate the conflict by crossing the LoC and possibly even the international border, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his National Security Affairs advisor, Brajesh Mishra, decided to confine the fighting to India's side of the LoC, even though deployed army units outside Kashmir were ready to strike against a Pakistan army that had not mobilized for war. A large war was avoided because just as Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and General Pervez Musharraf realized by late June that Pakistan was in a militarily and politically untenable position, Vajpayee and Mishra understood the international political advantages of restraint.

Neither the military balance nor the prospect of nuclear war had much effect on strategic calculations in 1999, although they played very significant roles during the subsequent military crisis in 2001–2002.[77]

Arms control

The sixth expectation of the theory of the nuclear revolution – that nuclear rivals will pursue arms control to stabilize their strategic competition – has not yet been realized in the aftermath of the Kargil crisis. Chapters 12 and 13, written by Basrur and Rizvi, respectively, explain how the Kargil episode taught key constituencies in India and Pakistan important lessons about needed improvements in their military force structure, planning, training, and equipment, as well as about intelligence deficiencies and other strategic issues, such as the role the United States, China, and other concerned parties are likely to play in future crises. These lessons had a powerful influence on the behavior of each country during their 2001–2002 military standoff. And they still shape the way India and Pakistan conduct their strategic rivalry at present. But very low, if anywhere, among these lessons is the recognition that arms control ought to be pursued to reduce the costs, dangers, and risks of strategic rivalry.[78]

True enough, New Delhi and Islamabad have come together in recent years to discuss nuclear risk-reduction measures and even to sign in October 2005 an agreement to notify each other in advance of ballistic missile flight tests. But these moves have largely been at the behest of the international community, and do not yet reflect a transformation of security thinking along the lines that occurred (eventually) between the United States and the Soviet Union after the Cuban missile crisis. In February 2004, India and Pakistan agreed to resume their composite dialogue on normalization of bilateral relations, which had been agreed in the February 1999 Lahore Declaration, but which had been suspended since the Kargil conflict. As part of this dialogue, dozens of senior-level and working group meetings have been held, but none has of yet produced

[77] Malik explains the various considerations that led India's civilian leadership to insist on military restraint throughout the Kargil crisis, and observes: "The nuclear factor too must have been weighing on the minds of the prime minister and his CCS colleagues, though this aspect was never mentioned or discussed in the meetings." Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 126.

[78] For background on impediments to arms control between India and Pakistan, see Peter R. Lavoy, "South Asia," in *Arms Control: Cooperative Security in a Changing Environment*, ed. Jeffrey A. Larsen (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 241–252; and Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Arms Control: Risk Reduction Measures between India and Pakistan," *SASSU Research Paper* no. 1, University of Bradford, June 2005, www.brad.ac.uk/acad/sassu/publications/ZJ_research_paper_no1.pdf.

Table 1.1 *The Kargil conflict's implications for nuclear-deterrence theory*

Expectation	Outcome	Comment
1. No war between nuclear powers	Mixed	Armed conflict occurred, but remained limited.
2. No nuclear threats to gain territory	Positive	Neither side seriously threatened nuclear use; the nuclear stability–instability paradox did not motivate the Kargil operation.
3. No initiation or escalation of crises	Mixed	A crisis and limited conflict occurred, but escalation was controlled.
4. Durability of status quo	Very positive	The territorial status quo was soundly preserved.
5. Irrelevance of balance of power	Mixed	The conventional military imbalance did not cause Pakistan's withdrawal, but neither did the prospect of nuclear war.
6. Initiation of arms control	Negative	Real arms control remains elusive, even long after Kargil.

major breakthroughs. However, if India and Pakistan do move toward a more formal strategic restraint regime, it is likely to take place through the auspices of the composite dialogue.

This book thus presents important findings for the theory of the nuclear revolution, but many of them are nuanced, apparently contradictory, and cannot be expressed in simple statements. At the risk of glossing over important complexities and fine distinctions, Table 1.1 summarizes six of the book's key findings for this theory. Beyond this theoretical stocktaking exercise, however, readers are encouraged to consider a perspective that all of our authors have had to entertain, and that Robert Jervis examines head on in chapter 15: deterrence optimists and proliferation pessimists are each right and each wrong in various respects.

Deterrence theory does explain much of Indian and Pakistani strategic behavior both during and after the Kargil conflict, but mainly in a dialectical manner. That is, a nuclear revolution is taking place, but only gradually through risky moves, dangerous crises, and limited conflicts, all of which modify prevailing strategic structures and beliefs. Unlike the US–Soviet strategic rivalry, which was a twin born with nuclear weapons, the India–Pakistan rivalry preceded the introduction of nuclear weapons, and thus the impact of the nuclear revolution has been slow and uneven. Proliferation pessimists can point to a series of military crises in the late 1980s and 1990s, including the Kargil conflict, to indicate the dangers of the India–Pakistan nuclear rivalry and slowness of these nations to engage in fundamental nuclear learning. On the other hand, deterrence optimists can rightly point to considerable expressions of caution and restraint

during difficult times and real improvements in the safety, security, and nonuse of the region's nuclear forces to bolster their understanding of South Asia's strategic stability.

In true dialectical fashion, each of these interpretations – thesis and antithesis – have merit. The key to the matter is the fact that India and Pakistan generally fought the Kargil conflict as if were just another in the long line of their bilateral conventional military crises, whereas the rest of the world viewed the dangerous developments of the summer of 1999 as a nuclear crisis. Remarkably, Kargil was just the beginning of true nuclear learning in India and Pakistan. After Pakistani forces withdrew back to their side of the Line of Control and the crisis subsided, both countries, but particularly India, began the process of developing integrated deterrence strategies and started to think more seriously about nuclear weapons, strategy, command and control, and actual nuclear operations. Most crucially, however, is the nature of the synthesis, the eventual culminating condition of the enduring strategic competition between India and Pakistan. Will the dialectical struggle end in nuclear war or a fundamental realization of the implications of the nuclear revolution? Of course, this question can be answered only with the passage of time.