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Chapter 1

Storm Is Coming

The gathering of storm

The Nuclear Tests: A Defining Moment in Indo-Pak Relations

As the world approached the turn of the twentieth century, a series of events unfolded that would forever shape the geopolitical landscape of South Asia, marking a significant turning point in India-Pakistan relations and beyond. The newly elected National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in India took a bold step that not only shocked the international community but marked a decisive moment in India's defense policy. On May 11 and 13, 1998, India conducted a series of nuclear weapons tests, definitively ending its long-standing policy of nuclear ambiguity. This decision stemmed from decades of deliberations within various Indian administrations, reflecting a consensus forged in the crucible of public debate and strategic necessity. The rationale for this potentially perilous choice rested on several pillars: the undeniable presence of nuclear capability in its immediate neighborhood, the discriminatory nature of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the rising international pressure surrounding the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Fissile Material Control Treaty (FMCT).

Not long after this seismic shift, on May 26, 1998, Pakistan felt compelled to follow suit, conducting its own nuclear tests just fifteen days later. This was perhaps not unexpected; Pakistan's security policies had traditionally been Indo-centric, and its capability for nuclear development was well established. The political apparatus in both nations enjoyed substantial domestic backing for these bold defense initiatives, although they were met with sharp condemnation and sanctions from many quarters of the international community.

During a Combined Commanders' Conference in October 1998, as I assessed the evolving strategic environment, I stated unequivocally that the situation had been dramatically transformed by the nuclear tests. There was a growing specter of instability, highlighted by the Taliban's ascendance and control in Afghanistan, posing a long-term security threat not just for India but for the entire region. The ramifications were clear: if the Taliban's influence spread, we could expect an increase in Islamic fundamentalism that would send shockwaves across South, West, and Central Asia. Alarming, intelligence reports indicated the likelihood of Pakistan dispatching approximately 2000 Taliban fighters into Jammu and Kashmir over the next year. Amidst this chaos, Pakistan had strategically positioned Jammu and Kashmir as a focal point in the Indo-Pak dialogue, utilizing its nuclear capabilities as leverage in its military and political strategies. Evidence suggested an alarming escalation in proxy warfare, with advanced weaponry and foreign militants infiltrating deeper into Indian territory.

I emphasized that India must not adopt a defensive posture regarding Jammu and Kashmir; instead, we needed to expose the true nature of Pakistan's support for terrorism and strive for a united international consensus against such activities. Following the words of Kofi Annan, the then UN Secretary-General, we understood the importance of combining diplomatic efforts with a firm stance — sound defense must underpin effective foreign policy.

The nuclear tests in both India and Pakistan produced dual developments — one constructive and the other fraught with peril. Politically, Pakistan chose to engage with India in confidence-building measures (CBMs) and sought to address outstanding disputes through dialogue. However, within the military echelons of Pakistan, there emerged a concerning trend: the Army intended to exploit the newly acquired nuclear threshold to consider limited warfare against India, a strategic intent that was veiled from the political leadership.

The Lahore Declaration: A Groundswell of Diplomacy

The international backlash, coupled with sanctions imposed on both nations, fostered a newfound sense of responsibility among the leadership in New Delhi and Islamabad. A shared recognition dawned — full-scale war was no longer a viable option; we faced the pressing need to de-escalate tensions. In the months following the nuclear tests, an unprecedented wave of diplomacy between the two countries surged, culminating in a historic moment: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's bus journey to Lahore and the signing of the Lahore Declaration with his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, on February 20-21, 1999.

The Lahore Declaration marked a commitment by both leaders acknowledging that the nuclear dimension added weight to their responsibility for averting conflict. Notably, they reiterated their determination to uphold the Shimla Agreement and pledged to enhance efforts to resolve all outstanding issues, including the vexed Kashmir question. Integral to the declaration was a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the foreign secretaries of both countries, aimed at establishing a framework for bilateral consultations regarding security concepts and nuclear doctrines, with the ultimate objective of facilitating conflict avoidance. The MoU contained provisions for seven significant clauses related to both nuclear and conventional CBMs.

In preparing for this historic encounter, my colleagues in the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) and I were included in discussions regarding the drafts of the Lahore Declaration and the MoU. After thorough review and discussion, we advocated for the explicit inclusion of language concerning cross-border terrorism in the declaration — a recommendation that the negotiating team endeavored to incorporate but ultimately was met with undue hesitation. Instead, the final wording was settled on general declarations against interference in each other's internal matters, diluting the urgency regarding the terrorist threat.

Uncertainty Lingers Amidst Peace Talks

However, within the shadows of this diplomatic thaw lay the unsettling reality: the Pakistan military had already laid the groundwork for the Kargil conflict (termed Operation Badr) even before the Lahore Declaration transpired. The foundation of this proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir had been established well prior to this diplomatic endeavor; it can be traced back to Pakistan's strategic maneuvers in the late 1980s, following the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan. Collaboration between the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the CIA during this period cultivated significant guerrilla warfare expertise in Pakistan's military.

As the ISI intensified its efforts to manipulate the youth in Kashmir, young men were clandestinely dispatched to receive religious indoctrination and paramilitary training across the Line of Control (LoC). This movement escalated violence across the Kashmir Valley, with insurgents beginning to infiltrate the region in increasing numbers. The emerging control of militants became glaringly apparent during a period of notable unrest between 1987 and 1989, culminating in the 1989 kidnapping of Dr. Rubaiya Sayeed, which signified a loss of control by state authorities.

Following the resignation of Dr. Farooq Abdullah in January 1990, governance in Jammu and Kashmir shifted to the hands of central authorities. The subsequent imposition of Governor's rule soon morphed into President's rule by June 1990, coinciding with a significant military deployment aimed at stabilizing the situation. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (J&K), 1990, granted expansive powers to military forces, allowing them to maintain order amidst surging violence. Despite heavy-handed responses, the ISI consistently funneled both arms and resources to militants, yielding a chronically unstable environment.

In the years subsequent to the elections between 1996 and 1999, some semblance of stability began to return as Kashmiri civilians engaged with the democratic process, believing in the potential for peace and order. However, as Pakistan turned its focus to areas such as Poonch, Rajouri, Naushera, and Doda

for its proxy initiatives, tensions persisted as military activities along the borders intensified.

Worsening Hostilities Post-Lahore Declaration

Despite the diplomatic overtures encapsulated in the Lahore Declaration, the widening chasm between rhetoric and reality became glaringly evident. On the very day the declaration was signed, unrest rippled through Lahore as jihadi factions instigated riots in response to Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit. Intelligence intercepts illustrated a concerted effort to ramp up violence in Jammu and Kashmir, underscoring the precarious balance of peace amid escalating hostilities.

In a staggering series of events from February to April 1999, there were over 600 violent incidents reported in Jammu and Kashmir, leading to significant casualties among civilians, security personnel, and terrorists alike. As attacks sharpened in intensity, Indian leaders urged military forces to heighten readiness and establish security measures as a deterrent response to the surging violence. The Army spread both troops and paramilitary forces throughout the region with reinforced patrols, and for the first time, Indian Air Force helicopters were deployed to assert air dominance.

As April unfolded, the dynamics of the region didn't reveal any signs of abating conflict; instead, intelligence suggested the infiltration of militants continued unabated across the LoC. The political expectations following the Lahore Declaration were dashed as my reports highlighted the unchanged ground realities. I articulated concern in my strategic assessments — a sober reminder that the diplomatic progress could not mask the underlying tensions.

The developments during this period were alarming: Pakistan's proactive military engagement in Operation Badr, coupled with on-ground escalations in Jammu and Kashmir, brought both nations to a precarious edge. The enduring suspicion lingered — the promise of diplomacy stood challenged by the ongoing realities of conflict and armed insurgency.

As I prepared for an official visit to Poland and the Czech Republic on May 10, 1999, the specter of conflict loomed larger than ever. The dual shades of diplomacy and military preparedness would soon face one of the most grueling tests of the decade, as the winds of war began to stir in the mountains of Kargil.

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It seems that the excerpt you've referenced did not come through in your message. However, I would be happy to assist you in creating a compelling narrative relating to the theme of 'India Victory in Kargil' based on the themes of surprise attacks and eventual victory.

Chapter: Storm is Coming

As the sun dipped below the sweeping horizons of the Ladakh region, painting the sky a tumultuous mix of orange and purple, a palpable tension hung in the air—foreboding yet strangely exhilarating. The indomitable Indian soldiers, tasked with safeguarding their nation's integrity, stood vigilant against an unseen enemy. For weeks, intelligence reports had quivered with insistent warnings: an unusual movement across the line of control, a gathering storm of adversaries preparing to breach their homeland.

The harsh landscape of Kargil, marked by its rugged mountains and desolate terrain, had always been unforgiving. But each boulder and crevice served as a silent witness to the unwavering determination etched across the faces of the troops stationed there. The chilling winds that howled through the valleys mirrored the resolve brewing within the hearts of every soldier; they were prepared to confront whatever tempest lay ahead.

In the surrounding military camps, whispers of a surprise attack circled among the ranks. Rumors spread like wildfire, igniting a mix of anxiety and courage among the soldiers. They understood the stakes—a successful incursion meant not only the loss of life but the compromise of their pride and

sovereignty. Each man knew that to protect their homeland, they would need to draw on every ounce of strength, strategy, and sacrifice.

On the night that would come to be remembered in history books, the first strikes echoed through the mountains. Enemy forces, emboldened by shadows of deceit, launched their assault with ferocity, aiming to capture crucial positions that would give them an upper hand. The soldiers of the Indian Army, caught off-guard yet resolute, sprang into action. With immediate counter-strikes, they transformed their fear into a fierce collective roar. It was a battle between not just soldiers, but ideologies—the spirit of resilience against the forces of aggression.

Communication systems hummed with fragmented messages as commanders directed their troops amidst the chaos. Strategy meetings blurred into the roar of artillery and the crackle of gunfire. The mantra of “never give up” ran like a lifeblood through each unit, carrying with it the stories of fallen comrades and the promise of unity among those left standing.

The ensuing days of fierce combat felt eternal, every moment stretching into an abyss of uncertainty. Yet, with every battle won, they reclaimed not just territories but the very essence of humanity—the unyielding will to fight for what is rightfully theirs. As climactic clashes erupted on the snow-capped summits, the once-silent winds carried echoes of resolve that buoyed the spirits of Indian soldiers determined to thwart the advances of the adversary.

And then came the turning point. In a strategic maneuver unparalleled in modern warfare, the soldiers executed a surprise counter-offensive that seemed to materialize from the conflict’s chaos. Under cover of darkness, they ascended the rugged hills, reclaiming critical high ground that had initially been lost. It was a testament to their grit, training, and a quintessential bond forged in the fires of mutual commitment.

As dawn broke over the battle-scarred landscape, it illuminated the hopeful sight of Indian flags unfurling upon the reclaimed peaks. Exhausted yet jubilant, the soldiers basked in the victory—an emblem of freedom, tenacity, and honor. Through hardship, they emerged not just as defenders of a nation but as guardians of peace, proving likewise that determination can turn the tide of fate and that the heart of a warrior beats fiercely against the storm.

In the wake of Kargil’s tumult, the stories of heroism and sacrifice prompted a nation to rally in respect and recognition. As families reunited with their loved ones, the resilience shown during those dark days became woven into the very fabric of India’s identity—a reminder that in the face of adversity, the spirit of unity prevails, ensuring that the sacrifices made would never be forgotten.

Thus, Kargil transformed from a mere geographical confrontation into a narrative of inspiration—a tale of unity, valor, and the relentless pursuit of victory against all odds. The storm had come and gone, leaving a legacy that urged an entire nation to remember the sacrifices of those who faced down the darkness and emerged victorious.

This revised version captures the essence of the story while enhancing engagement, detail, and readability. Let me know if there’s something specific you would like to modify or explore further!

Chapter 2

War Planning Or Was It Just A Conspiracy

war planning or conspiracy

When Did Pakistan Decide to Attack Kargil?

In the summer of 1998, as Pakistan grappled with internal strife and political upheaval, tensions between its political leadership and military were coming to a head. August to September of that year saw Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Jehangir Karamat, at loggerheads with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Their disagreements centered around the pressing need for a National Security Council in Pakistan, which encompassed governance and rampant ethnic violence. Additionally, they clashed over the appointment of Karamat's successor, brewing a storm that would soon culminate in significant shifts within the military command structure.

As Karamat prepared for retirement, an era defined by discord became tangible when the Chief of Army Staff announced his resignation after being publicly criticized by Nawaz Sharif. This decision led to the appointment of General Pervez Musharraf as the new Chief of Army Staff, an action that controversially superseded two senior generals. This shakeup was not merely procedural; it heralded a change in Pakistan's military strategy and outlook concerning its long-standing rival, India.

Once in command, Musharraf wasted no time in reshaping the military hierarchy. Appointing Lieutenant General Mehmood Ahmad as General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 10 Corps, responsible for all Pakistani Army operations in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, he further strengthened his command by selecting Lieutenant General Mohammad Aziz Khan from the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) as the Chief of General Staff. This was an unusual choice, as it went against the norm of appointing someone who had commanded a corps.

As preparations for a high-stakes meeting in Lahore unfolded, the military was simultaneously laying the groundwork for what would come to be known as 'Operation Badr'. This initiative, poised to kick off from November 1998, was ambitious in scope and dangerously calculated. The primary objectives were:

1. **Realigning the Line of Control (LoC)** east of the Zoji La pass to inhibit India's strategic mobility on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh highway.
2. **Revitalizing jihadi terrorism** within Jammu and Kashmir, re-igniting an insurgency that had shown signs of subsiding.
3. **Drawing international attention** to the unresolved Indo-Pak dispute over Kashmir.
4. **Capturing Turtuk**, a crucial village situated on the southern bank of the Shyok River, which represented a vital trade route into Pakistan's Northern Areas.

The military meticulously orchestrated an infiltration strategy that relied on the trained Northern Light Infantry battalions. Troops were instructed to disguise themselves as jihadi militants, thus blurring lines between conventional military engagements and guerrilla warfare. As snow melted with the approach

of summer in April-May 1999, the plan was to exploit the seasonal terrain advantage to execute the operation.

However, as the operation loomed closer, questions arose about the level of knowledge and approval Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif possessed regarding this military endeavor. Did he sanction the planned incursion into Kargil, or was he kept in the dark?

Nawaz Sharif maintains that he was not privy to details of the Kargil operation and asserts that General Musharraf concealed crucial information from him. He argued that when the conflict began, Musharraf painted the situation as a skirmish involving Mujahideen rather than admitting to an orchestrated military operation. Enlightened about the Pakistan Army's direct involvement only after being informed by India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Sharif has publicly shifted the blame of the war's initiation squarely onto Musharraf.

Echoing Sharif's sentiments, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, a close ally, reiterated that the prime minister was misled, receiving only selective information about military exercises that ostensibly did not involve armed forces crossing the LoC.

In stark contrast, Musharraf countered these claims, asserting that Sharif was fully cognizant of the Kargil strategy, having been briefed on the operational plans a number of times—initially in December 1998 and again in March 1999. He deemed Nawaz's reluctance to engage with the military's operational nuances as a fundamental misunderstanding of strategic realities.

In political circles, both in India and Pakistan, there is a consensus that Nawaz Sharif either received insufficient details about the operation or failed to grasp its broader implications. His style of governance, coupled with an apparent aversion to military complexities, rendered him distanced from the military's strategic objectives. Intercepted conversations suggest that high-ranking Army officials strategically chose not to share detailed insights about the operation, operating under a strict need-to-know basis. The secrecy veiled the extent of preparations and the military's ambitious designs, which they feared might evoke a political veto.

Nawaz Sharif's Diplomatic Maneuvers

In the months leading to the Kargil war, Nawaz Sharif's administration had embarked on a path that contradicted the Lahore Declaration, launching an intensified anti-India campaign after India tested the Agni-2 missile. Sharif empowered his Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, and key senators to publicize allegations against India concerning human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, insisting on a push for self-determination in the region.

Such maneuvers were dual-edged; they showcased Nawaz's intent to bolster Pakistan's position internationally while also navigating domestic pressures. A noticeable engagement with Sikh secessionists subtly hinted at potential unrest and reviving militancy in Punjab, raising alarms within Indian intelligence.

Interestingly, while Sharif empowered Musharraf by extending his responsibilities, indications suggested that he was also leveraging the Kargil situation to establish a timeline for negotiations over Kashmir. His diplomatic outreach to leaders in China and the United States was intended to rally support for Pakistani claims over Kashmir. In discussions with President Bill Clinton, he even hinted that rejecting his diplomatic overtures could place his life at risk.

Following the war's conclusion, Nawaz Sharif joined Musharraf in visiting the Northern Areas to soothe the outraged families of soldiers lost in combat, highlighting the turmoil faced by the military ranks yet devoid of recognition for their sacrifices.

Skepticism surrounds the belief that a prime minister capable of dismissing an army chief and appointing a new one could merely operate under threat or coercion from military leaders. It stands to reason that Nawaz Sharif had a vested interest in maintaining a façade of ignorance about military operations while simultaneously capitalizing on the political ramifications of the Kargil incursion.

Both Sharif and Musharraf's portrayal of events raises a critical question about the truth of their

narratives concerning Kargil and reflects deeply on the civil-military relations within Pakistan.

Civil-Military Relations in India and Pakistan

The interrelationships between a nation's political leadership and its military establishment are often complex and fraught with tension, particularly in South Asia. In India, political leaders gain insights not only from official military channels but also through informal feedback from former military associates and trusted advisors across various sectors; friendships built during tumultuous prior wars have often informed more predictable interactions with military chiefs.

In contrast, Pakistan's civil-military dynamics have been marred by distrust and suspicion. Politicians, often sidelined, remain at the mercy of the military's narratives, seldom questioning the strategic intentions or decisions that are kept shrouded in secrecy.

Nawaz Sharif's political credibility was limited; he exhibited a dismissive approach towards his military leadership and lacked the requisite gravitas to meaningfully challenge their authority. His struggle to assert control over military appointments became apparent when the military elite effectively bypassed him in strategic matters despite his formal authority.

This disconnect exposes two starkly different approaches to civil-military relations. In Pakistan, the military often perceives civilians as inept to grasp the nuances of power dynamics and strategic foresight, engendering a culture of military superiority that has shaped Pakistan's geopolitical decisions.

Misguided Assumptions and Self-Deception

The ramifications of this power struggle extend beyond internal governance; they have shaped perceptions and responses to India's military posture. The Pakistan Army has historically harbored a skewed understanding of Indian capabilities, often leading to miscalculations. A blend of opacity in military operations in Pakistan coupled with India's program of increasing military transparency fostered a false sense of security within the ranks of Pakistan's military elite.

Prior to Kargil, an air of overconfidence permeated the Pakistan Army, driven by beliefs stemming from previous engagements that portrayed the Indian Army as exhausted and ill-prepared. High-ranking officials like General Musharraf indulged in perceptions that Indian forces were demoralized and elements of both decay and stagnation plagued their military capabilities.

In light of these flawed premises, strategies were designed and actions initiated without requisite foresight or comprehensive understanding of their potential repercussions. The Pakistan military hierarchy perceived their coalition government as weak posturing, forecasting an underwhelming Indian response to provocations—believing they could initiate 'Operation Badr' without facing serious military reprisals.

The Stability-Instability Paradox

The Kargil conflict is emblematic of a deeper strategic conundrum known as the stability-instability paradox, wherein a stable nuclear deterrent ostensibly emboldens militaristic pursuits below the threshold of total war. This model of thinking guided the Pakistan Army's reasoning during the Kargil conflict, leading to the belief that nuclear deterrence allowed for calculated offensive movements without the threat of escalation into a full-scale war.

Scholars like Stephen P. Cohen crystallized this theory by asserting that nuclear capability could paralyze responses across the board for adversaries, and thus, a daring strike during times of perceived Indian vulnerability might be fruitful. This interaction reflects a failure to appreciate the complexities of modern conflict, not just in terms of nuclear deterrence but also considering the significance of proxy warfare that escalates tensions and can spiral into conventional engagements.

The dogma of engaging in proxy operations masked actual vulnerabilities and called for a reassessment of military strategy. The Kargil War underscored the limitations of relying solely on nuclear deterrence without acknowledging the dynamics of asymmetric warfare, terrorism, and local insurgencies that continue to define the Indo-Pak relationship.

The Revenge for Siachen

The backdrop of resentment stemming from the Siachen Glacier's occupation played a pivotal role in shaping the motivations behind the Kargil incursion. The Siachen—a strategic glacier located in the Karakoram Range—has been a contentious point since its occupation by India through Operation Meghdoot in 1984, leading to the establishment of the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). This unyielding terrain, known for extremities in weather conditions, exemplifies the heightening tensions over territorial claims in a barren land few others would pursue.

Fostered by the failures to reclaim lost ground and punctuated by repeated military setbacks, the Pakistan Army's narrative juxtaposes these territorial challenges against national pride, highlighting a perceived humiliation at having lost what they considered rightful land.

Siachen embodies the psychological scars and operational strains borne by the Pakistan Army, fueling a narrative of vengeance that sought to justify the Kargil aggressive incursions. The Kargil War was thus propelled, in part, as a misguided attempt to remedy the failed legacy of Siachen, displaying an ethos driven more by vengeance than strategic gain.

The Kashmir Obsession

The enduring obsession over Jammu and Kashmir, sparked by historical grievances and conflicting narratives, served as a centerpiece in Pakistan's military ambitions. A brief historical lens reveals Pakistan's relentless aspiration to wrest control over Kashmir, mapping a pattern of aggression that includes two full-scale wars and persistent support for militancy since the late 1980s.

As normalcy returned to Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, sentiments within Pakistan grew fraught with concern over the fading intensity of the independence struggle. The military leadership perceived "Operation Badr" not merely as an offensive maneuver but as a conduit to ease political pressures and re-ignite the Kashmir issue in international arenas.

The Kargil operation, thus, was positioned as a strategic response to preserve relevance in Kashmir discourse, demanding international attention and compelling India towards negotiations. Brigadier Shauqat Qadir notes a pervasive anxiety within Pakistan's establishment—an urgent desire to advocate for the Kashmir cause, necessitating a bold military demonstration masquerading as guerrilla warfare.

This operation embodied both a military and political strategy, reflecting the complex intertwining of ambitions that traversed both the local conflict and broader geopolitical tensions, framed within the aspirations of two nations forever embroiled in discord.

Ultimately, the Kargil conflict stands testament to a myriad of miscalculations—strategic, political, and psychological—entrenched within a historical rivalry marked by a convoluted tapestry of perceptions, beliefs, and enduring grievances. Navigating this landscape remains crucial for any understanding of contemporary Indo-Pak relations and the lingering shadows of Kargil that continue to shape their tumultuous path ahead.

Chapter 3

A Line Uncontrolled

A Line uncontrolled

The Unraveled Frontier: A Strategic Overview of Jammu and Kashmir's Defense Landscape

In the rugged terrain of Jammu and Kashmir, a vast expanse of wilderness, the laws of nature contradict the ideals of comprehensive defense. Defenses in mountainous regions, by their very definition, must accommodate gaps. It is impossible, both physically and tactically, to marshal sufficient manpower to cover every inch of a border with an aggressive stance. Such is the reality of the India-Pakistan boundary, a fateful line drawn across a landscape rife with history and conflict.

Jammu and Kashmir, a territory caught in the crossfire of geopolitical tensions, is divided between India and Pakistan along a vulnerable 1,049-kilometer stretch, encompassing the Military Line of Control (LoC) and the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). This division sees the AGPL culminate at Indira Col, an area of 4,853 square kilometers unilaterally ceded to China by Pakistan in 1964—a maneuver that disrupted the territorial integrity of this already fractious region.

To the southwest lies a continuation of the Indo-Pak international border, intertwined with the historical narratives of Punjab. The initial segment, spanning 199 kilometers up to Akhnoor, mirrors the old alignment between Jammu and Kashmir and West Punjab, an area that now falls under Pakistan's domain. Here, the boundary is visibly marked on both maps and landscapes, vigilantly watched over by the Border Security Force (BSF). Yet, Pakistan has opted to label this boundary a 'working boundary' since the 1980s, amplifying the ongoing dispute over Jammu and Kashmir's status. The terrain in this section is largely flat, characterized by alluvial plains disrupted by numerous stone-laden riverbeds. Past conflicts, notably the 1965 and 1971 wars, have left their imprint, yet the formal boundary remains unchanged. Large-scale infiltration remains improbable here, primarily due to the predominant Hindu and Sikh populace, which has historically offered little support for insurgent activities. Small groups of terrorists, however, have found their way across the border, largely navigating the wide riverbeds.

The LoC itself stretches approximately 740 kilometers from the international border, converging at Point NJ 9842 near Turtuk in the high-altitude region of Ladakh. This line first emerged from the 1972 Shimla Agreement, wherein the ceasefire line established following the December 1971 conflict was formally delineated. Senior military commanders from both nations engaged in extensive discussions, resulting in meticulously prepared maps that were exchanged in a significant ceremony in New Delhi.

As we trace the contours of the LoC from Akhnoor to the Pir Panjal Range, the landscape transforms from flat riverine terrain to steep hills blanketed in dense forests, with elevations reaching up to 9,000 feet and snow during the winter months. Communication is hampered by the challenging terrain, making troop movements and logistics an eternal struggle. Connecting roads run parallel to the LoC, linking Jammu to crucial deployment areas in Rajouri and Poonch. Despite the evident military presence on both sides, the natural geography presents lucrative opportunities for infiltration by determined attackers. The area saw significant instances of infiltration, particularly during the 1965 Indo-Pak war.

As one moves along the line from Pir Panjal to Kaobal Gali on the Great Himalayan Range, the stakes grow higher. Here, army outposts perch at altitudes of 9,000 to 13,000 feet, with some stationed at an imposing 17,000 feet. The Kashmir Valley boasts a more favorable communication network, yet the forward areas lack substantial road links. Troops deployed here face the constant challenge of maneuvering in difficult territory often blanketed in heavy snow.

Throughout this complex landscape are numerous villages cheek-by-jowl with the LoC—intensifying the dual burden of surveillance and security. In the late 1990s, suggestions to relocate inhabitants further inland were rebuffed due to political sensitivities and financial constraints. Political maneuvering like this complicates efforts to maintain the tactical advantage.

The journey beyond the Great Himalayan Range leads us to the ridges of the Ladakh Range, where the scenery becomes even more forbidding. The mountains rise steeply, many over 16,000 feet in elevation, compounding the logistical challenges for defense forces. The region, characterized by glaciated peaks, is home to Dras, the second coldest inhabited place on Earth, where winters can be unforgivingly severe. The topography is divided by several rivers, including the Shyok and Indus, which serve as natural landmarks. As we navigate through meaningful geographic corridors, essential road links become lifelines—facing inevitable disruption during heavy snow periods.

On the Indian side, the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road serves as the only significant communication link between Ladakh and the Kashmir Valley, frequently closed from mid-November to early June. Similar challenges face the Pakistan side, where access routes also traverse formidable mountain ranges, presenting challenges for military movements as well as the crucial delivery of supplies.

Demographically, this region is a tapestry woven with diverse communities. Around 95 percent of Dras residents are Sunni Muslims, while 80 percent of Kargil's population identifies as Shia, with Buddhists making up the remaining segments. Ethnic tensions have increased over time, though there remain pockets of harmony, especially among members of the Ladakh Scouts within the Indian Army.

Most of the Shia Muslims and Buddhists retain a unified stance against militant activities, resulting in relative calm in this region, despite sporadic incidents of violence instigated by infiltrators. However, the persistent threat from Pakistani artillery targeting regions near Kargil emphasizes the fragility of this peace.

Ukraineed by sensitivity to the complex dynamics of security and territory, the Indian and Pakistani armies have largely respected the sanctity of the LoC since the Shimla Agreement. Nevertheless, there have been notable violations, particularly in the 1980s, reflecting the precarious balance of power along the border.

The Kargil conflict of 1999 illustrated the tendency for misinformation to cloud military operations, as Pakistan claimed uncertainty about the exact delineation of the LoC. Nonetheless, marked maps and GPS technology discredited such claims, revealing the extent of planning and geographic understanding that both forces maintained.

As we venture into the area beyond Point NJ 9842, we reach the AGPL, which spans an additional 110 kilometers along the rugged Saltoro Range. Here lies the infamous Siachen Glacier, a battlefield characterized by some of the harshest environments in the world. The logistics for military operations here demand exceptional determination, given the extreme altitudes and inhospitable conditions.

Operational responsibility for securing Jammu and Kashmir lies with the Headquarters Northern Command at Udhampur, strategically positioned between Jammu and Srinagar. Each corps—15 and 16—bears the weight of this responsibility, consistently engaged in counterinfiltration efforts along the LoC.

As conflicts and tensions ebb and flow, the shifting operational deployments and resources reflect the broader strategic landscape of the region. The thinning of troop concentrations between 1991 and 1997 did not go unnoticed, contributing to the backdrop against which the Kargil conflict unfolded.

Throughout 1999, with the operational deployment under 3 Infantry Division firmly established, the defense structure of this region became increasingly scrutinized. Frequent positional adjustments

evidenced the ongoing threat perception, compounding the traditional gaps in defenses that molded military strategy for decades.

In conclusion, the multifaceted challenges posed by the geography, demographics, and unpredictable human behavior underscore the intricate fabric of defense along the LoC and beyond. Gaps will always exist in the mountainous terrains, but the constant need for vigilance and adaptability remains paramount. In the face of history, today's decisions echo through time, shaping the complex security paradigms in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Chapter 4

The Dark Winter

The Dark Winter

The Dark Winter: Intelligence Failures in Kargil

The responsibility for gathering and analyzing intelligence regarding potential military threats has always been paramount. In India, this task predominantly rests with two agencies: the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). However, the Kargil War of 1999 starkly highlighted an unsettling reality—the Indian defense establishment was caught completely off guard by a well-coordinated intrusion by Pakistani forces. This episode has since been dissected in numerous discussions surrounding intelligence failures, poor surveillance, and a decidedly lackadaisical approach to security, especially in the context of the Kargil Review Committee’s findings.

Reports from this committee were damning, underscoring not only the inadequacies in intelligence gathering but also the mismanagement of assessing the information that was available. The intrusion of Pakistani troops into the Kargil sector was a total shock to the Government of India and its intelligence apparatus. Analysts have often pointed out a significant lack of awareness among political leaders regarding the critical importance of gathered intelligence and its assessment. There was a notable complacency stemming from the Lahore Declaration, which many claimed distorted intelligence outputs to conform to the anticipations of top decision-makers.

The Intelligence Landscape

Understanding the deficiencies that led to such a shocking oversight requires a deeper examination of the intelligence landscape. It is well-recognized that the work of intelligence agencies is fraught with challenges. This was not merely an oversight during the Kargil War; similar failures have permeated military history, exemplified by the inability of various intelligence entities to prevent terrorist attacks on 9/11, or to substantiate claims of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Incredibly, throughout the lead-up to the Kargil conflict, there were no actionable intelligence reports indicating a planned Pakistani Army invasion. The focus of Indian intelligence remained overly fixated on the presence of jihadi militants in camps near Skardu—locations that, while significant, were too far removed to serve as adequate indicators of impending military action. The intelligence community’s persistence in insisting that jihadi militants were the primary threat, rather than recognizing the more dire intentions of Pakistani regulars, illustrates a severe disconnect between reality and assessment.

Much of this failure can be traced back to the structural inadequacies of the JIC, which had seen its significance wane over the years. At various points, this committee was helmed by “double-hatters,” individuals managing their respective intelligence agencies while also tasked with overseeing the JIC. In such an environment, the flow of vital information was stifled, and the JIC struggled to coordinate its efforts across agencies. Agency heads became more focused on direct lines with the Prime Minister and Home Minister, rather than engaging in the vital collaborative synergy necessary for effective strategic

intelligence.

A Critique of Intelligence Assessment

The merging of the JIC with the newly formed National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) in 1998 also muddled the waters. While the NSCS was intended to bring about better integration of intelligence inputs, the fundamental challenge of thorough and effective analysis persisted. Intelligence assessments, which are quintessential for formulating military responses, were inadequate. They should encapsulate an understanding of adversarial capabilities, intentions, and an assortment of socio-political factors, yet the focus remained overly confined to reports on militant activities.

Leading up to March 1999, assessments released by R&AW indicated a perceived lull in hostilities from Pakistan—a sentiment seemingly echoed after the Lahore Declaration, suggesting that Pakistan’s military was redirecting its energies towards domestic improvement. Notably absent in these assessments was the foresight to anticipate Pakistan’s continued proxy warfare and cross-border infiltration efforts.

Reports allowed the narrative to shift blame onto economic limitations in Pakistan, indicating that aggression against India was implausible in the near term. In effect, the Indian military failed to notice the bolstering of Pakistani forces along the LoC, and the Northern Areas clarified their strategic training. R&AW’s continued fixation on jihadi groups further clouded the real and immediate threat.

Tactical Intelligence and Operational Surveillance

At the tactical level, the situation bore equally grim undertones. As the Army maintained its traditional surveillance protocols, the broader picture remained fragmented. Operational surveillance—a critical requirement in a territory as complex as Kargil—proved inadequate. Substantial reliance on routine patrolling yielded few actionable insights, stunted tremendously by complacent methods of operation and a disconnection from the local populace.

In March 1999, when signs of potential intrusion began surfacing, the military remains oblivious to the unfolding crisis. Their assumptions—primarily suggesting that infiltration threats were limited to jihadi militants—betrayed a flawed understanding of the operational capacity of regular army units. As intelligence reporting spiraled towards focusing on militant movements, the significant adjustments made by Pakistani regulars were poorly factored into assessments.

Patrolling, an essential aspect of military intelligence and a practical means of information gathering, became nothing more than a perfunctory exercise under looming weather conditions. Reports from these operational patrols fell through the cracks, many going unfiled or disregarded, contributing to a culture of neglect that further compounded the intelligence breakdown.

The Misconception of Winter Operations

Misconceptions about the nature of winter warfare particularly hampered the responsiveness of the Indian military. The common assumption rooted in prior experience was that the Kargil terrain, known for severe snowfalls and avalanches, would inhibit operational capacity. The fact that Pakistani forces were making strategic movements during winter raised alarms, particularly when viewed with hindsight against their successful yet perilous operational planning. Captured accounts revealed significant Pakistani casualties due to weather, yet their disciplined execution ensured that initial stages of the Kargil War would catch the Indian Army off-guard.

Conclusion

The Kargil War serves as a potent reminder of the imperatives of vigilant intelligence operations and the consequences of complacency in military preparedness. Pakistan’s audacious operation revealed shortcomings in Indian systemic evaluations and the willingness of its political and military leaders to engage with reality. The insinuation that jihadi militants alone posed a threat overlooked the array of options and strategies regular forces could deploy.

As the Kargil Review Committee noted, the war was underpinned by a strategic surprise, one where lessons learned would reshape the understanding of intelligence, surveillance, and preparedness in the

face of multifaceted security challenges. The repercussions of these misjudgments echo still, a clarion call for vigilance, adaptability, and a robust grasp of the fluid tapestries that define military and political landscapes.

Chapter 5

The Fog Of War

The fog of war

A significant contributor to the element of surprise and the pervasive confusion we faced during the Kargil conflict was our extended struggle to ascertain the identity of the intruders. Who were they? Were they mere militants or the regulars of the Pakistani Army? This ambiguity cast a long shadow over our strategic assessments and operational planning.

Everything began on 10 May 1999, when I embarked on an official visit to Poland and the Czech Republic, a trip that had been meticulously planned months in advance. Such visits require dual approval from crucial governmental bodies: the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for diplomacy and strategic military initiatives. This official sanctioning process involves careful deliberation over factors like bilateral relations and military collaboration. My second approval for the visit had been secured just two to three days prior to departure, underscoring the urgency behind preparations to procure essential defense equipment from these nations.

At that time, the military situation along the Kargil and Siachen fronts appeared stable, showing no immediate need for me to rethink my travel plans. The Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Lieutenant General Nirmal Chander Vij, had recently visited the regions of Leh and Kargil. His assessment yielded no signs of intrusion from Pakistani forces in discussions with local commanders. Similarly, the Northern Army commander, Lieutenant General Hari Mohan Khanna, had reported from the 15 Corps headquarters that aside from some routine exchanges of gunfire, no serious incursions had occurred. Even an intelligence tip-off from Tashi Namgyal—a local from Garkhun village alerting us to the presence of unidentified individuals in the Batalik sector—had not reached Army Headquarters at that point.

As tension began to mount, my schedule temporarily shifted. During my tenure in Warsaw, I received vital pieces of information from Brigadier Ashok Kapur, my military assistant, about a potential infiltration of militants into the Batalik sector. Early the next day, I reached out to the DGMO, who confirmed the intrusion was predominantly by jihadi militants—estimates placed their numbers between 100 to 150, signalling a localized infiltration. Troops from the 3 Infantry Division were deployed for an immediate response.

However, the situation continued to evolve rapidly. By 14 May, I was visiting a cavalry formation of the Polish Army, oblivious to the growing crisis, when I received word that the defence minister and senior army officials had assessed the conditions and confidently briefed the press that a resolution was within grasp. While optimism swirled, the winds of uncertainty were also beginning to shift.

On 15 May, while on my way to Prague, I was alerted by Ambassador Girish Dhume about emerging Pakistani media claims stating that 'Pakistani Mujahideen had captured Indian territory near the Line of Control.' These reports contradicted our lack of confirmation and made me reflect on the intelligence we had received. I articulated my belief that jihadi militants typically did not engage in territorial conquest,

reinforcing our deepening concern regarding the true nature of the intruders.

Unforeseen developments emerged when the DGMO reported an increased estimate of intruders, now believed to be between 250 and 300. Operational patrols were becoming increasingly perilous; a missing officer's patrol had encountered hostile forces, highlighting the dire need for immediate action. I recommended we utilize helicopter reconnaissance and be prepared to surge additional troops if called upon.

As days churned on, dialogues continued within the armed forces' hierarchy. I persistently emphasized the need for air support, suspecting that the intelligence about the nature of the intruders continued to obscure the involvement of the Pakistani Army. However, during an important meeting on 18 May, the request for helicopter coverage was shot down, citing operational constraints. Faced with resistance to acknowledge the escalating conflict, I remained in communication with the Northern Command, pressing for further troop readiness.

Throughout this period, what became strikingly evident was the failure of intelligence assessment. On several occasions, during my discussions with the Deputy Chief of Army Staff and the DGMO, I inquired whether my immediate presence in New Delhi was warranted. Both assured me that the capabilities of the Northern Command sufficed to manage the current situation, so I stayed the course of my preplanned diplomatic visit.

However, the concept of 'time' began to unravel, as I journeyed back to New Delhi on 20 May. At the airport, I was presented with the latest assessments and decisions made during my absence. The urgent meeting that followed with the Chiefs of Staff Committee confirmed the worrisome unfolding of events. Our uncertainty regarding the identities of the intruders persisted, even as evidence began amassing that the Pakistan Army was playing a more significant role than was reported.

Over time, while our intelligence agencies focused on the narrative of jihadi militants, I insisted that a deeper analysis was necessary. In meetings with key strategic agencies, consensus suggested a composition of approximately 70 percent jihadi militants and 30 percent regulars. This, I contested, lacked credible evidence. With no tangible proof of militant presence apart from carefully constructed radio intercepts, I felt entangled in the fog of war.

An unforgettable moment arose during these discussions when the secretary of the National Security Council quietly whispered that "we must protect their honor too." This remark epitomized our challenges—the clashing narratives between military assessments and political necessities.

Months later, the far-reaching implications of our strategic miscalculations and intelligence failures would become evident. They would illuminate the outer limits of our grasp on the tactical battlefield. On 9 June, after another exhaustive day at Headquarters 15 Corps, Colonel Vijay Chopra entered my quarters, deeply disturbed. He shared alarming observations about the enemy presence on our maps, raising suspicions of a cover-up regarding the escalating conflict. I reassured him, clarifying that while the rising number of enemy indications was troubling, it was also a sign that the fog of war was dissipating as we began to gain clarity on our adversaries' positions.

In retrospect, this entire ordeal became emblematic of how intelligence failures cloud perceptions on the ground. The realities of war are convoluted, often hidden beneath layers of bureaucracy, misinformation, and urgency. What began as an ordinary military visit evolved into an unexpected confrontation, one that required every ounce of vigilance and wisdom from those responsible for navigating the intricate landscape of warfare.

Chapter 6

The Reckoning

The Reckoning

The Reckoning: A Fight for Honor and Territory

I strongly believed that the Indian Air Force had to assert its presence in Kargil, demonstrating our might not just in that region but wherever necessary. Our dominance in the air and on the seas was a powerful tool, one that should be wielded to establish strategic asymmetry against our adversary, be it in Kargil, Ladakh, or the entire western border.

As I took stock of the situation, one fundamental truth crystallized before me: all three branches of our armed forces—Army, Navy, and Air Force—were critical national security assets. The dynamics of any conflict would require us to deploy them in an integrated and optimal manner to maximize our effectiveness.

From an early stage in my military career, I acquired a crucial insight: the first reports on any event typically lack balance. They tend to lean towards overoptimism or excessive pessimism. Hence, it was imperative for a commander to draw his own conclusions, ideally through firsthand observation of the battlefield.

By May 21, discussions unfolded in a lengthy Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) meeting held in the Military Operations Room at Army Headquarters. I was informed of a concerning development—our initial patrol, spurred by civilian intelligence, had stumbled upon intruders in the Batalik sector. Soon after, it became clear that the number of intruders had swelled, surpassing a thousand, and they were heavily armed with mortars and artillery. They occupied strategic heights, hindering our movements not merely on the national highways but also on smaller access roads leading to our positions along the Line of Control (LoC).

Despite our comprehensive surveillance, there had been no indications of infiltrations near our posts, raising alarm as the scope of the threat became painfully evident. Two battalions from the 3 Infantry Division—1/11 Gorkha Rifles and 12 JAK Light Infantry—were rapidly deployed to counter the incursion, assuming the command of Headquarters 70 Infantry Brigade tasked with securing the Batalik sector.

Further reinforcements from the Kashmir Valley—1 Naga and 8 Sikh—were also dispatched to bolster defenses in the Dras sector under the command of Headquarters 56 Mountain Brigade. The Rashtriya Rifles units had shifted to both Dras and Kargil for secure operations in the rear areas.

While we were fairly apprehensive about the fact that the Pakistan Army might be involved, concrete evidence of their presence was elusive. The infiltrators displayed the attire of civilians but operated with a level of training indicative of military personnel. The situation grew more tenuous with the intensification of artillery shelling from across the border, leading us to intercept communications that continued to attribute the activity to Pakistani jihadi militants.

A detailed briefing of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) conducted on May 18 highlighted our mandate to eliminate the intrusions while adhering to constraints designed to avoid further escalation of hostilities. When Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, the Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS), suggested utilizing helicopters and offensive air support, the proposal was promptly rejected by the CCS. The divisions among COSC members and a perceived need to exercise restraint—heightened by ongoing Track-2 dialogues—likely influenced this response.

On May 19, after the VCOAS returned from Srinagar, he presented an aerial photograph taken two days earlier revealing the ominous flight of a Pakistan Army helicopter along our side of the LoC, intensifying concerns about the Army's involvement.

The intruders' precise deployment was yet to be ascertained, despite numerous patrols being dispatched. The situation became increasingly dire; our troops struggled to reclaim any ground taken by the intruders, and casualties were mounting almost daily.

In Udampur and Srinagar, briefings revealed the swift tactical responses from local formations aimed at repelling the intrusions. Immediate troop movements were ordered by the Headquarters of the 3 Infantry Division, 15 Corps, and Northern Command to establish a presence in the area of operations. I was updated with assessments from both the Army commander and the corps commander, shedding more light on the scope of the incursion.

The intrusion's extent stretched from the Mashkoh sector, vital under 121 (I) Infantry Brigade, to Subsector West (SSW) corresponding to 102 Infantry Brigade. The intruders were ensconced in several strategically significant locations, having constructed makeshift shelters to monitor our troop movements and execute effective fire support. In the absence of comprehensive aerial or satellite imagery beyond a single photograph taken by the Aviation Research Centre, we could ascertain their arsenal mirrored the capabilities of a standard infantry battalion. They unleashed precise artillery and mortar strikes on troop movements, employing a mix of zealous jihadi militants and regular armed forces. Despite their positions, neither the Pakistani troops nor the infiltrators attempted to carry out direct assaults on our posts.

Efforts to clear the Zoji La pass soon facilitated the movement of the 56 Mountain Brigade and other reinforcements from the Kashmir Valley to the Kargil sector. Palmaged on the marked strategic importance of Batalik, Headquarters 70 Infantry Brigade had fortified its position with two additional battalions previously stationed in the Siachen sector. Tactical Headquarters of the 3 Infantry Division had already moved from Leh to Kargil to oversee operations eastward of the Zoji La.

However, the overall response on the ground had veered primarily towards counter-terrorism rather than traditional military engagement. My observations suggested that the reinforcements brought forth had been deployed hastily and without proper logistical backing or strategic planning.

As I interacted with the commanders, tensions and apprehension became palpable. Previous enthusiasm had ebbed, and frustration was evident amid their grim resolve. I held them accountable for the surveillance lapses and infiltrations observed within the 3 Infantry Division, particularly surrounding 121 (I) Infantry Brigade. Together, we analyzed operational priorities and stressed the need for meticulous planning that acknowledged the challenging terrain where the enemy was ensconced.

In light of the unfolding circumstances, it became paramount to identify the intruders with clarity and detail. I urged urgency in reconnoitering their precise positions to build a coherent operational plan derived from a thorough understanding of the enemy's composition and capabilities.

The urgency of the operational balance on the LoC and the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) remained a point of focus; it was apparent the enemy had yet to reveal their entire strategy.

Upon reaching Srinagar, I learned that adverse weather conditions prevented any flights to Kargil that day, and a subsequent CCS briefing was scheduled for early May 24. There was much weighing on my mind; reflection was necessary as I deliberated how best to convey the gravity of the situation to my colleagues. Consequently, I made my way back to New Delhi that evening.

The reality struck me; the degree of the crisis was far worse than conveyed. The intrusion was

unfolding not due to jihadi insurgents alone but pointed towards a broad strategy orchestrated by the Pakistan Army. Tactical surprise had favored the enemy, thrusting us into a war-like scenario akin to 1947-48 and 1965. The government's verdict was clear: we had to clear the intruders while maintaining our position without crossing the LoC.

With an intricate knowledge of the local terrain, I understood the difficulty the 15 Corps would face in dislodging the enemy unless we could create a genuine strategic advantage, enabling our forces to operate effectively. The need for additional formations, artillery, and logistical support was clear; achieving success in the intruded sectors required neutralizing the advantage secured by the Pakistani military.

It was becoming increasingly clear that Pakistan retained hidden agendas; their political and military objectives demanded further investigation. Moreover, we had to preempt any adventurism by their forces elsewhere. In a volatile war environment, we had to be ready for any eventualities that might arise from adversarial maneuvers or for the accomplishment of our own strategic aims.

Throughout this preoccupation, Pakistan's Army had seized the initiative in a way we had not. The time had come for us to respond on our terms, leveraging our strengths to escalate hostilities strategically, should the need arise.

My immediate priority was to share the operational insights and profound political and military implications with my COSC colleagues, rallying them for a unified front in the face of adversity. It was imperative to utilize the Air Force's capabilities in Kargil and wherever else necessary. Our air and sea superiority had to be brought to bear on the enemy, establishing the necessary strategic imbalance not only in Kargil but along the entire western front.

The unique challenges faced by the Army, Navy, and Air Force in rapid mobilizations for war were undeniable. Nonetheless, these obstacles could be surmounted if we collaborated and coherently crafted our military strategy, collectively advocating for a unified front to the CCS.

The CCS, however, exhibited caution, refraining from escalating the conflict further. Either they were lacking in critical information regarding the Pakistani involvement or there were unspoken political issues influencing their decision-making processes, evident to us, the military heads.

We were in desperate need of authorizations to mobilize our forces, thus gaining critical strategic upper hand. Would the CCS entertain escalation? Would they permit further mobilization of the other armed services? With the looming shadows of nuclear capabilities hanging over both nations, could we navigate the international chamber's scrutiny effectively, especially post the nuclear tests of 1998?

I urgently needed to convene discussions with my staff, COSC colleagues, and the national security advisor, Brajesh Mishra, to work through these pressing issues.

Being the most visible of the armed forces, the Army is the one that takes the longest to mobilize. A declaration from political leadership was invaluable in this regard; we had to ensure mobilization proceeded without alarming our citizens or the global community. We had to contemplate how swiftly we could mount offensives without disrupting other essential services, all while reassessing our inventories for both defensive and offensive capabilities.

By May 23, I presented my analysis to the VCOAS and operational staff in the Operations Room. I followed up with a conversation with the Navy chief, Admiral Sushil Kumar, updating him on our strategic requirements for collaborative military action.

It's vital that we adopt a unified approach at the COSC level. The armed services must collaborate and plan integratively, considering not only historical contexts but our prevailing military infrastructure. Operational missions must be assigned through meticulous coordination, aligning with the unique attributes and capabilities of our forces, as well as the level of inter-service cooperation we can achieve.

Admiral Sushil Kumar echoed my sentiments on the necessity of an integrated strategy, aware that it would afford us both tactical superiority and a position of strength against any escalatory moves from our adversaries. However, the complexities of convincing Air Chief Marshal Anil Yashwant Tipnis became

apparent; he had previously resisted the proposition of deploying air power, citing altitude limitations and the risk of broader conflict. Those objections stymied earlier attempts by the CCS to employ air assets meaningfully.

On May 19, Tipnis attempted to clarify his position in a lengthy letter assessing the misconceptions surrounding air power's implications. Though unsettling and poorly timed, I opted to maintain composure.

I called a COSC meeting on May 23, restricting attendance to just the three of us to avoid any potential sensitivities arising from external discussions.

At the meeting, I shared my assessment of the situation, emphasizing the urgency of reclaiming strategic initiative to facilitate the operational imperatives of 15 Corps and Northern Command. This transition would require us to brace for an escalation of conflict, whatever source it might come from. All three services needed to prepare for direct involvement, so we couldn't afford to wait any longer.

I recommended that the Air Force mobilize resources in Kargil and Ladakh to enhance 15 Corps' operations while facilitating joint operational planning going forward. The agreement among my COSC colleagues bore enough weight for unanimity before the CCS meeting the following day, but I decisively clarified that dissenting voices would be met with opposition during that briefing.

My assessments and strategy garnered support from my colleagues, leading us to persistently endorse joint military operational plans, advocating for the inclusion of both naval and air forces at the impending CCS meeting.

The day of reckoning came for the CCS meeting in the Operations Room. What struck me was the unusually high turnout of civilian officials from various sectors—the Prime Minister's Office, the Cabinet Secretariat, the Ministry of Defence, and intelligence agencies. There was a palpable sense of anxiety within the room; officials fidgeted, keen to discern our next steps amidst a swirl of unease.

The meeting persisted for over ninety minutes, during which I briefed the CCS on a spectrum of pivotal matters—our operational status, the geographical challenges before us, the gaps in our defenses, and the critical ways intruders had breached our territory, embedding themselves in advantageous positions.

Stressing the need for a cohesive response, I articulated the intent behind the Pakistani intrusion into Batalik, Kaksar, Dras, and Mashkoh. They aimed to establish a foothold that could disrupt travel along the strategic Srinagar-Kargil highway and the route leading to Leh through the Indus River valley. The enemy had heavily fortified themselves and disrupted essential supply routes, amplifying the need to reclaim our control and restore balance.

My appraisal laid bare a strategy where Pakistan, facing losses in the broader conflict, had chosen this moment to attempt swaying Jammu and Kashmir's narrative in their favor during a critical period. Their military motives thus aligned broadly with disrupting our communication lines and reigniting insurgent tumult within our territory.

Initially, our scope of response safeguarded existing posts, maintained communication lines, and focused on isolating and countering these new incursions while mobilizing reserves strategically.

As I laid out the conclusions from our earlier COSC strategic discussions, it was evident that we could not afford hesitancy. Combatting this situation required both assertive initiative and coordination among all three services—prompt preparations and cohesive action were non-negotiable.

In that context, I approached the room with clarity on seeking permission to utilize air power alongside the Navy. I had noted the earlier hesitance from the political echelon, particularly from external affairs minister Jaswant Singh against incorporating air power into our responses.

This time, as I sought approval, I can still picture the tension; my gaze was focused primarily on Singh. Much to my relief and surprise, the CCS unanimously green-lighted our proposals, emphasizing the urgent need to clear the intrusions from the LoC. However, it was made abundantly clear that no forces were to cross the LoC or international borders; a directive reiterated emphatically by Brajesh

Mishra on behalf of the CCS.

While the restraint shown at this juncture was understandable, considering the ambiguity surrounding Pakistan's true motives and the identities of the intruders, it simultaneously posed challenges. The intelligence and assessment teams still grappled with the complexities stemming from the Pakistani radio network, contributing to a fog of uncertainty that had clouded our strategic decisions.

With conversations about nuclear capabilities lingering in the backdrop—following our own nuclear tests that had sent ripples through regional and international forums—these factors weighed heavily upon the mind of our Prime Minister and his cabinet, though such deliberations were conspicuously absent from our meetings.

My summation underscored the stark reality; the operational landscape was indeed graver than what preliminary assessments had suggested. I candidly noted that we needed to ensure further investigations regarding the nature of this intrusion and how it had unfolded, though I stressed that such an inquiry would have to be conducted post-haste, not during our immediate struggles.

As I concluded my briefing, I sensed the growing tension within the room, long faces reflecting the enormity of our task ahead. For the first time, it felt as though expectations surrounding the Track-2 dialogues were fading, replaced by a grim acceptance of immediate realities.

In closing, I briefed the CCS that our military operation regarding Kargil had been codenamed Operation Vijay. With that resolve, I assured them that we would take all necessary actions to assert our sovereignty, reiterating a commitment to ensure that victory would ultimately be ours.

That night, Prime Minister Vajpayee reached out to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, articulating our firm stance: "We will not allow any intrusion on our territory. We will clear our territory."

Confounding narratives emerged as some analysts in the U.S., reflecting on early reports from Pakistan, described the incursions as a 'limited probe.' Such characterizations starkly misrepresented the reality on the ground. A true 'limited probe' involves a small-scale incursion, designed to assess capabilities while allowing for a risk-controlled withdrawal. On the contrary, the context in Kargil unfolded as Pakistani troops infiltrated as deep as 8-10 kilometers across a 160-kilometer front, undermining our strategic communications and endangering both civilian populations and military assets critical to sustaining operations.

The tangible ramifications of these incursions became clear—navigating a force of nearly one-and-a-half brigade-strength units into such strategic depth presented us with nothing less than serious combat. The meticulous orchestration of every initiative and deception, from troop movements to logistical support under the aegis of the Pakistan General Headquarters, reflected a concerted military endeavor.

A Call to Action

Fresh operational directives were dispatched to Headquarters Northern Command immediately following the CCS meeting. The first part instructed operations along our side of the LoC, emphasizing the urgent need to maintain control over essential transport routes like the Srinagar—Kargil—Leh road while stabilizing the region from further intrusions through deliberate military responses. Prioritizing sectors became imperative, and the immediate induction of additional troops was mandated to remedy the situation.

Simultaneously, the command was tasked with transitioning counterinsurgency responsibilities in Jammu and Kashmir to the Rashtriya Rifles, allowing the two Corps to focus on conventional military engagements rather than getting entangled in internal security duties. The second directive encompassed a readiness for cross-border punitive action, should circumstances necessitate it.

In the ensuing days, much of our time was consumed with military strategy formulation, operational planning, and the movement of personnel to both interim locations and frontline positions. The foundational principle at the heart of our strategic response emphasized an aggressive stance along the LoC and at the international border—asserting our capabilities while simultaneously preventing Pakistan from concentrating its forces solely on Kargil.

The Union War Book outlines measures that should have prompted our government to declare a ‘warning period’ or ‘precautionary state’ for mobilization. Yet, the reality starkly reflected that a traditional war condition did not exist; the CCS hesitated to adopt heightened measures for fear of escalating hostilities. While operational readiness could be pursued, there were legitimate concerns that prompted hesitation on their part.

In the weeks that followed, a logistical juggernaut began to unfold—446 military special trains streamed towards the western border to transport troops and supplies. The operational structure experienced substantial adjustments; formations initially engaged in counterinsurgency operations were redirected towards conventional operational responsibilities.

Strikingly, four additional Bofors (155-mm) artillery regiments along with one 122-mm rocket battery found their way to bolstering the Kargil sector to ensure we achieved fire superiority. More than 19,000 tons of ammunition traversed the arduous terrain through Zoji La pass directly supporting troops during critical positioning.

In parallel, naval movements were underway. The Indian Navy had initiated heightened alertness, deploying INS Taragiri to patrol crucial waters off the coast of Dwarka in Gujarat. By the time our CCS meeting concluded, the Navy had bolstered its assets with various naval vessels, strategically positioning itself for a broad-spectrum response.

The projecting reach and readiness of the Indian Navy prompted a swift response from Pakistan, compelling them to commence escorting their oil tankers amidst mounting worries over vulnerability at sea. In a moment of levity, I humorously noticed Admiral Sushil Kumar’s aggressive posturing; it became essential for me to remind him to exercise restraint and approach our engagements judiciously while ensuring that all services made necessary preparations concurrently.

The Indian Air Force had thus far been engaged in logistical missions—airlifting troops, evacuating casualties, and conducting reconnaissance missions. On May 21, a notable event occurred; a Canberra reconnaissance flight was hit while patrolling over the Batalik sector but managed a safe return after enduring enemy fire.

After receiving the go-ahead post-CCS approval for employing air power, our forces readied their aircraft for combat operations. On May 26, the first wave of close-air support missions unfolded; MiG fighters and armed Mi-17 helicopters executed aerial strikes that assertively communicated our resolve to the adversary.

As resolute as we were in our resolve to counter the enemy’s provocations, tragedy struck swiftly. A day later, two MiG aircraft were lost; one MiG-27 succumbed to mechanical failure in the Batalik sector, leading to Flight Lieutenant Nachiketa Rao’s ejection into enemy territory, where he was subsequently captured.

In an even more harrowing incident, Squadron Leader Ajay Ahuja, attempting to locate his comrade, fell victim to a missile strike, tragically printing his name into a proud legacy marred by the suffering of loss. Following that, the loss of an armed Mi-17 helicopter during an operation near Dras led to a melancholic resolve among our ranks: we would eradicate this intrusion, no matter the cost.

The Air Force, invigorated by resolve, sought innovative approaches to maximize operational effectiveness and minimize casualties. By implementing a state-of-the-art weapons delivery system powered by GPS technology, they enhanced accuracy on the battlefield profoundly. As frictions with ground troops regarding target engagement accuracy surfaced, they swiftly re-engaged with Mirage aircraft, employing laser-guided munitions to ensure that precision guided our every strike in the ensuing operations.

In this delicate interplay of strategy, resolve, and the harsh reality of loss, our path forged ahead would require us to leverage not only our technological prowess and numerical advantage through enhanced coordination among the Army, Navy, and Air Force but also the collective spirit of a nation that stood united in its challenge against those who sought to undermine its integrity. Through Operation Vijay, we were determined to reclaim every inch of lost ground and ensure that the sacrifice of our brave soldiers would not go in vain. Together we would pursue victory, nothing less.

The kargil synergy and war management

Following the pivotal meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on May 24, 1999, the three chiefs of the armed forces found themselves deeply enmeshed in a complex politico-military decision-making framework. Collaborating closely with Brajesh Mishra, the National Security Advisor, we set to work compiling a comprehensive list of essential weapons and equipment urgently needed by each military service. This list was promptly forwarded to the Ministry of Defence, where we were given assurances that procurement of these critical supplies would take place within a span of two to three months.

In the ensuing weeks, the CCS convened with remarkable frequency, holding meetings almost daily until the second week of July 1999. These gatherings brought together not just the Prime Minister and other key members of the CCS but also involved the National Security Advisor, the Cabinet Secretary, the three service chiefs, secretaries from the Defence, Home, Finance, and External Affairs Ministries, as well as the heads of the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW). Additional special invitees occasionally joined these discussions for specific agendas.

As the meetings commenced, the atmosphere was charged with purpose. Information flowed from the heads of intelligence agencies, who provided updates on fresh intelligence and follow-up outcomes. The service chiefs took turns to present detailed briefings on the previous day's operations, punctuated by discussions on proposed plans that needed CCS clearance or warranted coordination. An array of politico-military and diplomatic dimensions were scrutinized. The international landscape was continuously monitored, with the foreign secretary briefing attendees on diplomatic initiatives and feedback from various countries. Meanwhile, the home secretary furnished updates on the domestic political situation and law-and-order issues.

The roles of the defence and finance secretaries were crucial as they closely tracked all proposed procurements and movements of troops, especially actions that bore significant financial implications and necessitated procedural clearances. This cooperative spirit fostered an undeniable sense of synergy and consensus among different branches of the government, effectively bridging political control with military action and proactive diplomacy. The collaborative decision-making process marked a refreshing change, allowing political leaders to receive unfiltered insights directly from the service chiefs. After meticulous discussion, the prime minister issued directives to the relevant executive authorities, including the three service chiefs.

At the heart of this integrated approach to 'war management' lay the essential contributions of National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra. His accessibility and adept troubleshooting capabilities proved invaluable in facilitating smooth interactions among the various sectors involved. The interplay of political, economic, diplomatic, media, and military elements woven together created a coherent strategy for addressing the complexities of war.

Within the Armed Forces, the routine briefings at the Army Headquarters' Military Operations Room served as vital conduits of information. Regular attendance at these briefings comprised not only the three chiefs but also representatives from the Ministries of Defence, External Affairs, Home Affairs, and the intelligence agencies. Operational officers from all three services, selected for media briefing roles alongside relevant officials from the Ministry of External Affairs, also participated in these discussions. Each daily briefing culminated in an 'in-house' dialogue adhering to a strict 'need-to-know' policy.

Army commanders and select corps commanders frequented the Military Operations Directorate, contributing to planning and collaborative discussions on an as-needed basis. These visits were instrumental in fine-tuning contingency plans and bolstering operational security. The Directorate was staffed by a team of exceptionally skilled and dedicated officers, spearheaded by Director General, Lieutenant General Nirmal Chander Vij, and Assistant Director General, Major General J.J. Singh—both of whom would later ascend to the highest ranks in the Army. A pair of crucial staff officers, Brigadier M.C. Bhandari and Colonel Ashok Sheoran, were responsible for preparing daily operational briefs for my review.

In response to a sudden escalation in workload and responsibilities, some officers from the Perspective Planning Directorate were assigned to bolster the Military Operations Directorate team. This transition involved integrating personnel with the desks designated for the Southern and Western Commands, thereby redistributing manpower effectively to support ongoing operations in the Northern Command.

region.

Amid the thrust of war, the three service chiefs took crucial steps to maintain transparency and foster confidence in the government's military efforts. They provided essential briefings to the President of India on two occasions, addressed the Vice-President once, and updated all governors and chief ministers in a comprehensive session. An all-party meeting was convened in the Parliament House, ensuring that the progress of operations was communicated clearly to the political stalwarts who represented the nation.

This period of intense collaboration, rapid decision-making, and comprehensive engagement across multiple fronts illustrated how India, during the Kargil conflict, expertly orchestrated its military response amid complex geopolitical challenges. The resolve and synergy demonstrated during this critical phase of military history would remain etched as a testament to the nation's commitment to its sovereignty and security.

the hotline

In an era defined by uncertainty and strategic vulnerability, the communication protocols established between India and Pakistan became an essential lifeline for maintaining a semblance of peace amidst tensions. The practice that had emerged—and continues today—was for the Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMO) from both nations to engage in weekly telephone conversations every Tuesday. If any Tuesday coincided with a public holiday, the dialogue would shift to the following day. This routine was not just a bureaucratic tick-box; it played a crucial role as a confidence-building measure that facilitated open lines of communication, allowing both sides to avert misunderstandings and potential escalations. Given the evolving landscape, we recently reviewed and reaffirmed the importance of this ongoing arrangement, a decision duly relayed to the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

The value of these hotline conversations quickly became evident. They often provided profound insights into the Pakistani military's thought processes and strategic perceptions, highlighting underlying tensions that might otherwise remain shrouded in secrecy. Such exchanges proved invaluable when the Pakistan Army sought to negotiate a withdrawal from the contested territory, requiring intricate coordination.

In May 1999, a particularly striking series of interactions emerged. When our DGMO, Lieutenant General Nirmal Chander Vij, confronted his Pakistani counterpart, Lieutenant General Tauqir Zia, about the alarming reports of infiltration, Zia feigned ignorance. Vij underscored the seriousness of the situation, pointing out that this act not only threatened the status quo but also violated the Shimla Agreement, which had been designed to ensure peace along the Line of Control (LoC). Throughout these conversations, Zia frequently referenced Siachen, attempting to draw equivalences between that long-standing point of contention and the developing crisis in Kargil.

Then came Monday, May 24—a pivotal day. Zia relayed a request to postpone their scheduled Tuesday conversation to Wednesday, May 26. When the discussions resumed, a noticeable shift had occurred in Zia's tone. Disturbed by our active engagement, particularly the utilization of air power in Kargil and heavy artillery shelling, he raised concerns about our fighter aircraft operating close to the LoC. He pressed our DGMO to divulge any details regarding the discussions that had taken place between Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. Our DGMO responded firmly, stating that India would exert all efforts to neutralize the intrusions. He clarified that our Air Force was confidently operating within our own territory, emphasizing that no notification was necessary. Zia, perhaps sensing the urgency for de-escalation, cautioned against targeting their established posts or crossing the LoC, suggesting that such actions would compel Pakistan to react. It marked a rare moment of diplomatic candor as Zia invoked the notion of "defusing the situation."

As expected, the CCS's approval of our military strategy on May 24 catalyzed a rapid sequence of developments. From May 26 to May 30, a flurry of significant events unfolded, each one heightening tensions. Prime Minister Vajpayee set a definitive tone, categorizing the infiltration not merely as a violation, but as an audacious attempt to seize territory. He affirmed that decisive actions would be taken to restore control over the Kargil area while assuring that Indian troops would not cross into Pakistani territory. The government later made clear that this intrusion had been executed "with full

complicity and support” from the Government of Pakistan, setting the stage for a fierce escalation in rhetoric and military posturing.

On May 26, Defence Minister George Fernandes engaged with opposition leaders and briefed both the United States and United Kingdom diplomatic missions in New Delhi on the evolving military strategy. The following day, Pakistan’s Nawaz Sharif escalated the stakes by openly referencing the potential use of nuclear capabilities in the context of the Kargil conflict. His assertion, claiming that the people of Pakistan now felt assured of their ability to meet any armed aggression “on equal terms,” underscored the gravity of the military stand-off. Pakistan officially signaled its readiness to defend itself and retaliate if provoked.

During this period, we intercepted one of the most crucial pieces of intelligence that would shape our understanding of the conflict: a phone call between Pakistan’s Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant General Mohammad Aziz Khan, and General Pervez Musharraf, who was in Beijing at that time. This intelligence would provide deeper insights into the Pakistani military’s strategic calculus and maneuvers.

On May 28, in a twist that spoke volumes of the palpable tension in the air, Nawaz Sharif offered to dispatch his Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, to Delhi for discussions. The offer was a testament to the shifting dynamics; it became glaringly evident that Pakistan was rattled by the recent developments, oscillating between aggression and overtures for dialogue, effectively showcasing their precarious position.

These unfolding events reflect a delicate dance between diplomacy and military strategy and highlight the persistent volatility that has characterized India-Pakistan relations throughout history. The ongoing hotline conversations, once a mere formality, now bore the weight of lives, territory, and national pride, as both nations approached the brink, each step carefully considered against the backdrop of a possible catastrophe. As tensions simmered, the world watched closely, knowing that the decisions made in those crucial days would shape the destiny of both nations for years to come.

Chapter 7

The Turning Of Tide

The turning of tide

On a fateful day, 23 June 1999, amidst the tension of escalating conflict, I faced a room full of journalists eager for answers regarding the situation with Pakistan. One journalist posed a question that aptly captured the gravity of our circumstances: were we at ‘war’ with Pakistan? I responded deliberately, emphasizing the reality of the situation for those on the ground: “Let us not get involved in semantics. For soldiers fighting on the border, it is war.”

The events leading up to this media briefing had unfolded dramatically since 24 May 1999. By that time, everyone in the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), and all relevant officials were aligned in their understanding of the situation in the Kargil sector and our political-military strategy. Our collective resolve was clear: India had fallen victim to an incursion and, while exercising maximum restraint, was determined to vacate the intrusion. However, with no formal declaration of war or mobilization due to political directives, we operated in a precarious balance.

To operationalize this overarching strategy, the military chiefs needed to devise a detailed military response. Our plan involved positioning our forces strategically, enabling rapid deployment across the international border or Line of Control (LoC) to exert pressure on Pakistan and prevent its forces from concentrating solely on Kargil. The immediate directives were multifaceted and crucial to our military posture:

- Mobilize forces and ensure readiness along the international border and LoC to create strategic advantages.
- Reinforce resources in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on the Kargil sector, to establish superiority that would lead to reclaiming our territory.
- Ensure that all additional forces were operational and ready for immediate action.
- Remain vigilant along the border with China.
- Continuously monitor the military landscape, specifically within the 15 Corps.

The necessity for careful navigation of our military policy while adhering to restraint was of utmost importance. Despite the political mandate to refrain from crossing the border or LoC, we understood that the fluid nature of warfare required us to anticipate all possibilities. Thus, I ordered that our forces be kept in a state of heightened readiness to allow for an offensive capability within six days’ notice.

The strategic plan also included leveraging alternative routes, particularly the Pathankot-Manali-Upshi-Leh road, to enhance logistics and support our operations in Kargil. As operational staff relay these instructions to command headquarters, I embarked on a familiarization tour of the Northern, Western, and Southern Commands, intending to cohesively synchronize inter-command and inter-service operations. These visits provided an opportunity to motivate and understand the sentiments of our troops at Sainik Sammelans (soldier gatherings) to instill courage and determination.

Traveling during June and July 1999, I explored crucial locations along the northern and western borders, meeting various command formations in Jammu, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. However,

my priority remained the Northern Command and 15 Corps, as they were at the heart of the conflict.

In my capacity as Army Chief, I was not privy to the daily tactical maneuvers in Kargil, as those were orchestrated at the division level and overseen by Headquarters 15 Corps and Northern Command. Nonetheless, the gravity of the situation compelled Army Headquarters to maintain close surveillance of operations. By 25 May, we had already borne a tragic toll—twenty-nine casualties and approximately thirty wounded soldiers—without any gains on the ground. The reality was stark—we found ourselves in a condition of undeclared war. It became clear that swift and decisive action was imperative to restore morale and accountability among formation commanders.

In the ensuing days, the operational strategy from Headquarters Northern Command laid forth a roadmap for 15 Corps. Their tasks centered on containing and isolating enemy intrusions, securing critical supply lines—like National Highway 1-A—and reinforcing defensive positions. Specific objectives included capturing strategic points like Tiger Hill, Point 5100, and Tololing to dismantle enemy logistics in the area.

The arrival of Defence Minister George Fernandes on 30 May 1999 saw us visiting pivotal locations—Srinagar, Dras, and Kargil. Accompanied by high-ranking officers, this visit was crucial for assessing the operational environment first-hand. However, upon our arrival in Dras and Kargil, I observed an unsettling atmosphere. Bunkers had been constructed adjacently to barracks, which exposed them to enemy fire. The performance of Brigade Commander Major General V. Budhwar raised significant concerns; despite his previous assurances about securing the region, his efforts had fallen short. Thus, candid discussions about the operational failures were imperative.

In the meantime, the political landscape was shifting, with growing diplomatic pressure from Pakistan and the international community urging dialogue. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif suggested halting air strikes as a condition for talks, a proposal that was swiftly rebuffed by India. The specter of negotiating under current circumstances raised fears of repeating historical humiliations—echoes of the 1962 Sino-Indian War haunted our collective consciousness.

On 5 June, I took it upon myself to convey our steadfast resolve directly to the army. I communicated a message to all ranks emphasizing the violation of our territorial integrity and the urgency to reclaim our lands. Firm in our mission, I urged them not to be distracted by diplomatic back-channel negotiations; the focus had to remain on expelling the intruders.

As diplomatic maneuvers unfolded, I urged caution with Prime Minister Vajpayee, highlighting that our military may have to re-evaluate our constraints if successes continued to elude us. My foresight was validated as the middle of June proved to be a period of heightened anxiety and urgent conflict management.

Despite the prevailing pressure, critical victories began to materialize on the battlefield. On 17 June, after intense and tactical fighting with the indomitable spirit of our soldiers, we recaptured Tololing, followed by Point 5140 on 20 June. This was a transformative moment; it bolstered not just military morale but also instilled confidence across the leadership in New Delhi that our objectives were indeed attainable.

The hard-won victories laid the groundwork for subsequent successes. The battle for Tiger Hill, Point 5203, and beyond mirrored our military resolve and strategic acumen. With each captured position, the tide shifted in our favor, emboldening our armed forces further.

In the wake of these military achievements, however, attempts to reengage in political dialogue persisted from Pakistan, albeit under terms that sought favor without recognizing our territorial integrity. We stood firm; any cessation of hostilities would come only with the complete withdrawal of Pakistani forces.

The Kargil conflict was not merely a military engagement; it was a complex interplay of strategy, nerve, and unyielding dedication to our homeland. Each decision, from the battleground to diplomatic fronts, was layered with weight—a testament to the resilience of the Indian Army and the unwavering support of our nation during one of its most testing times.

Chapter 8

We Shall Fire The Last Shot

india shall fire the last shot

In the aftermath of intense military engagements, more than 270 fallen Pakistani soldiers lay on the battlefield, having been recovered by Indian battalions following the successful recapture of strategic positions. Some of these soldiers were discovered half-buried in shallow trenches, while others had been hastily covered with stones or left exposed by retreating forces. In a profound gesture of respect, the Indian soldiers ensured that every one of them received a burial conducted according to Muslim rites, reflecting the dignity afforded to all who serve in the military.

War serves as the ultimate crucible, testing both the capabilities of armies and the mettle of their soldiers. Victories in conflicts are forged through meticulously won battles, where factors beyond mere weapons—such as military skill, comradeship, regimental pride, and an indomitable will to prevail—play pivotal roles. The Indian Army boasts a long-standing tradition noted for its selflessness, dedication to duty, sacrifice, and unwavering courage, particularly in the face of adversity. Each Indian soldier embodies a unique spirit: spiritually aware, mentally resilient, physically robust, and exceptionally skilled. Well-led troops muster all their resolve and potential for the task at hand. The Kargil War, etched in the annals of military history, stands testament to unparalleled valor, relentless grit, and the unyielding determination of the Indian soldiers. Every unit involved responded with remarkable speed, steadfastness, and relentless perseverance, essential qualities for success in the theater of war.

The lion's share of the credit for triumph in Kargil rightly belongs to the youthful officers and steadfast soldiers who displayed extraordinary bravery amidst the chaos of battle. These courageous men charged into the fray, refusing to shy away from sacrifices necessary to uphold the pride and dignity entrusted to them by their regiment and nation. Their high morale, shining determination, and exemplary junior leadership facilitated remarkable performances on the battlefield. From countless acts of gallantry to steely resolves under pressure, their selfless acts culminated in immeasurable sacrifices—each of them contributing, albeit sometimes unnoticed amidst the fog of war.

In the context of a warring nation, the Army Chief's role shifts towards strategizing, resource allocation, and ensuring coordination across various theaters of operation. Tactical decisions seldom reach his purview unless a grave situation arises, triggering his intervention through the established command channels. His contributions primarily align with monitoring tactical activities, advising at operational levels, and attending to political-military negotiations.

Throughout the Kargil conflict, the Army Headquarters refrained from engaging in the intricate operational planning deemed necessary for the frontline battles. Control of these aspects was entrusted to the Northern Command and its respective commanders, with few instances requiring direct involvement. Despite this, I made it a point to visit Srinagar, Kargil, and Leh frequently, maintaining an open channel of communication with commanders across all levels. This engagement allowed me to assess the ground realities and understand the challenges faced by troops, without encroaching on their operational sovereignty. I sought to uplift the spirits of the soldiers during these visits, imparting motivation with

statements like the one made at Moghalpura on 28 June 1999: “The enemy has started the fight, but it is we who will fire the last shot. The war will conclude only on our terms.”

As the narrative unfolds, it recaps military operations conducted across various sectors and details the extraordinary valor displayed by some soldiers, showcasing acts of bravery and determination that would appear insurmountable in any ordinary circumstance. It is crucial to recognize that for every single brave act acknowledged, innumerable other resolute deeds remain obscured in the relentless chaos of warfare. To those unsung heroes and the courageous men who executed those unnoticed deeds, I extend my heartfelt apologies for their lack of recognition.

THE DRAS SECTOR

The battle to reclaim the Tololing ridgeline in the Dras sector, located less than five kilometers from the town of Dras and the national highway leading to Kargil, was one of urgency and significance. The brink of this ridge allowed enemy forces to assert control over major supply routes, directly threatening the movement of troops and military logistics. The highway, a vital lifeline for both civilian and military traffic during the warmer months, needed secure access to facilitate the winter stocking of essential commodities for local residents as well as for military garrisons assigned within the region. Realizing the risks posed by the intrusions, early clearance of the occupying Pakistani forces from Tololing and its adjoining peaks became an operational priority.

By the third week of May 1999, Indian patrols had successfully made contact with the Pakistani infiltrators stationed at significant heights, namely Tololing, Point 5140, and Point 4875, effectively overseeing the national highway. As a solution, on 17 May, the 56 Mountain Brigade of the Indian Army was mobilized to spearhead eviction operations in the sector, led by Brigade Commander A.N. Aul, who meticulously crafted a plan to clear enemy forces from the Tololing complex while simultaneously undermining the enemy’s lines of supply.

In preparation for combat, battalions such as the 8 Sikh and 1 Naga executed preliminary operations. 8 Sikh’s valiant efforts allowed them to ascertain the scope of the enemy incursion into the Tiger Hill complex and secure Pariyon ka Talab, aiming to sever enemy supply routes. The 1 Naga battalion also engaged in a series of offensives across the Tololing and Point 5140 complex; however, they encountered substantial resistance and sustained losses as they gathered critical intelligence on enemy configuration.

Eventually, the recapture of Tololing, Point 5140, Point 4700, and Three Pimples fell under the purview of the 56 Mountain Brigade. The 192 Mountain Brigade, under Brigadier M.P.S. Bajwa, also played a crucial role in ejecting the enemy from Tiger Hill, further exemplifying the cooperation among units.

The deployment of a formidable array of over a hundred artillery guns, mortars, and rocket launchers ensured a robust superiority of firepower during this critical phase. Many of the valiant officers and soldiers who bore the brunt of fierce battles during this campaign earned acclaim, culminating in the bestowal of prestigious awards, among them three Param Vir Chakras, the highest award for gallantry in India.

As battles at Tololing and Tiger Hill were broadcast live to millions, they ingrained themselves in the nation’s collective memory. Near the highway, a memorial now stands to remember these brave souls who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Initial Assault on Tololing

In the final weeks of May 1999, as information revealed a limited enemy presence on the Tololing ridgeline—no more than six to eight infiltrators per stronghold—the 56 Mountain Brigade assigned the critical task of evicting these forces to the 18 Grenadiers. Limited by time, this battalion had only four days to conduct reconnaissance, execute acclimatization training fit for high-altitude operations, and ready themselves for action. The attack was set for 22-23 May, supported by artillery, mortars, and medium machine-guns.

As the soldiers advanced close to their objectives from three directions, enemy forces responded fiercely with devastating artillery fire. Ensuing fire from heavy machine-guns and anti-aircraft weapons forced the

brigade to confront the dire reality that they were contending not with irregular forces but with highly trained regular troops. Attempts to strike the enemy using an MMG-mounted helicopter were ultimately ineffective.

By 26 May, Indian Forces launched the first airstrikes, though the immediate effects were limited. However, these air operations proved instrumental in enhancing the operational confidence of our troops. Major R.S. Adhikari, commanding one of the engaged companies, directed fire from an armed Mi-17 helicopter to further much-needed support against enemy positions; sadly, these efforts had little consequential impact.

On 27 May, the 1 Naga battalion sought to secure Point 5140, hoping to cut Tololing off from further reinforcements. However, as they approached the objective, they sustained heavy retaliatory fire, resulting in multiple injuries, including that of their company commander. Although Point 5140 was not taken, valuable information about the entrenched enemy's strength and position was acquired in the process.

Tragedy struck on 28 May when an enemy Stinger missile struck a Mi-17 helicopter, which crashed violently into the ravine known as Tololing Nala, underscoring the mounting dangers our troops faced.

In the face of dire circumstances characterized by heavy and accurate enemy gunfire, the Indian soldiers undertook another assault through the night. Available artillery support was minimal, with only five batteries positioned across the entire Dras sector, far too few to wreak significant havoc. As the battalion attempted to advance amidst dangerous terrain lined with jagged rocks and scattered boulders, they remained fastened to their positions. Casualties mounted, yet evacuation efforts for the wounded proved fruitless due to the treacherous conditions and relentless artillery fire from the enemy.

Under the vigilant leadership of Colonel Khushal Thakur and Lieutenant Colonel R. Vishwanathan, the battalion persevered, continually hauling food and ammunition upward and steadfastly retrieving the wounded back down the treacherous mountainsides.

On 28 May, bolstered by a better-organized strategy, an assault was launched under Major R.S. Adhikari's command. Adhikari himself plunged heartily into enemy lines, making it to within 25 to 30 meters of a sangar before he suffered a fatal volley of enemy fire that ended his life amidst the chaos and valor that embodied the Kargil War's spirit.

The command structure in the sector was reconfigured, placing responsibility in the capable hands of Major General Mohinder Puri of the 8 Mountain Division, planning to scale up infantry and artillery strength. The introduction of Bofors 155-mm howitzers promised devastating effectiveness against the previously established enemy defenses on Tololing and Point 4590. As powerful artillery barrages surged forth, the Grenadiers readied themselves for another onslaught amidst these chaotic yet determined conditions. Lt. Colonel R. Vishwanathan famously charged through enemy lines, creating a foothold for his battalion while sacrificing his life in the line of duty—his actions serving as a beacon of courage. The service of soldiers like Subedar Randhir Singh and Havildar Ram Kumar, who led their platoon with indomitable valor, represented the spirit of selfless dedication that carried through the operation.

Despite immense challenges, the troops engaged with determination, leading to eventual gains as the battle for Tololing unfolded from aspirations to reality. The sacrifices made during this intensive conflict were not at all in vain; the men held fast, and secure footholds were finally established.

Capture of Tololing: The First Victory

After reinforcing his plan, Commander A.N. Aul directed 2 Rajputana Rifles to initiate core assaults aimed at reclaiming the Tololing ridge. Their preparation included essential training in bunker-busting techniques essential for mounting a successful offensive in difficult high-altitude terrain. As additional artillery units consolidated in support of the battle effort, meticulous preparations began for what would become a crucial assault.

On 12 June, the attack by the 2 Rajputana Rifles commenced. Company C, led by Major Vivek Gupta, and Company D, under Major Mohit Saxena, spearheaded the charge. Reservists from 'A' and 'B' Companies simultaneously established fire bases to provide surgical support. Company D embarked first on a mission toward Point 4590, braving intense enemy resistance to establish a crucial foothold.

As Company C launched its accompanying offensive, they engaged in fierce hand-to-hand combat while advancing toward Tololing Top.

Despite critical injuries, Major Vivek Gupta led the fight from the front, continuing to inspire his men even as he faced grave wounds. As the last enemy forces were finally pushed back, the brief command of young Captain Mridul Kumar Singh, who took charge of his company during a pivotal moment, ensured the ground was held against imminent Pakistani counterattacks.

Soon after, Lieutenant Colonel M.B. Ravindernath launched 'A' Company under Major P. Acharya's command to secure the remaining part of Point 4590. Despite sustained casualties amongst Indian forces, clever employment of artillery fire and extraordinary bravery began to turn the tides in favor of the Indian army.

Finally, on 13 June, after a success forged through collective sacrifice, the 2 Rajputana Rifles managed to reclaim the Tololing feature from the entrenched enemy positions.

Within this fierce battle, countless acts of profound bravery transpired. Captain N. Kenguruse, with his Commando Platoon, rushed to solidify a strategic block against enemy reinforcements, demonstrating extraordinary leadership and coordination. As a direct result of these sacrifices, ground against tremendous odds and the scope of prolonged combat, positions were secured upon the Tololing ridge.

Following this monumental achievement, a renewed drive emerged. The 18 Grenadiers were ordered to maintain the momentum, leading to further advances across the lifeline of the region. However, the enemy, incensed by the losses of territory, retaliated with heavy artillery fire, claiming twelve Indian lives in a concentrated counter-barrage just prior to their H-hour assault, showcasing the unyielding nature of conflict.

Riled by the loss of irreplaceable comrades, Colonel Khushal Thakur spurred his Grenadiers anew—unleashing them to charge and reclaim their dominant positions against the disgruntled enemy, driving them from Hump and adjacent territories that had become battle-scarred landscapes.

As time progressed through this engagement, the battlefield saw remarkable contributions come from leaders like Major Amrinder Singh Kasana, a battery commander recognized for his unwavering resolve and deadly precision. His courage and gallantry evolving into a legendary status through the trials he faced alongside the assaulting units.

Weeks of bitter fighting culminated in a significant moment for Indian forces: Tololing Top and Point 4590 were secured through the resolute efforts of the braves who took up the fight against tough adversity. The triumph marked the dawn of victory in the Kargil confrontations, proving to be a turning point in the conflict as the interior forces reorganized and secured their gains.

The capture of significant enemy arms caches further illuminated the reality that the Pakistani forces consisted of regular troops rather than the insurgent units they had been portrayed to be, and this intelligence acted as a pivotal turning point for India's military strategy going further into the campaign.

Capture of Rocky Knob

In the midst of June 1999, the operational focus shifted toward the retrieval of Point 5140, which lay a mere 1,500 meters from the already captured Tololing feature. Tasked with this crucial objective were the 13 JAK Rifles and 18 Grenadiers, who exemplified courage and strength. The initial assault on Rocky Knob would prove instrumental to mounting an attack on Point 5140 directly.

The operational assault commenced on 15 June. The charged environment saw intense artillery barrage pave the way for the advance of forces. As the battle raged, the demanding nature of war led to the sudden medical evacuation of the commanding officer, placing the leadership mantle on Major Y.K. Joshi, who was thrust into immediate responsibilities that day, facing newly erected challenges.

Despite some enemy strongholds proving impervious to missile and artillery fire due to the unfortunate geography of shielded positions, a strategic pivot to use direct artillery fire adapted the assault plan as more approaches to Rocky Knob were charted by the brigade. The courage exhibited by Captain S. Vijay

Bhaskar during these efforts showcased exemplary leadership and contributed enormously to ultimately realizing success.

On 18 June, decisive reconnaissance by the 13 JAK Rifles uncovered enemy rendezvous points, indicating the sizable and fortified nature of their presence. To proceed with conquering this area, a multidirectional assault was planned, deploying members from 18 Garhwal Rifles, 1 Naga, and the 13 JAK rifles strategically positioned for coordinated combat intended to deplete the enemy defenses.

As the assault detached itself from meticulous planning on 19 June, companies simultaneously surged forward from multiple angles. In this environment, Captain Vikram Batra emerged as a natural leader, exhibiting extraordinary valor and tactical rapport. He instigated a daring charge that saw him eliminate multiple enemy combatants in fierce close-quarter confrontation.

As the dust settled the following morning, Point 5140 lay clear of enemy presence, an emblem of the triumph evidenced by the courage and tenacity of Indian forces. In the wake of heavy fighting, critical leadership from figures like Captain Sanjeev Singh and Lieutenant Colonel Y.K. Joshi ensured the Indian forces pressed on without falter.

Black Tooth and Area Rocky

With the immediate phase of the assault targeting Point 5140 well underway, a careful tactic shifted focus to securing the objectives of Black Tooth and Area Rocky. Here, the 1 Naga battalion launched their fierce assault with determination embedded in every stride.

Supported by previous tactical success, the battalion advanced fearlessly. Gaining beneficial ground was not without difficulty; steep cliffs meant progress demanded each soldier to pull not just their weight but that of their brothers in arms. It required courageous soldiers willing to lead the charge. These men would face not just the enemy's might but the very terrain itself in battle.

In one pivotal moment, sepoy K. Ashuli displayed immense bravery when tasked with securing a rope for his squad to flank the enemy position. His courage stood as a testament amidst the narrative of sacrifice—sustaining grievous injuries yet personifying resilience. Ultimately, after relentless engagements and turned tides, the 1 Naga reclaimed Black Tooth.

Once these significant terrains were established, the burden began to shift away from Pakistani forces. The path was paved for greater advancements in the Dras sector—a success directly attributable to the indomitable spirit of the soldiers committed to their duty and the price they paid to defend their ground.

Assault on Point 4700

Following these battles, the strategic importance of capturing Point 4700 could not be understated, and on 28 June, the 18 Garhwal Rifles were enlisted for this critical task. As they geared up for a retaliatory strike against the positions above, their advance would inevitably face artillery and heavy resistance; nonetheless, the resolve to succeed propelled them onward.

Captain Sumeet Roy capitalized on an advantage gained through patience and precision, leading his troops on a daring outflanking maneuver. Their surprise attack solidified the advantage, navigating brave paths to eventually capture the objective.

With 4700 now under Indian control, the battalion didn't stop—they prepared with renewed intent, targeting the nearby strongholds known as Rocky and Sangar. By dusk on 30 June, both were also secured, an outcome allowing Observation Points that notched another victory in the ongoing campaign.

Area Three Pimples

As the Indian forces continued to press and engage, their success would lead them to confront Three Pimples—a critical complex providing surveillance of vital parts of the national highway, Dras village, and Sando Nala from the dominant heights. The task to wrestle this terrain away from the enemy would be a significant undertaking, demanding expertise earned only through experience and driven by the collective valor of the divisions in action.

Over subsequent weeks, reconnaissance by the 2 Rajputana Rifles underscored that these mountaintops would indeed be heavily fortified. The decision to recapture Three Pimples confirmed the continuation of a well-planned offensive operation.

After a scheduled visit to Headquarters 8 Mountain Division on 27 June, I directly connected with leaders preparing for the imminent assault on Three Pimples, offering my encouragement via phone. As the chief, it was a rare occurrence to instill morale just before an impending clash. Brigadier M.P.S. Bajwa mobilized elements that would optimize their success against formidable odds.

Tiger Hill

A major hallmark of this saga centered on capturing Tiger Hill—a towering apex in the vicinity that commanded the landscape and was crucial to the control of the highways. Shrouded by a notable image of danger, this prominent feature had garnered national attention, and every inch gained would unravel the high-stakes battle dynamics involving various infantry units and ethnic diversity of ranks.

This mission placed the 18 Grenadiers back in action, bolstered by the previous successes absorbed during their time released for recovery. 8 Sikh was also deployed, rounding out a combined force supported strongly by teams from the High-Altitude Warfare School.

Countless preparatory efforts weaved forward throughout the last week of June as units dissected the terrain, continuously refining strategies that would ultimately favor a simultaneous assault approach. The clever orchestration of supporting artillery bore intentions of inflicting maximal damage on enemy defenses, with successful air support heralding vital progression toward triumph.

Adverse weather conditions and nighttime cover proved vital on 3 July as the 18 Grenadiers launched a multidirectional assault. A key victory, and a significant foothold achieved, was bitterly fought for and exemplified through extraordinary veteran leadership.

In this critical confrontation, the collective bravery displayed by soldiers like Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav significantly altered the course of events, rousing determination while earning him the highest military decoration—the Param Vir Chakra for gallantry.

As more and more ground was seized and secured, the intensity of consequence weighed heavily on the opposing forces nearing their breaking point. Indian troops, positioned upon Tiger Hill Top, stood resilient against wave after wave of enemy counterattacks—made evident by the fierce determination embedded in each soldier who encountered adversity head-on.

As successes mounted following relentless maneuvers and ever-increasing artillery support, all Indian forces converged upon the supply lines of their opponent, brutally severing connections to the front lines that had supported their occupation for too long.

The MDF's Leadership Instincts

Among the diverse troop movements lying beneath the tactical strategies lay few who exuded genuine leadership instincts capable of inspiring greatness in the very wake of adversity. The valiant commitments of leaders like Captain Vikram Batra brought indigenous flair to an age-old reliance on scripted military doctrines. When the dust of battle settled after days of fighting, Batra emerged with accolades flowing, and whispers of a once-in-a-generation leader pivoted.

His tenacity would not only carve pathways on these battle fronts but would underscore movements that captivated sagas of valor and gallantry.

The Mashkoh Valley Sector

Passing through time, as the dust of vibrancy transitioned into uncertainty, one constant emerged: the healing properties captured during operations in the Mashkoh Valley ensued as Pakistani incursions into the peaceful precincts needed urgent counteractions.

As the valley solidified urgent objectives, units were mandated to thwart attacks before they could be mobilized deeper into Indian territories. This necessitated movements skilled in precision and attention

toward strategic planning aimed at engaging entrenched enemy positions.

The targeted efforts zeroed in on freeing the region by launching strong offensives—one after the other—aimed at swallowing the enemy strongholds through sheer tenacity and marked synchronization.

As engagements persisted, the sun fell over them—yet these units, unyielding and configured through courageous spirits, would shatter that which once held dominion. The recognition bordering the collective movement would, over time, pave the way for swift re-establishment across tactical sectors that had embraced various facets of civility before the shadow of conflict breached their borders.

With the stage set, the haunting realities of war traversed our own soldiers' tales as adjustment and remembrance brought bitter lessons learned in the relevant period, crafting a living legacy of dignity, valiance, and honor through the face of trials seen on the ever-shifting landscape of memory.

The poignant notion that for every soul in grief, countless others stand to honor sacrifices made within their rightful bounds and across boundaries fortified within their convictions, creating a symphony that plays through every mantra of a soldier's existence.

As the search for permanence unfolds through the hand of fate and remembrance, history etches a poem: timeless and undeterred. The Kargil conflict becomes more than just a objective—ensuring victory resounds loudly through future generations who hum the words they describe in tales of valor fought. The sea of spirit, a wellspring from which valor emerges, bound to forge something grander as we continue to rise, look back, and embrace the history of heroism engraved in the very fabric of our Indian Army.

Chapter 9

Combat And Logistic Support

A crucial hub

The Gunners

In the unforgiving terrain of mountain warfare, where every foot gained is a battle won, the infantry may often be seen as the spearhead of an attack. Yet, like all spears, this leading edge is futile without a robust shaft—who can deny that foundation is provided by artillery? It is this powerful backbone that shapes the very essence of any military offensive, and during Operation Vijay, this synergy came into sharp focus.

Operation Vijay was no ordinary endeavor; it represented a high-intensity offensive in the treacherous high-altitude mountains of Kargil. The nature of the operation demanded an unparalleled level of artillery support, much of it unconventional yet vital. The advancements in weaponry and ammunition that had come to the forefront offered artillery units a remarkable opportunity to inflict damage and destruction with an effectiveness and responsiveness that surpassed anything possible in the past. However, amidst this technological progress, there existed a notable shortcoming—the absence of weapons-locating radars and other essential equipment hampered the artillery's ability to ensure precise target acquisition and enhance battlefield surveillance.

As the conflict unfolded, both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) faced relentless engagements of enemy positions. The Indian forces committed nearly fifty fire units—spanning artillery guns, howitzers, mortars, and even a rocket battery—to engage in this battle. Their tasks were diverse: from obliterating strategic objectives to supporting the infantry's ground assaults and executing counterbombardment against the enemy. Over a grueling period of ninety days, these artillery units unleashed a staggering total of nearly 250,000 rounds and rockets, demonstrating extraordinary firepower. Notably, the medium guns accounted for approximately 30 percent of this total, and during intense moments, the artillery could rain down over 1,200 rounds of high explosives upon critical targets like Point 4875, Tololing, and the strategic Tiger Hill, all within a span of five minutes.

In a distinctive twist on traditional warfare, the operational demands of the high-altitude theater led to the innovative use of field guns such as the 155-mm Bofors howitzers, 130-mm medium guns, and even 122-mm Grad multibarrel rocket launchers in a direct firing role. These artillery pieces engaged the enemy with precision at distances stretching up to 17 kilometers, a feat that exemplified adaptability amid adversity.

However, this warfare was not without its heavy toll. The gallant forward observation officers and battery commanders, dedicated to moving alongside the assault troops, often found themselves under the threat of small arms fire. Many sustained injuries, and some made the ultimate sacrifice. In circumstances where a company commander fell in battle, it was inspiring to witness the resolve of forward observation officers as they stepped into leadership roles, often seizing command to ensure the objectives were met and their comrades' efforts were not in vain.

A testament to the bravery and heroism displayed during this arduous campaign is reflected in the names of those who emerged as exemplars of courage. Major K.A.S. Kasana of the 41 Field Regiment, Captain S.B. Ghildyal from the 315 Field Regiment, Captain R. Jerry Prem Raj (awarded posthumously) of the 159 Medium Regiment, and Gunner S.G. Pillai (also awarded posthumously) of the 4 Field Regiment were all honored with the Vir Chakra, India's second-highest wartime gallantry award. Their stories are entwined with the legacy of many other distinguished individuals: Brigadier Lakhwinder Singh from Headquarters 8 Mountain Artillery Brigade, Colonel N.A. Subramanian of the 315 Field Regiment, and Colonel Sanjay Saran from the 15 Field Regiment, who received Yudh Seva Medals for their exceptional service. In addition, thirty-four gunners were recognized with Sena Medals (Gallantry), and the valor of three exemplary artillery units—141 Field Regiment, 197 Field Regiment, and 108 Medium Regiment—was honored with the Chief of Army Staff's Unit Citation, marking their indelible contribution to an unforgettable chapter in India's military history.

In the end, the saga of the gunners during Operation Vijay serves as a reminder that every great military victory is built upon the commitment, courage, and unwavering spirit of those who stand with their weapons, prepared to defend their country against all odds. They wrote a story of valor amidst chaos, ensuring that the thunder of artillery was the sound of freedom ringing across the mountains of Kargil.

The Army aviation corps

The Army Aviation Corps: Wings of Valor

In the heart of Kargil, amidst the stark mountains and the unforgiving terrain, the Army Aviation Corps soared against the backdrop of an unfolding war. At a time when every second counted and the stakes were as high as the peaks surrounding them, the aviators distinguished themselves with extraordinary courage and skill. Two squadrons took to the skies, engaging in over 2,500 vital missions and amassing more than 2,700 flying hours. These were not just numbers; they represented incredible feats of precision, determination, and a relentless drive to serve.

Operating at the upper limits of their helicopter's flight capabilities, each mission challenged the limits of human endurance and machine reliability. These helicopters, designed to glide through the skies, faced unpredictable weather conditions and navigated treacherous landscapes. Yet, time and again, the aviators skillfully maneuvered through the daunting heights and depths of the battle zone. They were not just flying machines; they were lifelines linking the frontlines with the much-needed reinforcements and medical evacuations.

In the face of fierce combat, the helicopters became a crucial asset, lifting 240 soldiers and transporting roughly 200 tons of essential materials to both established posts and newly established lookout points. These supplies were critical to maintaining tactical advantages against an enemy who had fortified their positions. The roar of the helicopter blades overhead was often the last sound heard before a soldier's fate changed, delivering support and hope to men enduring the hardships of war.

Despite the constant threat of small arms and artillery fire, the Army Aviation Corps executed numerous medical evacuations, performing miracles of mercy under fire. They managed to collect over 900 casualties from the battlefield, many from makeshift helipads hastily established in the most rugged terrains. Of these operations, Cheetah helicopters—commonly known as Alouettes—played a pivotal role, successfully evacuating 785 soldiers in an impressive 734 missions. The efficiency and bravery displayed during these missions became legend, epitomizing the indomitable spirit of the Army Aviation Corps.

Amidst the thunder of helicopter engines and the echoes of battlefield courage, heroes emerged. Major Gautam Shasikumar Khot and Major Prabhu Nath Prasad earned the esteemed Vir Chakra, a recognition of their extraordinary bravery in the line of duty. Their acts of valor inspired not only their fellow aviators but also those serving on the ground. In addition, the corps was honored with other notable accolades, including one Yudh Seva Medal, three Sena Medals for Gallantry, and a Sena Medal distinguished service. Each award symbolized a chapter of heroism that resided not just in individual acts, but in the collective spirit of the Army Aviation Corps.

Together, these aviators created a legacy that would be remembered for generations. They were more than soldiers; they became the embodiment of hope, courage, and commitment to their nation, soaring through danger to uplift their brethren in arms. The story of the Army Aviation Corps during the Kargil conflict stands as a testament to the power of dedication and valor in the face of imminent peril, highlighting how the skies are not merely a realm above us, but are also a territory where the brave untangle the threads of fate woven by the hands of war.

the corps of engineers

In the annals of warfare, where valor on the battlefield often overshadows the unsung heroes who toil behind the scenes, the engineers of the Indian Army, popularly known as sappers, embodied a spirit of dedication and sacrifice during the Kargil War. Their tasks, though largely unglamorous, were monumental in scope and critical to the success of military operations. From laying mines to constructing vital logistical support structures, the sappers were instrumental in enabling combat forces to engage effectively.

In the rugged terrain of Kargil, a total of twelve engineer regiments were deployed, each manned by brave soldiers whose expertise lay in overcoming obstacles, both natural and man-made. The Sappers faced grueling challenges, diligently weaving through the harsh conditions to lay down approximately 8 kilometers of Class 9 roads—designed to support the movement of heavy trucks. Additionally, they painstakingly crafted 250 kilometers of new mule tracks and 20 kilometers of foot trails, linking isolated troops to necessary supplies and reinforcements. The reconditioning of an additional 30 kilometers of existing mule tracks proved essential for maintaining the flow of logistics.

Among their numerous achievements, the construction of nearly seventy helipads stood out. These vital landing zones facilitated swift aerial support, allowing for the rapid deployment of troops and supplies, sometimes even under enemy fire. However, one of the sappers' most daunting tasks was the perilous recovery of mines and booby traps left behind by retreating Pakistani forces—an endeavor complicated by the absence of markers that usually identify such hazards. Battling time and trepidation, these audacious engineers successfully disarmed around 5000 mines, showcasing their impeccable instincts and commendable bravery.

It is important to recognize that the establishment of communication and logistic infrastructure in such a war-torn area does not happen overnight. It is a process that takes years of meticulous planning and resource allocation. The groundwork laid before the conflict provided a solid base for the engineers to build upon, preventing operational bottlenecks during crucial moments. In the challenging environment of Kargil, these men rose well above expectations, delivering results with remarkable efficiency as they mobilized and distributed supplies, often utilizing helicopters to overcome difficult terrain.

A shining example of leadership and courage emerged in Captain Rupesh Pradhan, who, in recognition of his gallant service, was honored with the prestigious Vir Chakra for his selfless valor. Moreover, the bravery of the sappers did not go unnoticed; eight of their comrades were awarded Sena Medals for their acts of gallantry. These men, though often standing in the shadows of more visible combat roles, played a pivotal role in ensuring that every operation was executed with precision.

The tale of the sappers during the Kargil War is a tribute to their resolve, professionalism, and the spirit of unfaltering dedication that pulses through the Corps of Engineers. Their contributions, though sometimes overlooked, are integral to the fabric of military success. It is through their relentless efforts that the Indian Army was able to adapt, overcome, and ultimately secure victory in one of the most challenging domains imaginable. With every mine safely lifted and every road constructed, these unsung heroes etched their legacy into the narrative of India's valor in Kargil.

the corps of signals

In the theater of modern warfare, the need for a diverse array of communication channels and advanced technological systems cannot be overstated. Effective operational communications are paramount, par-

ticularly in the challenging conditions present in high-altitude combat zones and rugged mountainous terrains. In such environments, not only is the portability of communication equipment a crucial factor, but the ability to maintain secure lines of communication becomes even more vital to ensure mission success and troop safety.

During the Kargil conflict, the Corps of Signals embodied the spirit of adaptability and resilience. However, the equipment at their disposal was a troubling mix, comprising both outdated devices and a handful of newer models. This amalgamation was insufficient to meet the demands of a fast-paced and unpredictable battlefield. Specifically, the technologies needed to secure communications were inadequate and often unavailable to the infantry battalions and artillery regiments that relied on them. Although promises of timely delivery had been made by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and various production agencies, the reality fell short, leaving soldiers scrambling for reliable tools.

Yet, in what could have been a significant setback, the Corps of Signals rose to the occasion with remarkable ingenuity. Faced with differing degrees of operational capability, they implemented innovative solutions that defied expectations. For instance, they deployed Iridium satellite telephones to artillery observation posts, ensuring that firing units remained in constant contact with command elements. In tandem, they established Inmarsat satellite terminals, bridging the communication gap between remote headquarters and frontline units. The utilization of hand-held walkie-talkie sets proved invaluable for monitoring convoy movements and tracking the logistics supply chain, enabling real-time updates that were critical in a fluid combat situation.

Moreover, in an effort to enhance communication capabilities even further, fax facilities were mobilized to extend connectivity down to the battalion headquarters level. This initiative allowed for the swift transmission of essential information, bridging the gap between the tactical and strategic echelons of command.

As the operations unfolded, it became increasingly clear that an operational reserve of signal equipment—particularly devices designed to ensure secure communications—was not merely beneficial; it was essential. The lesson learned here was monumental: stockpiling these specialized devices in the theater of war could dramatically improve operational efficiency. Additionally, the importance of managing the electromagnetic spectrum through a centralized agency emerged as a critical concern. This management ensured that communication systems, alongside other vital networks, functioned cohesively, allowing for synchronized operations across varying units.

In conclusion, while the road to effective communication during combat was fraught with challenges, the resourcefulness of the Corps of Signals proved that adversity can often foster ingenuity. Their ability to maximize limited resources and innovate within the constraints of the battlefield highlights a fundamental truth of warfare—that success often hinges not only on numbers and firepower, but also on the strength of communication and the cohesion of efforts across all fronts.

logistic support

In the midst of towering peaks and treacherous terrains, a formidable challenge loomed for the armed forces engaged in a high-altitude conflict. The harsh realities of managing logistic support for a large military contingent deployed in an environment that was not only glaciated but also grossly underdeveloped was daunting. It became a battlefield not just of weaponry and tactics, but of logistics and supply chains. This region, fraught with the ever-present threat of avalanches and blizzards, posed an extraordinary challenge to sustaining military operations.

The Pakistan Army, despite its strengths, struggled to overcome these logistical hurdles—a fate that ironically echoed the initial complications faced by our own forces. Our readiness was hampered by a perilously short warning period, leaving little time to prepare for the abrupt escalation in troop levels. Suddenly, the induction of artillery was necessary, along with the daunting requirement of 5000 tons of ammunition. The concerns were compounded by enemy interference disrupting vital supply routes along the Srinagar—Kargil—Leh highway, a critical artery for resupplying our forces.

As the requirements surged, so too did the pressure on army logistics. The movement and provision of essential supplies—ammunition, fuel oil, lubricants, rations, engineering equipment, and winter clothing—needed to be rapidly scaled up to meet the increased demands of an evolving battlefield. Each of these elements played a crucial role in ensuring that our troops had the necessary resources to sustain their fight amidst the unforgiving conditions.

In response to this multifaceted challenge, the Army logistics teams embraced the pressure with unwavering resolve. Tirelessly working around the clock, they demonstrated not just hard work but also remarkable ingenuity. They sought alternative routes, implemented innovative strategies for transportation, and prioritized the distribution of essential supplies. With each passing day, they turned obstacles into opportunities, ensuring that our forces remained equipped and ready to face the enemy.

The journey through this tumultuous period was marked not only by the struggle for survival but also by resilience and perseverance. As the war raged on, the logistical backbone of our military operations started to stabilize, thanks to the unwavering commitment of the men and women behind the scenes. The collective effort of these teams became the unsung hero of our campaign, keeping the momentum alive in an environment that was determined to thwart our every move.

Thus, while the battle on the frontlines was intense, it was the battle for logistics that quietly but decisively shaped the course of the conflict. Each resupply mission, each delivery of rations, and every transport of artillery became a testament to the unyielding spirit of those who served. As the war evolved, it became clear that victory in the Kargil conflict was not just about military might and strategic acumen; it was equally about the intricate web of support that held everything together in those critical moments on the icy heights of the Himalayas.

transportation

In the treacherous heights of Kargil, amidst fierce combat and unyielding terrain, the true valor of the Animal Transport Battalion (AT) personnel was unveiled, revealing heroism that transcended the brutal realities of war. These brave souls risked their lives and demonstrated unwavering dedication during one of India's most challenging military engagements. Among them was Naib Risaldar Prem Singh, whose extraordinary courage and commitment earned him the prestigious Sena Medal—a testament to the vital role played by the AT Battalion. In a remarkable achievement, the 874 AT Battalion cemented its place in history by becoming the first unit of the Army Service Corps (ASC) to receive the Chief of Army Staff's (COAS) Unit Citation, an honor that underscored their pivotal contributions during the conflict.

However, the path to valor was riddled with obstacles. With the onset of the operations, the situation was far from ideal; supplies accumulated during the previous winter season were running dangerously low. Fresh stocking of essentials had not yet begun, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the logistics of the impending campaign. The sudden and substantial deployment of troops strained the already limited road space, complicating the movement of critical logistical materials. As the ground situation weighed heavily on the transport logistics, the responsibility of maintaining a steady supply chain fell squarely on the shoulders of local depots and the composite platoons of ASC battalions stationed in the Kargil region.

Despite the relentless barrage of enemy shelling, the courageous men and women of the transport battalions rose to the challenge. They undertook the monumental task of ensuring that necessary supplies were stocked, despite the dire constraints posed by their new and unfamiliar vehicles. Many drivers had limited experience, which added layers of complexity to an already precarious situation. Yet, through sheer determination and a fierce resolve to serve, they quickly adapted, honing their driving skills under pressure while demonstrating remarkable administrative ingenuity.

The coordination of efforts among all battalions became paramount; the unit leaders fostered seamless communication to ensure that everyone remained aligned in purpose. Each driver, each soldier, played a critical role in this collective endeavor, embodying the spirit of camaraderie and sacrifice that prevailed throughout those harrowing times.

As soldiers from the Mechanical Transport Battalion valiantly executed their duties, some, like Sepoys

V. Paneer Selvem and Gopinath Maharana, faced the ultimate sacrifice. Their lives were tragically cut short in their relentless pursuit of duty, yet their legacy lives on in the hearts of their comrades and those who followed in their footsteps.

The Kargil War was not just a traditional battle; it was a test of logistical rigor and human tenacity. The transport units, forged amid adversity, emerged as unsung heroes whose crucial contribution ensured that mountains, both literal and metaphorical, were conquered, paving the way for a victorious campaign. In every challenge faced and every obstacle overcome, the story of the Kargil War stands as a powerful reminder of the extraordinary capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces and the unyielding spirit of unity that triumphs against all odds.

the medical corps

In the unforgiving landscape of Kargil, where the majestic yet treacherous mountains loom high, a silent battle raged not just between combatants but also against time and nature. This was where the Army Medical Corps, a group of relentless heroes clad in olive green, rose to the occasion, demonstrating unparalleled professionalism and unwavering dedication to the care of the wounded. From the rudimentary regimental aid posts nestled on craggy cliffs to the bustling advance base hospitals and military hospitals beyond, these medical personnel stood on the frontline with courage that echoed through the valleys.

The conditions they operated under were nothing short of daunting. Facing inhospitable terrains strewn with boulders and steep ascents, they navigated harsh weather changes and limited access to resources. Yet, their spirit remained unbroken. During this intense period of conflict, a staggering 1,361 casualties were admitted to various hospitals. Triumphantly, only fourteen of those heroes succumbed to their injuries, marking a success that is not merely statistic but a testament to the meticulous care and commitment shown by the medical teams. This outstanding achievement resonates deeply—holding significance far beyond the military realm, it speaks to the very essence of human valor and resilience against unimaginable odds.

Amidst the chaos of gunfire and shrapnel, the regimental medical officers became symbols of bravery. Their battlefield was perilous, yet their resolve shone brightly as they delivered urgent medical aid under enemy fire. One particularly inspiring story is that of Captain Somnath Basu. A line of fire marked the horizon, but it was nothing compared to the fierce commitment he held within him. Though he sustained severe injuries himself, Captain Basu insisted he would remain at his post, embodying the spirit of selflessness. Every day, he donned the mantle of duty and performed over fifteen intricate surgeries in his field ambulance—a feat that would test the mettle of any medical professional, especially in such dire circumstances.

Captain Basu's relentless determination did not go unnoticed. His commitment to save lives, even at the risk of his own, earned him a prominent place in the annals of military history. Additionally, the incredible efforts of his colleagues did not falter; they too exemplified the ethos of service and sacrifice. One of their own was honored with the prestigious Yudh Seva Medal, while two more received with pride the Sena Medals for Gallantry, recognizing their exceptional bravery in the face of adversity.

As the sun dipped below the jagged mountain peaks, and the skies transformed into a canvas of stars, the sacrifices made by the Army Medical Corps illuminated the essence of humanity in warfare. Through their remarkable valor and surgical precision, they transformed the tide of what could have been a tale of despair into one of hope and triumph—reminding us all of the indomitable spirit that prevails even amidst the fiercest of battles.

the army ordnance corps

The Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) stood at the forefront of one of the most challenging phases during the Kargil conflict, shouldering the heavy mantle of responsibility for ensuring that the Indian Armed Forces were adequately equipped in the face of a rapidly escalating need for military supplies. As the situation at the frontlines intensified, the AOC found itself tasked with a monumental challenge: to meet

an unprecedented surge in demand for nearly every conceivable item of warfare, with the exceptions being rations and fuel.

The orchestration of this logistical feat required not just meticulous planning but also a considerable amount of coordination and commitment from every individual involved. The corps rose to the occasion, displaying extraordinary diligence and efficiency. A staggering requirement materialized for approximately 300 artillery guns, an array of mortars, menacing rocket launchers, an extensive stockpile of small arms ammunition, as well as a variety of supplementary equipment. The ability to fulfill these demands under such pressing circumstances is a testament to the dedicated personnel of the AOC and their relentless spirit.

In this extraordinary operation, the AOC implemented an ambitious logistics plan which included the mobilization of nearly a hundred special trains. Each train carried critical ammunition, vital weaponry, and other necessary supplies that were swiftly moved from strategic depots scattered across the country. These depots, brimming with military supplies, became lifelines for the soldiers stationed at the front.

The journey of these supplies was seamless, as the special trains transported cargo to the railhead at Jammu with remarkable speed and efficiency. Once the trains reached Jammu, the logistics machinery shifted into high gear. From there, the mission continued as the materials were swiftly transferred to an intricate network of vehicles that carried them to the treacherous terrains where soldiers valiantly engaged the enemy.

Throughout this operation, the AOC exemplified resourcefulness and resilience, ensuring that every item was securely delivered. Each round of ammunition and every piece of equipment transported bore the weight of the mission at hand; they were not mere supplies but lifelines for the brave men and women who relied on them to secure victory. The dedication of the Army Ordnance Corps transcended routine logistics; it was a resolute commitment to equip each soldier with the tools necessary to safeguard the nation's honor.

As the conflict wore on, the invaluable contributions of the AOC became increasingly apparent. The ordnance personnel, working tirelessly in the backdrop, became unsung heroes of the Kargil War, their relentless efforts playing a pivotal role in empowering the frontline troops. The triumphs at the frontlines could not have been realized without their unwavering dedication, efficiency, and commitment to service. Their story remains an indelible chapter in the annals of India's military history, one that highlights the crucial interplay of combat and logistical support in achieving victory in tumultuous times.

the electrical and mechanical engineers for kargil war

In the treacherous terrain of Kargil, where the fate of a nation hung in the balance, the unsung heroes of the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EME) emerged as the backbone of the military's operational readiness. Tasked with the critical responsibility of ensuring that all weapons and equipment remained in impeccable working order, these skilled engineers demonstrated not just technical expertise, but also immense bravery and resourcefulness.

Amidst the chaos and uncertainty of the Kargil War, the engineers faced an environment fraught with danger and adversity. Their mission was clear: to carry out essential repairs and recovery of armaments, often in the most challenging conditions, where enemy artillery fire rained down around them. The Kargil ridges, characterized by their rugged cliffs and perilous altitudes, became a setting for their relentless efforts to keep the machinery of warfare operational.

Imagine the scene: bombarded by the sounds of distant artillery and the whistling of shells, engineers worked tirelessly, often under cover of night, to execute repairs right on the frontline. Most of the repairs were conducted in situ, a testament to their skill and determination to keep the army's fighting spirit alive. Logistics were a battlefield of their own; supplies and spare parts were crucial for ensuring that equipment remained functional. Ingeniously, helicopters that were originally designated for casualty evacuation were repurposed as lifelines, ferrying essential spares to the front lines where they were desperately needed.

The commitment of the EME personnel was remarkable. Throughout the course of the conflict,

they successfully recovered over 650 military vehicles, replaced 200 engine assemblies, and executed a staggering 5,000 miscellaneous repairs—all while under the constant threat of enemy fire. Their ability to keep helicopters in the sky, continuously serviced and operational, became a critical strategic advantage during the war, allowing for troop movements and supply deliveries that were paramount for sustaining the offensive.

Captain M. V. Sooraj, a distinguished officer of the EME, served alongside the valiant 18 Garhwal Rifles, embodying the spirit of courage that defined this era. His extraordinary efforts were recognized with the prestigious Vir Chakra, a testament to his heroism and dedication under fire. Alongside him, two other officers, equally committed and brave, were honored with the Sena Medal (Gallantry) for their commendable contributions while serving with infantry battalions.

The narrative of the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers during the Kargil War is one of silent valor, unwavering commitment, and exemplary professionalism. It highlights the often-overlooked roles that maintain the armory of a nation's defense. Their story serves as a reminder that behind every victory, there lies a multitude of hands working tirelessly in the shadows, ensuring that the machines of war remain strong, functional, and ready to serve at a moment's notice.

profiles of collective courage

In the aftermath of the fierce battle for Tololing, a strategic high point that was crucial for controlling the region, discussions among commanders began to take shape regarding the recognition of the valiant efforts demonstrated by the troops during the ongoing conflict. Historically, the Indian Army had adhered to a tradition of honoring individual acts of bravery and valor through various awards. However, the harsh realities of war paint a different picture. In the heat of battle, such individual awards had, more often than not, led to feelings of jealousy and discrimination within the ranks, creating an environment that could mar the spirit of camaraderie essential in combat.

Recognizing this potential for discord, the leadership made a pivotal decision aimed at fostering unity and reinforcing the collective strength of the forces engaged on the front lines. Rather than focusing on individual accolades, which could sow discontent, they opted to celebrate the collective actions of entire units which had shown extraordinary bravery and commitment during the Kargil War. This groundbreaking decision culminated in the establishment of an award that would resonate in the annals of the Indian Army's history for years to come: the 'Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Unit Citation'.

The 'COAS Unit Citation' was not merely a token of appreciation; it was a symbol of the extraordinary resilience, teamwork, and sacrifice exhibited by the various units during one of the most challenging military operations in contemporary history. Acknowledging that success in battle relies heavily on the endurance and cooperation of collective efforts, this award would serve to honor and immortalize the dedication of those who fought not just as heroes, but as cohesive units bound by a shared purpose.

During this significant campaign, several units distinguished themselves through their exemplary service, unwavering commitment, and strategic effectiveness. Each of them played a vital role in the uphill battle to reclaim the heights in the rugged terrains of Kargil, often executing their missions in the face of overwhelming odds. The following brave units were bestowed with the prestigious 'COAS Unit Citation' for their remarkable contributions:

- The 8 Sikh regiment, known for their tenacity and fierce resolve.
- The 13 JAK Rifles, who executed their operations with precision and courage.
- The 1 Bihar regiment, exhibiting exceptional teamwork and sacrifice.
- The gallant 17 Jat, whose spirit never wavered despite the challenges faced.
- The reputed Ladakh Scouts, masters of the terrain, offering invaluable support.
- The 18 Garhwal Rifles, who charged fearlessly into confrontations.
- The 1/11 Gorkha Rifles, with their formidable fighting spirit and legacy.
- The 2 Naga regiment, known for their daring operations and bravery.
- The 18 Grenadiers, whose gallantry became the stuff of legends.
- The 12 JAK Light Infantry, exemplifying courage under fire.
- The 663 Recce and Observation Squadron, pivotal in reconnaissance and planning.
- The 141 Field Regiment, offering essential artillery support.
- The 2 Rajputana Rifles, maintaining their storied tradition of valor.
- The 666 Recce and Observation Squadron, providing critical intelligence.
- The 108 Medium Regiment, whose firepower proved decisive in numerous confrontations.
- The 197 Field

Regiment, known for their strategic impact on the battlefield.

By choosing to highlight the collective actions that demonstrated courage and determination, the Indian Army instilled a sense of pride and unity among its ranks. It illustrated that true heroism is often found in a soldier's commitment to their comrades, rather than merely in solitary acts of bravery. This approach not only recognized the courage of individuals but celebrated the spirit of teamwork that is fundamental to military success. The 'COAS Unit Citation' thus became a lasting legacy of the Kargil War, ensuring that the sacrifices made and the bonds forged in the crucible of battle would be remembered and honored for generations to come.

Chapter 10

The Army Family Support System

system82

In the vast and intricate landscape of India, the welfare of its soldiers is upheld by a distinctive and remarkable organization unlike any found worldwide—the Army Wives' Welfare Association (AWWA). This non-official yet essential body functions as the heart and soul of military family support, bridging the gap between service members and their loved ones. It is a unique establishment, primarily led by the wives of Army personnel, operating alongside the hierarchy of the Indian Army to tend to the welfare needs of soldiers and their families.

The AWWA reflects the spirit of solidarity and compassion of Army families, forming a comprehensive web that encompasses the families of all Army personnel. This includes not just the living soldiers but also those of the deceased, injured, and ailing, ensuring that every section of the military community is cared for. During pivotal times such as the Kargil War, the AWWA emerged as a crucial player in bolstering the morale of soldiers and providing comfort to families left at home.

The Human Resilience Behind the Uniform

In India, the title "Army wife" carries a significant weight of respect, garnished with admiration for their unwavering courage and resilience in the face of trials and tribulations. The life of an Army wife is an intricate tapestry woven with challenges; long separations, battles with anxiety, and the solemn acceptance of a soldier's precarious profession are commonplace. Over time, these women become the rock behind their husbands, learning to navigate the complexities of military life while holding their families together. Their strength and resolve provide the emotional backbone that enables soldiers to face daunting adversities, ultimately contributing to acts of extraordinary bravery and strength on the battlefield.

The AWWA embodies the essence of this human spirit, operating with the guiding principle of "Caring and Sharing." Its members dedicate themselves to the betterment of not just their families but the entire Army community. This humanitarian organization engages in a multitude of activities designed to uplift others, driven by a deep-seated sense of empathy cultivated through shared experiences.

At the helm of AWWA is the President, typically the spouse of the Chief of Army Staff, who lays down guidelines and establishes priorities. Below her, a hierarchical structure thrives that extends down to regional AWWA branches at various command levels, and ultimately connects with the grassroots through family welfare centers in regiments or units. Every unit commander's wife works diligently to maintain an active connection with the soldiers' families, ensuring their needs are met and voices heard.

Commitment Amid Crisis

The various committees within the AWWA address specific segments of the military family, such as supporting widows and children of fallen soldiers, providing assistance to wounded and disabled personnel, and running educational initiatives for the specially challenged. These efforts are not a reaction to crises

but stem from a longstanding commitment to serve, honed over decades of military engagement, including counterinsurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

When the Kargil conflict erupted unexpectedly, the AWWA adjusted its efforts in response to the spiking demands for support. They did not start from scratch; rather, they relied on established protocols and a robust understanding of the families' needs to deliver urgent assistance effectively. During this tumultuous period, solidarity messages from across the nation and beyond poured in, further galvanizing the AWWA's resolve to offer help wherever required.

The Role of Compassionate Outreach

In this critical time, the AWWA directed its focus toward several vital areas: providing support for the bereaved families, tending to the seriously injured, assisting families who remained in home cantonments while their loved ones were stationed in conflict zones, and organizing collection centers for essential supplies headed to soldiers and hospitals in the war zones.

Letters of encouragement were sent from the President of the AWWA to various commanding officers asking them to reach out to the families of fallen comrades, underscoring the importance of compassion and connection in the face of loss. As the bodies of the fallen soldiers returned to Palam Airport, draped in the national flag, the visual impact was powerful. AWWA volunteers were there, offering comfort and a shoulder to cry on to young widows and grieving families, ensuring they understood that their loved ones' sacrifices were recognized and honored.

Long-term Care and Support

The reality of war is stark, leaving lasting scars on families. While public sympathy may ebb once the fighting stops, the AWWA remains steadfast in its mission to support those who had lost so much. They focus on individual family contexts, guiding them towards sound financial decisions concerning any compensation they receive. Tragically, victims of the chaos sometimes unwittingly squander funds meant for their futures on temporary memorials or community feasts, as young widows seek to navigate their new realities in the absence of their husbands.

To combat societal stigmas and pressures, AWWA has worked to provide job opportunities for young widows, often aligning them with promising training programs. Initiatives aim to ensure that women receive professional development opportunities that allow them to regain their independence, reassuring them that they need not solely rely on the legacies of their deceased husbands.

With governmental support, significant compensation packages for the families of the fallen and injured soldiers have been instituted. As the Kargil War unfolded on screens across the country, public awareness surged, leading to donations and contributions from every corner to assist the affected families.

The Voices of Gratitude from the Battlefield

As the AWWA took initiative to support not just the families but also the soldiers fighting valiantly in Kargil, letters of gratitude flowed back from the fronts. Each soldier, facing intense challenges, expressed profound appreciation for the support from home—the packets of sweets, the letters of encouragement, and the emotional connection they fostered. These small gestures, often taken for granted, became vital lifelines for soldiers isolated in hostile terrain.

The sentiments shared reflected not just gratitude for tangible goods but an overwhelming sense of love and support from their families and the AWWA. When soldiers recalled moments of despair turned to joy upon receiving letters or care packages, it highlighted the powerful impact of community on individual morale.

Unity Beyond the Battlefield

Through events and public outreach, the AWWA continued to strengthen the bond between society and soldiers. Donations flooded in, showcasing a remarkable level of support from civilians, which reinforced the idea that the fight for the nation was a collective struggle, strengthened by the sacrifices made at home.

In her engagements with media outlets, the AWWA president articulated the essence of their work: "It takes so little to make people happy—just a touch, a word of kindness, just a moment to help those who are suffering." With such a philosophy guiding their efforts, the AWWA has become a cornerstone of support for the army, in peacetime and in conflict.

As the organization continues its mission, it's a testament to the resilience and dedication of the human spirit, driven by compassion and a shared purpose. The AWWA is not only an association; it's a movement rooted in the belief that every soldier is backed by a network of love, care, and unwavering support, ensuring that no one faces the trials of war alone.

Chapter 11

Partners In Victory

The partners in kargil war

In the crucible of the Kargil conflict, three service chiefs found themselves at the heart of a collaborative effort to bolster Indian defense strategies. With an unprecedented invitation to the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), a transformational shift unfolded in decision-making processes. This new approach allowed the political hierarchy to gain invaluable first-hand insights from the Armed Forces while simultaneously empowering the chiefs to secure clear-cut directives from the Prime Minister himself.

This synergy could not have been more pronounced when contrasted with the Pakistan Army's operational tactics during the conflict; the Pakistani military's planning phases notably excluded consultations with the Air Force and Navy, overshadowing their command structure. In striking contrast, India's Operation Vijay was orchestrated through a framework of cooperation that demonstrated unity of purpose across the three branches of the military.

Following my return from abroad, I immersed myself in the evolving operational landscape, where the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) played a pivotal role in coordinating our responses. Regular briefings were held at the Military Operations Room of the Army Headquarters, attended by representatives from all three services. This not only enhanced internal communication but also fortified our collective resolve to fortify our national security.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) embraced a distinctive yet crucial role in the Kargil conflict, termed Operation Safed Sagar. As intelligence emerged detailing the scale of the Pakistani intrusion, the need for air power became evident. The IAF was tasked with multiple objectives: supporting ground operations, conducting reconnaissance, interdicting enemy supply routes, and establishing tactical superiority. The successful execution of these missions ensured the foundation of secure airspace for both Army and Air Force helicopter operations.

Before 25 May 1999, the Western Air Command had been ordered to adopt precautionary measures. The Air Force's active participation began following political clearance on 24 May, with the vital stipulation that the Line of Control (LoC) must not be crossed. Upon entering the fray, our determination to eject the intruders was unmistakably communicated to Pakistan and resonated internationally, shifting perceptions from a mere border skirmish to a significant conflict.

During the initial days leading up to 25 May, the IAF's helicopter units provided airlift support for troops in Ladakh, deploying various aircraft and helicopters across Jammu and Kashmir. However, requests from the Army for Mi-35 attack helicopters were hampered by elevation challenges, and the Mi-17 armed helicopters were denied for lack of political clearance. One of the early missions on 21 May involved a Canberra photoreconnaissance flight, which weathered an attack but successfully returned.

In the face of challenging terrain and operational limitations, the IAF initiated airstrikes against entrenched enemy positions while simultaneously targeting supply lines to debilitate the enemy's logistical

capabilities. The mountain landscape complicated visual identification, and the absence of forward air controllers restricted our engagement with defined targets. This resulted in tragic losses, including two MiG fighter aircraft on 27 May—one lost due to engine failure and the other to enemy-operated surface-to-air missiles.

The precarious situation worsened on 28 May when an Mi-17 armed helicopter was shot down while returning from a successful mission at Tololing. Subsequently, the IAF adapted its tactics, opting to engage the enemy from a safer standoff distance to protect its aircraft from incoming threats.

Operational methods evolved with a focus on precision bombing, utilizing heavy bombs while adjusting for extreme altitude conditions. As missions progressed, the integration of a global positioning system revolutionized target acquisition, with the Mirage 2000 ultimately proving to be the most effective aircraft due to its sophisticated navigational systems. Following intense scrutiny of operations, it became vital to visit ground formations within the Kashmir Valley and Kargil, which positively reinforced troop morale.

The integration of nearly fifty Air Force and Army radars enhanced intelligence and tracking capabilities across the western front, culminating in substantial air operations. The IAF conducted an impressive array of sorties: 1050 strike and escort, 483 air defense, 152 reconnaissance, alongside over 2000 helicopter sorties for evacuating casualties and logistical support. Despite the team's valiant efforts, limitations were palpable—the mountainous terrain, restricted flight paths, and adherence to the LoC's boundaries presented enormous challenges.

Throughout these operations, the IAF personnel demonstrated resilience and ingenuity, continually striving to innovate and improve, even in the face of adversity. However, the shortcomings of electronic intelligence and reconnaissance efforts were undeniable; insufficient technological support meant that many planned missions faced significant drawbacks, particularly during adverse weather conditions.

In a letter dated 7 July, Air Chief Marshal A.Y. Tipnis expressed profound admiration for the courage and dedication demonstrated by the Army, commending their exemplary bravery in Kargil. His words resonated across ranks, reinforcing the bond between army and air forces, emphasizing a shared commitment to the nation's defense efforts.

In a reciprocal message, General V.P. Malik acknowledged the camaraderie that had unfolded during the operation, attributing their successes to the joint efforts of the Air Force. He reiterated the need for continued cooperation, expressing gratitude for the unwavering commitment displayed by all branches in the campaign to reclaim sovereignty over the contested territories.

The Kargil war served as a cornerstone in the evolution of military operations, highlighting the critical nature of close air support, especially in the mountainous regions. It underscored an urgent need to enhance operational capacities, including tactical intelligence mechanisms and real-time coordination among all armed forces. This comprehensive overview of lessons learned would shape future military engagements, ensuring that the sacrifices of those who served during this conflict were honored through action and preparedness.

The Indian Navy, too, contributed significantly, designated its operations under the name 'Operation Talwar'. Though less visible than the other two services, the strategic implications of the Navy's involvement played a crucial role in the Kargil conflict. Heightened vigilance was established early on, based on past experiences that advised against underestimating potential threats from the sea.

On 21 May, the Western Naval Command deployed INS Taragiri for an imperative barrier patrol, and preparations commenced to enhance maritime security measures substantially. Close monitoring of Pakistani naval activities allowed for anticipatory responses to their maneuvers. As the Navy's assets were mobilized from across the country, the objective was clear: bolster regional security and ensure immediate deterrence capability.

Throughout these operations, it was imperative that the Navy and Army maintained effective communication and coordination. By providing support equipment to help locate enemy positions, the Navy's Information Warfare Dornier Squadron proved essential in conducting surveillance and gathering intelligence along the western front.

Indeed, the Kargil conflict was a resounding testament to the valor, resolve, and dedication of India's armed forces—an enduring reminder of the sacrifices made in the pursuit of peace and security for the nation. The camaraderie among the Army, Air Force, and Navy fortified not only their shared mission during the conflict but also laid the foundation for future collaborative endeavors, redefining the very concept of unified military action.

Chapter 12

The Pakistani Withdrawal

Pakistan soldiers going back

Who Was Putting Pressure on Whom?

In the escalating conflict during the summer of 1999, our military operations were steadily gaining momentum. Each day, our forces successfully recaptured strategically significant positions that had once been occupied by the enemy. Amid this progress, important updates emerged from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meetings, revealing that the United States Administration was establishing strong communications with both the governments of Pakistan and India. This diplomatic engagement reached its peak with several conversations between U.S. President Bill Clinton and the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan — Atal Behari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, particularly gaining traction after mid-June 1999.

On the 24th and 25th of June, General Anthony Zinni, the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Central Command and a person well-acquainted with Pervez Musharraf, arrived in Islamabad under direct orders from the White House. During his meetings with Pakistani political and military figures, he delivered a stark warning: “If you don’t pull back, you’re going to bring war and nuclear annihilation down on your country. That’s going to be very bad news for everybody.” Zinni later recounted in his book that while no one disputed this logic, the challenge for the Pakistani leadership lay in their fear of national humiliation. A retreat to the Line of Control would be perceived as political suicide for them, necessitating an exit strategy that would allow them to save face. To facilitate this, Zinni mentioned that the U.S. could offer a meeting with President Clinton, which would end Pakistan’s long-standing diplomatic isolation, but only if forces withdrew first — an ultimatum that caught Musharraf’s attention and persuaded him to encourage Sharif to engage.

After witnessing the ineffectiveness of Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz’s visit to India, Pakistan’s authorities found themselves in search of a dignified resolution to the conflict. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed a sincere desire to halt the war and, significantly, revealed that Musharraf had suggested he meet with Clinton to seek a way forward.

As the days progressed, Sharif’s desperation grew. By July 2, he initiated direct requests for a meeting with President Clinton to seek American intervention to halt the fighting and address the Kashmir issue. On the following day, his determination intensified, with Sharif even offering to travel immediately to Washington. Clinton responded firmly, indicating that any meeting necessitated Sharif’s agreement to withdraw troops from the Line of Control and stated clearly that he wouldn’t involve the U.S. in Kashmir under circumstances that could reward Pakistan’s aggressive actions.

During these critical negotiations leading up to Sharif’s anticipated visit to Washington on July 4, military developments were proving increasingly favorable for us. Just twenty hours before Sharif’s meeting with Clinton, our forces recaptured Tiger Hill, effectively turning the tide of the battle in our favor.

The crucial dialogue between President Clinton and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took place at Blair House in Washington, and their discussions produced a joint statement. Key elements of that agreement included a shared acknowledgment of the dangerous nature of the ongoing fighting, a reaffirmation of respect for the Line of Control in accordance with the Shimla Agreement, and a commitment to take substantive steps to restore the ceasefire.

Bruce Riedel, a key aide to President Clinton, shed light on essential aspects of the meeting. He underscored the insistence that Pakistani troops withdraw from the LoC and raised concerns regarding Pakistan's military's preparation for potential nuclear engagement. Sharif's pleas for direct U.S. intervention in the Jammu and Kashmir dispute signaled Pakistan's precarious position.

In the subsequent days leading up to the meetings, intelligence reports reached U.S. officials indicating that Pakistan was preparing its nuclear arsenal, presenting an increasing risk of potential escalation into a nuclear confrontation. Such alarming findings contributed to the mounting pressure on Pakistan to deescalate its military activities.

As the discussions unfolded, both sides navigated tricky waters. President Clinton insisted on the immediate restoration of the LoC, accompanied by the withdrawal of Pakistani forces. Sharif found himself cornered—when he attempted to sidestep the withdrawal issue, Clinton confronted him with the assertion that preparations for nuclear readiness were underway and that a nuclear conflict might be imminent. Sharif was quick to deny any orders had been given for missile readiness, ultimately agreeing to sign the joint statement.

In parallel to these talks, President Clinton posed another serious challenge to Nawaz Sharif. He warned that if Pakistan failed to increase cooperation in the fight against terrorism, particularly in capturing Al Qaeda leaders, it would become clear to the world that Pakistan was supporting terrorism in Afghanistan. In a surprising twist, Sharif agreed to the U.S. proposal for Pakistan to train commandos to hunt down Osama bin Laden—an indication of the shifting dynamics at play.

In the meantime, the rhetoric from Pakistani leadership regarding nuclear threats had reached menacing proportions. Official statements projected an alarming eagerness to utilize nuclear weapons. In India, however, these threats were generally met with skepticism. National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra publicly dismissed the notion while indicating that the Indian military would always remain vigilant. Yet, in light of intelligence reports about military preparations in Pakistan, we took careful measures to distribute and relocate missile assets — a prudent precaution amidst escalating tensions.

As events proceeded rapidly, July 6 bore witness to a scheduled communication between the Directors General Military Operations (DGMO) of both nations. Our DGMO conveyed that we had obtained significant documents and correspondence from the Pakistani Army that exposed their duplicity. The conversation ended abruptly, with the Pakistani DGMO visibly rattled and unable to respond.

On July 8, I received a call from Prime Minister Vajpayee at his residence. He relayed the news of Pakistan's agreement to withdraw its forces to the LoC, and I immediately questioned the wisdom of such a concession. Given our recent successes, I argued that permitting a withdrawal would allow the enemy escape without cost. We suffered substantial casualties; why should we provide them an exit? I insisted that a discussion with the Chiefs of Staff Committee was necessary for thorough consideration.

Not long after, another discussion at the Prime Minister's residence centered on how much more time our forces would need to secure complete control over the areas infiltrated by Pakistani troops. I estimated it would likely take two to three weeks, keeping a week as a reserved buffer. The Prime Minister expressed concern over recent heavy casualties and the potential for further losses as we continued. He emphasized the looming deadline for parliamentary elections, adding pressure to conclude military operations smoothly.

That evening, I reconvened with military leaders to explore our position thoroughly. Our discussions highlighted the potential implications of accepting the withdrawal and raised questions about the Pakistani military's sincerity. Despite the received commitments from Islamabad, could we ever fully trust their intentions? This mistrust led us to agree to a phased withdrawal — one that would ensure we retained the power to counter any potential malfeasance from the Pakistani military.

The following day, on July 9, the Pakistani DGMO initiated an unscheduled call to facilitate dialogue surrounding the withdrawal. The conversation marked a significant shift, indicating both nations aimed to decrease tensions. The DGMO claimed to have convinced the Mujahideen to cooperate with the withdrawal, a statement that drew skepticism; how could they suddenly exert control over forces that had long operated independently within Kashmir?

We began refining details for the Pakistani withdrawal from sectors, and while their proposal for a general ceasefire was rejected, we agreed upon a limited ceasefire specific to the Kaksar sector while outlining clear expectations for withdrawal timelines.

On July 10, it became evident during the CCS meeting that Pakistan was inclined to formalize a one-on-one meeting of the DGMO to delineate further withdrawal details. However, I strongly insisted we host this dialogue on our soil, avoiding any perceptions of concession to Pakistan.

That evening, the DGMO received a structured withdrawal timeline that mandated Pakistani forces retreat well beyond the LoC. Key operational decisions were communicated, allowing for the cessation of hostilities to ensure a smooth disengagement. A critical part of this procedure was a mutual acknowledgment that no new posts would be established within a thousand meters of the LoC until the completion of the withdrawal.

Despite some success in the early stages of withdrawal, unforeseen complications arose. Reports indicated that Pakistani forces had sabotaged their withdrawal by indiscriminately laying mines and traps, leading to further discord. Notably, some Pakistani pockets remained stubbornly occupied despite our insistence on compliance, fueling frustrations within our ranks.

Amidst this chaos, the announcement of upcoming elections by India's Chief Election Commissioner, M.S. Gill, further complicated matters by shifting focus from the military operations to electoral politics—a stark concern as fighting persisted in various sectors.

As the situation unfolded, we sought clarity on the Pakistani withdrawal but were met with continued disputes between both DGMO lines over the complete withdrawal. By July 21, I briefed the Prime Minister, emphasizing that Operation Vijay could only be deemed complete once the remaining three Pakistani strongholds were vacated from our side of the LoC.

Upon receiving approval to engage, we quickly enacted a plan to remove these last intruders, successfully clearing all remaining pockets by July 25. In a press conference soon after, I announced the end of Pakistani infiltration, confirming that our mission had been accomplished.

By July 27, the Prime Minister visited the Military Operations Room to commend our forces for their extraordinary achievements, culminating in a resounding affirmation of the resilience shown throughout the conflict.

Finally, on July 30, I publicly acknowledged the commendable efforts displayed during Operation Vijay, recognizing the hard-fought victories marked by profound sacrifices from our soldiers. Their bravery and unwavering spirit would serve as testament to the ethos of the Indian Army — an enduring heritage of valor and commitment.

Though the Kargil conflict drew to a conclusion, challenges lingered in the backdrop of ongoing tensions in Jammu and Kashmir. As we prepared to confront future adversities, our goal remained solidly oriented toward enhancing operational prowess, fortifying national security, and upholding the pride that defined our armed forces. Striving for an indomitable spirit, we reaffirmed our dedication to national integrity, concluding with a resolute “Jai Hind!”

Chapter 13

Crying Nuclear Wolf

crying nuclear wolf

In February 1999, the Lahore Summit marked a significant moment in South Asian diplomacy. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif stood at a juncture where the specter of nuclear conflict loomed over their nations. Both leaders acknowledged the gravity that their respective nuclear arsenals carried, realizing it was incumbent upon them to avoid plunging into a conflict that could spiral out of control. They reaffirmed their commitment to the Shimla Agreement, a key diplomatic framework aiming to settle disputes peacefully, especially the contentious issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

During this summit, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by the foreign secretaries of both nations. This agreement laid the groundwork for enhanced dialogue on security concepts and mutual nuclear doctrines aimed at fostering trust and preventing militarized confrontation. It was a strategic step, recognizing that both nuclear and conventional confidence-building measures (CBMs) were essential for lasting peace. However, while the agreement sounded promising, the underlying realities painted a different picture.

Within Pakistan's complex political landscape, the military held disproportionate sway over security policy, particularly concerning nuclear assets. Even under civilian governance, the Army maintained tight control over Pakistan's nuclear framework and its operational command. As elaborated in preceding discussions, the Pakistani military viewed the initiation of Operation Badr, the code name for the Kargil offensive, as a strategic opportunity. The operation was expected to serve multiple purposes: reshaping the Line of Control (LoC), disrupting vital supply lines while enhancing the visibility of the Kashmir dispute on an international scale, and inciting renewed insurgency within Jammu and Kashmir—all without jeopardizing Pakistan's territorial security.

The military elite believed that Pakistan's nuclear posturing, established after the tests in May 1998, was a decisive factor that would preempt a full-scale war with India, allowing them to engage in limited warfare with a sense of impunity. The sentiment permeated the ranks of the Pakistani military. One officer confidently asserted that India would be deterred from expanding the conflict due to the dire repercussions that a nuclear engagement would entail. Encouraged by these assurances, the army leadership persuaded Nawaz Sharif to approve the operation, launching an incursion disguised as a Mujahideen struggle.

However, a formidable shift occurred on May 24, 1999. India's response escalated dramatically as it deployed air power and naval forces, demonstrating a unified military front aimed at reclaiming lost territory. This proactive strategy blindsided both the political and military establishments in Pakistan, who had not anticipated such a vigorous reaction.

On May 26, feeling the pressure, Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations reached out to express concerns over India's use of the Air Force, marking a notable pivot towards rhetoric of de-escalation. Subsequently, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif began to invoke the nuclear capability of Pakistan,

conveying a newfound confidence in asserting that the Pakistani people felt prepared to confront an armed conflict on equal footing.

As the confrontation escalated, the stakes intensified. On May 31, Pakistan's foreign secretary issued a foreboding warning, invoking the possibility of military retaliation using any means necessary to defend territorial integrity. This increasingly aggressive nuclear rhetoric began to alarm international observers. It was a precarious period where both sides were standing on the brink of potential disaster.

In the shadows of this escalating tension, the international community expressed deep concern. Prominent figures within the United States, including Karl Inderfurth, underscored the significant risk for miscalculation in such a volatile atmosphere. The growing tension brought fresh scrutiny from global powers, highlighting the urgency to prevent a nuclear disaster.

Amidst the Kargil conflict, the nature of Pakistan's military operations became a focal point of international criticism, demanding the withdrawal of Pakistani troops. The United States Congress even adopted a resolution targeting financial sanctions against Pakistan until its forces retreated across the LoC. Meanwhile, the G-8 and European Union echoed these calls, underscoring the global distaste for aggressive military maneuvers in nuclear-capable regions.

By the time a landmark meeting took place between Bill Clinton and Nawaz Sharif on July 4, Pakistan found itself in a precarious position. The realization dawned that a fourth Indo-Pak war could not only be catastrophic but nearly impossible to deem victorious given the nuclear capabilities of both nations. Sharif's concession, agreeing to withdraw Pakistani forces from the conflict, was portrayed as a diplomatic triumph amid mounting chaos.

However, within Pakistan, the narrative regarding the Kargil operations quickly morphed as the media initially hailed the Mujahideen's efforts as monumental victories. This jubilation soon dissipated as the reality of military failures uncovered the truths behind Pakistan's military involvement, leading to public disillusionment about the invulnerability projected by their nuclear arsenal.

This unraveling of narratives triggered intense debates about the efficacy of Pakistan's nuclear strategy and whether it effectively served as a deterrent. In the aftermath of the Kargil operations, there began a significant rift between Nawaz Sharif and the military, culminating in a military coup in October 1999—the echoes of which still linger within Pakistani political dynamics.

Under Musharraf's regime, the military maintained its stance on the Kargil operation, portraying it as a strategic success and blaming political leadership for capitulating under international pressure. Yet critics argued that if the operation was indeed successful, it raised uncomfortable questions about Pakistan's military doctrine and the role of the Mujahideen in its geopolitical strategies.

In a broader context, the Kargil conflict bore witness to the complexities surrounding nuclear diplomacy in South Asia. The persistent rhetoric surrounding nuclear capabilities often acted as a veil, obscuring more profound strategic considerations. Yet, both nations had cultivated an understanding of 'existential deterrence' since the early 1990s—where the mere existence of nuclear weapons provided a safeguard against aggression.

Throughout history, both India and Pakistan had consciously avoided causing widespread civilian harm, indicating a measured approach to military engagements. With both states demonstrating their nuclear capabilities overtly, the stakes became higher, and the possibility of miscalculation loomed larger than ever before.

When questioned about the likelihood of nuclear engagement, analysts often cited the presence of U.S. naval forces in the region as a stabilizing factor, suggesting that Western influence would prevent Pakistan from acting recklessly with its arsenal. Yet evidence suggested that the U.S. had historically struggled to curb Pakistan's more aggressive maneuvers.

The lesson that emerged from Kargil is clear: political leadership in a democratic framework tends to exercise restraint, while military command often embraces riskier strategies. The imperative for improved communication and integration between political and military leadership cannot be overstated, especially when navigating the perilous landscape of nuclear diplomacy. The Kargil War remains a

poignant reminder of the delicate balance that must be maintained in the interest of regional and global stability.

Chapter 14

We Shall Fight With Whatever We Have

India giving everything

The Drive for Modernization: A Tale of Struggle and Sacrifice

In the corridors of military power, every service chief is driven by the imperative to modernize the forces under their command. This pursuit of advancement and capability enhancement becomes especially poignant for leaders when they assume their roles. When my tenure as the Army Chief began in October 1997, the mantle of modernization weighed heavily upon my shoulders. It was not merely an agenda item; it was a matter that defined the operational readiness and future of our armed forces.

However, the journey toward modernization has been fraught with persistent challenges, many of which remain unaddressed even today. At the crux of this issue lies a triad of inadequacies: insufficient funding for capital purchases, an inability to develop and manufacture essential weapon systems and equipment in a timely manner, and notoriously convoluted procurement protocols that often entangle decision-making. In more recent times, we have been confronted by the specter of political malpractice and the daunting fear of becoming mired in scandals.

The economic landscape of the 1990s mirrored our struggles; a profound shortage of foreign exchange coupled with stringent budgetary constraints led to a stark decline in annual defense allocations. The figures tell a compelling tale: from 3.59 percent of GDP in 1987-88, defense funding dwindled to just 2.31 percent by 1996-97. The Eighth Defence Plan, envisioned to bolster our capabilities, became an unfulfilled dream trapped in bureaucratic limbo after not receiving approval from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). Consequently, the Army was compelled to adopt a 'bottom-line' strategy, which meant maintaining less than 70 to 80 percent of the authorized inventory of weapons, ammunition, and vital equipment, incurring a state of perpetual shortfall.

When I stepped into the role, the figures were stark: the defense budget for 1997-98 stood at Rs 16,384 crores; however, after accounting for essential maintenance, construction of necessary facilities, and existing contractual obligations, a meager Rs 230 crores, merely 1.4 percent, could be allocated for modernization initiatives. This chronic neglect over the years had dire consequences, exacerbating deficiencies and hindering our modernization processes.

At the Combined Commanders' Conference on October 20, 1997, I addressed the prime minister and his distinguished CCS colleagues on the pressing conditions of the Indian Army. My words resonated with solemnity: "While the spirit is unwavering, the body is weak." I highlighted the grave shortages of arms, ammunition, and equipment—especially as an increasing number of weapons, due to scarcity of spare parts, were rendered unusable.

The Army follows a cardinal principle: to ensure that our critical arsenal comprises three generations

of equipment, covering a span of twenty-five to thirty years. This strategic differentiation is crucial: Generation 1 includes equipment categorized as ‘obsolescent’ (20-30 years old); Generation 2 encompasses ‘mature’ equipment (10-20 years old); and Generation 3 represents ‘affordable state-of-the-art’ technologies (up to 10 years old). An optimal equilibrium across these generations demonstrates a balanced approach to modernization and operational efficacy.

Sadly, by 1998, much of our infantry equipment was still steeped in the 1960s and 1970s. The raising of the Rashtriya Rifles—parallel to the need for counterterrorism operations in Jammu and Kashmir—further strained our resources, as new battalions tapped into already dwindled stocks. For the Rashtriya Rifles battalions, weapon issuance dwindled to accessing armaments from Army reserves, leaving our combat units with outdated resources.

In effect, the Army’s state of preparedness was on exhibit as I briefly explained our constraints to various officials, including the finance, defense, and expenditure secretaries. I underscored that not only did we fail to receive adequate funding, but expediency within our procurement procedures made it virtually impossible to exhaust even the nominal allocations we did receive.

This futile struggle for fiscal allocation continued. By the time I addressed the prime minister again in October 1998, I expressed in earnest: “For years, the Army has sought a heightened budget to bolster its modernization. Instead, what we’ve consistently received is a mere inflation-adjusted increment.” Despite this bleak outlook, I found myself considering drastic measures, including a painful reduction of personnel, to rectify the severe deficiencies we encountered.

Throughout my tenure, I remained resolute in advocating for vital steps to overcome our limitations. This included urging for increased capital allocations, additional resources for the Rashtriya Rifles and Special Forces, and creating a “defense reserve fund” to mitigate the frantic pursuit for last-minute spending at the end of the financial year. However, as I pursued these avenues, I often faced the friction of personal relationships within the broader political structure.

The Kargil War erupted as a harsh reminder of our chronic deficiencies. As our troops prepared for battle, it was not just the age of our weaponry but the stark shortages of ammunition and spares that loomed larger than life. Deployments in high-altitude regions compounded our logistical challenges. On one crucial day in Srinagar, I took a thorough inventory of our essential stores, leading to immediate transfers of critical weaponry among the divisions waging war.

Despite the adversity, soldiers continued to express their unwavering resolve. During a visit with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to meet wounded soldiers, one Garhwali soldier, while grappling with pain, made a poignant request for lighter arms better suited for the treacherous terrain of the mountains.

The Kargil conflict also illuminated gaps in our surveillance capabilities. As we sought satellite imagery from allied nations, the answers we received were underwhelming, revealing a gap in our reconnaissance capabilities crucial for effective warfare. The absence of aerial reconnaissance from our side hampered effective responses, illustrating clear complications in command and control.

The Bofors artillery gun became our paradox—a focal point in our modernization discussions and yet the backbone of our artillery strength. Despite fielding 100 Bofors guns by late May 1999, we were confronted with a dire lack of spare parts due to protracted bans on procurement. I engaged in strenuous arguments with defense authorities to lift these restrictions, making headway after prolonged deliberation.

In the heat of the conflict, when asked how the Army might prevail against severe resource constraints, my candid reflection was, “We shall fight with whatever we have.” This honesty garnered mixed reactions, recognized as a rallying cry and critiqued as an unintended admission of systemic failings.

The aftermath of the Kargil War saw us moving forward with lists of prioritized procurement items in hand. Yet, this urgency exposed the vulnerabilities of our operational deficiencies and the bureaucratic labyrinth within which we navigated. While some immediate needs were met, systemic inefficiencies led to future shortages even as freshly allocated funds remained unutilized.

The unfortunate reality is that the narrative surrounding defense procurements has become enmeshed

in scandal, bureaucratic inertia, and political conflict. Concerns regarding defense preparedness now fuel political campaigns as the armed forces remain plagued by indecision in a climate of fear surrounding procurement narratives.

In one revealing exchange with a civil servant during the war, I was confronted with a stark oversight—he presumed that the existence of surplus rifles in a depot could resolve our broader deficiencies. The misconception epitomizes the disconnect between administrative understanding and operational reality.

Despite these challenges, our drive remained unwavering. We aspired to elevate our operational readiness and to confront potential adversaries with the strength they demanded. The lessons from this turmoil are significant—defense capabilities necessitate time, planning, and committed resources. From procurement to personnel training, each task contributes towards the intricate development of military capability and readiness.

Sir Winston Churchill famously remarked on the complexities of military life, framing it as a living organism that thrives on attention and investment, drying up when neglected. Much like Churchill's descriptions, our armed forces reflect a living entity—their vitality rests upon sustained commitment and support. The fight for modernization and operational preparedness continues as a defining narrative, with the fabric of national security woven from the resolve of every soldier and leader committed to the cause.

Chapter 15

Coming Of China

The China Factor

Chapter: The China Factor

In recent years, China has asserted its commitment to an ‘independent foreign policy’, claiming its relations with Pakistan would not compromise its ties with India. During the Kargil conflict of 1999, China publicly adopted a neutral stance, diplomatically voicing support for resolution without escalation. Yet, beneath the surface of these affirmations, the reality was starkly different. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) escalated its activities along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in both Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, indicating a more complex narrative.

The backdrop to this unsettling shift can be traced to key incidents that had unfolded over the years. The Sumdorong Chu (Wangdung) confrontation in Arunachal Pradesh’s Kameng district in 1986 marked a pivotal moment, but subsequent developments, particularly after India’s nuclear tests in May 1998, triggered an uptick in PLA patrols. While officially framed as efforts for ‘better border management’, this enhanced presence seemed to serve more as a strategic positioning than mere logistical necessity. Notably, incidents such as the construction of a road in the contested Trig Heights area and the troop deployments in Chantze, along with troop movements across Arunachal Pradesh, underlined China’s intentions to assert its claims over these disputed territories.

As the Kargil conflict unfolded, the timing of increased PLA activity was alarming. The militaristic maneuvers suggested a strategic endeavor to support Pakistan while attempting to capitalize on India’s engagement on its western borders. Detailed accounts of Chinese patrols during this critical juncture paint a picture of rising tensions:

- **Demchok:** On June 6, 1999, a contingent of approximately seventy PLA personnel conducted a patrol close to Old Demchok in eastern Ladakh, coinciding ominously with India’s initiation of operations in Kargil.

- **Trig Heights:** This area, marred by differing perceptions about the LAC, saw the Chinese begin constructing a natural surface track in late June 1999, a provocative act contradicting previously laid agreements to settle variations through negotiation.

- **Pangong Tso:** In an escalated military show, construction of a track from Spanggur to the southern banks of the lake was attempted, with 150-200 personnel engaged daily, emphasizing the machinery of military operations.

- **Chantze:** The first week of July 1999 witnessed another confrontation as the PLA established temporary posts, leading to a military standoff while asserting their presence in the region.

The intelligence landscape further painted a troubling picture when it was reported that senior PLA officials visited Islamabad for discussions on military support. The significance of General Pervez Musharraf

and Nawaz Sharif's visits to Beijing amidst the Kargil War fueled speculation regarding the 'all-weather' partnership between Pakistan and China, a relationship well-rooted in mutual strategic interests.

As India navigated these tumultuous waters, it had to adapt defensively. Despite constraints such as limited road transport in West Kameng, heightened vigilance ensured readiness against possible incursions. The logistic vulnerabilities in the Trig Heights area were troubling, yet armed forces took proactive measures to monitor and counter any PLA activities, aware that escalation could have dire consequences.

China's Strategic Ambitions

India and China share a lengthy border stretching approximately 4,050 kilometers, a frontier now complicated by China's ascent as a global power. Understanding the ramifications of China's strategic maneuvers for India requires careful consideration of various factors: the unresolved boundary dispute, assertive Chinese policy aimed at regional dominance, and the transactional military relationships China maintains with India's neighboring countries, including Pakistan, which has deepened its reliance on Chinese military support.

Since the shifts in diplomatic relations post the 1962 Sino-India War, Pakistan had strategically ceded territory to China, securing a foundation for enduring collaboration that has enabled a steady flow of military assistance to Pakistan across decades. In this partnership, viewed by the Pakistani military as more stable than its ties with the United States, China is often likened to the 'lips and teeth'—essential and supportive.

China's Military Landscape

Over the last half-century, the evolution of China's military doctrine reflects broader shifts in geopolitical strategy—from Mao Zedong's 'people's war' to Deng Xiaoping's adaptation of modern conditions, and on to Jiang Zemin's focus on localized conflicts with high-tech capabilities. Now, China's strategy revolves around net-centric warfare that incorporates advanced systems into its operations. The defense budget had seen a significant investment, reaching approximately \$25 billion in 2004, as China modernized its armed forces.

With an eye on regional stability, it remains clear that China is focused on diplomatic avenues, preferring to avoid large-scale military confrontations. Yet, concurrently, it builds ties with neighbor states and enhances its military capabilities, notably in the Asia-Pacific region, as it remains acutely aware of potential new threats, including terrorism targeted at its interests.

China's naval modernization makes it a formidable force, though current limitations prevent it from projecting power into the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, enhanced capabilities within the PLA Air Force and strategic forces pose more immediate concerns. Developments such as high-speed rail lines and improved logistics capabilities in Tibet underscore China's ability to mobilize and sustain rapid military engagement in the region.

A Policy of Caution and Cooperation

As India contemplates its socio-economic and strategic goals, fostering a peaceful environment is essential for progress. Noteworthy improvements in Sino-Indian economic relations and elevated dialogues reflect a mutual recognition of the need for cooperation. However, India cannot lose sight of the strategic dynamics influenced by Sino-Pakistan relations.

Balanced relationships lead to developmental benefits for both nations; thus, India has taken a cautious approach to monitoring and tending to its borders while holding to bilateral agreements. As it stands, strategic policy toward China must navigate the fine line of collaboration while ensuring national security.

In this complex theater, regions near China—including Kargil, the Siachen Glacier, and areas near the Karakoram Pass—remain essential to India's defensive strategy. An integrated defensive posture supported by robust logistics is non-negotiable for maintaining stability. The lessons learned from Kargil have paved the way for proactive military restructuring, exemplified by the establishment of Headquarters 14 Corps immediately following the conflict.

In conclusion, India's strategic posture in Ladakh and its broader policy frameworks must account for ongoing disputes along the Line of Control and the unresolved boundary questions with China. This dual approach of cooperation coupled with diligent vigilance encapsulates the essence of India's challenge in a region defined by old rivalries and emerging alliances, forging a path toward an uncertain yet hopeful future.

Chapter 16

Leave Us Alone We Are Apolitical

Leave us alone

In the intricate tapestry of developing nations, India stands out as a beacon of democratic values, where the military remains decisively uninvolved in the political sphere. The Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force are steeped in a tradition of political neutrality, a legacy that has been meticulously upheld through years of service. Unlike many of its neighbors, India's armed forces pledge their allegiance solely to the Constitution, ensuring loyalty to the elected government. This commitment has fostered a distinctive democratic political atmosphere, allowing the nation to thrive.

The apolitical nature of the Indian military is not merely a matter of tradition; it is deeply rooted in the broader socio-political context of the country. Factors such as effective political leadership, the essence of an egalitarian society, and well-established democratic institutions have contributed immensely to this phenomenon. Unlike various sectors within India that have gradually succumbed to political influence, the armed forces have remained one of the last citadels of impartiality. It is imperative that this state of affairs is preserved for the future, as the erosion of these democratic values poses a threat to the essence of the armed forces. The need for vigilance becomes particularly crucial as the absence of political consensus on defense matters could inadvertently lead to the politicization of the military.

The Kargil War, which unfolded amid a politically fragmented landscape dominated by coalition politics, serves as a poignant example of this delicate interaction between the military and the political establishment. At the onset of the conflict, the political environment was clouded with uncertainty regarding the nature of the Pakistani infiltration. As the intensity of the war escalated, political entities exploited the situation for electoral gain, pulling the armed forces into a contentious political crossfire that could potentially tarnish their unblemished image.

Navigating the political tumult became increasingly arduous for military leaders as they found themselves ensnared in debates that detracted from their core mandate. Initiatives undertaken by the government to clarify the situation often resulted in perceived political partisanship, a label that the armed forces fiercely resisted. For instance, when a briefing was hastily arranged for members of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the exclusion of opposition parties led to widespread outrage, underscoring how quickly perceptions could spiral out of control.

As tensions escalated, so did the stakes. The removal of Brigadier Surinder Singh, commander of the 121st Infantry Brigade, due to concerns regarding his command effectiveness, ignited considerable political interest. Opposition parties rallied behind Singh, expanding the debate into a public spectacle that risked politicizing military operations during a time of intense national crisis. Despite it being a decision stemming solely from military leadership, the backlash illustrated how easily military actions could become politicized.

Such political maneuvers continued to disrupt the integrity of military operations as the elections drew nearer, with Kargil becoming a tool for electoral agendas. Politicians flocked to military hospitals under

the guise of support for wounded soldiers, but their motivations were often transparently self-serving, aimed more at garnering media attention than genuinely aiding the troops. Various parties attempted to distribute symbols of support, such as rakhis, to soldiers on the battlefield, overshadowing the sincerity of their intentions with their overt political symbolism.

As the complexities of the Kargil episode unfolded, concerns about the armed forces being unjustly embroiled in political machinations deepened. Even routine engagements were scrutinized, as efforts to re-establish connections between military and political leadership were frequently misconstrued as evidence of military politicization. The vital dialogue between civilian leaders and military chiefs, especially post-war, became a contentious point of discussion, seen by some as a dangerous mix of politics and military operations.

The aftermath of the Kargil War revealed a sobering truth: political rivalries can severely undermine national security and the cohesion of armed forces. With defense procurement delayed by political squabbles, operational capabilities suffered, further complicating the landscape for the Indian military. Repeated calls to keep the military distanced from political affairs underscored a vital truth: when soldiers are preoccupied with political undercurrents, their primary focus—serving and protecting the nation—can become compromised.

Engagement with retired military officials and leaders like Dr. Manmohan Singh revealed a shared concern for this encroachment of politics into military affairs. However, despite raising alarms, discussions often fell by the wayside amid the cacophony of elections. The void left by this dilution of focus led to critical questions about how well political leaders understood the essential components of national defense, highlighting a concerning gap in awareness between political decision-makers and the realities faced by the armed forces.

To address these pressing issues, a multidimensional approach is required. Initiatives such as capsule awareness programs for Members of Parliament on national security can bridge the existing knowledge gap. Regular briefings and field trips for committee members to military installations would foster a deeper understanding of the operational challenges the armed forces face. Moreover, to solidify this relationship further, the inclusion of retired military officers in Parliament can provide actionable insights into defense matters at the highest levels.

Raising the profile of the armed forces in civil society is crucial, as the disconnect between military and civilian spheres grows. The uncertainty surrounding recruitment and dwindling public support must be remedied through enhanced engagement between educational institutions and military establishments, encouraging new generations to appreciate the importance of national defense.

Ultimately, accountability within both military and civilian structures is essential for good governance. Ensuring a clear delineation between political agendas and the responsibilities of the armed forces will safeguard the integrity of the military. By promoting awareness and understanding among political leaders, instituting measures to prevent unwarranted political interference, and keeping military functions insulated from political ambitions, India can preserve the apolitical nature of its armed forces—a crucial component of its democratic ethos.

In conclusion, while soldiers fight valiantly for the nation, it remains fundamentally crucial that they are shielded from the turbulence of political crossfire. For the spirit of service, dedication, and professionalism that defines the Indian armed forces to thrive, the relationship between the military and the political establishment must be cultivated with care, respect, and above all, a staunch commitment to the principles of democracy that bind us as a nation.

Chapter 17

The Information Battle

Controlling the information

Kargil: India's Maiden 'Television War'

The Kargil War marked a significant turning point in modern warfare, entering homes across the nation not just as a battleground but as a powerful symbol of resilience and patriotism. But how did this remarkable feat come to fruition? What lessons can we glean for future conflicts? This exploration aims to delve into the intricacies of the information battleground, the strategies employed, and the evolving dynamics between military and media.

To appreciate the profound impact of the Kargil War, we must first comprehend the historical synergy between warfare and its representation, a relationship as old as warfare itself. Ancient epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata are replete with chronicles of battle, showcasing how narratives shape perceptions. In contemporary contexts, advancements in technology have transformed the landscape of war coverage, rendering it an arena shaped not just by events on the ground but by the narrative and discourse nurtured through media channels.

Information warfare, as a concept, is far from new. Thinkers like Kautilya and Sun Tzu emphasized its value in undermining adversarial morale before a shot is fired. With the onset of the Gulf War in 1991, this notion gained newfound urgency. The power of on-the-spot intelligence became pivotal, evolving into an all-encompassing component of modern military strategy. In today's world, characterized by a deluge of information, the challenge lies not only in acquiring information but in discerning the truth amidst the chaos. The experience of the Iraq War in 2003—with its fast-paced coverage through 750 embedded journalists—further exemplified the stakes involved, highlighting both the advantages and perils of real-time media reporting.

To understand the strategic essence of information warfare, we turn to Carl von Clausewitz, who identified a trinity encompassing the state, military, and civilian populace in the waging of war. Each element plays a crucial role in ensuring victory, with the government articulating objectives, the military executing strategies, and the civilian population offering vital support. The engagement of the general public becomes not merely advantageous but essential, as it infuses morale and unity into the war effort. Consequently, the media's role in disseminating information grows increasingly essential, cementing its status as the 'fourth front' of war.

Media significantly molds national and international opinion. It can act as a formidable force multiplier or, conversely, as a force degrader. In situations of proxy wars, the battle for public sentiment becomes critical; winning gun battles is futile if the broader narrative alienates the masses. The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff describe information warfare as any action that seeks information superiority. This covers strategies aimed at influencing the opponent's information network while preserving one's own. In this multifaceted arena, 'public affairs' emerges as a significant component, harnessing the media to cultivate public support through strategic communication.

Past conflicts provide illuminating case studies in the evolution of information warfare. The Vietnam War revealed a credibility gap, a stark contrast between journalists' accounts on the ground and military briefings. From this, the U.S. leadership gleaned vital lessons, leading to the tightly coordinated coverage during the Gulf War, where journalists were organized into 'pools' for security reviews before disseminating information.

The Kargil War, often dubbed India's first television war, underscores the necessity of rapid and transparent information flow. The military, along with media representatives, learned on the job, growing acquainted with new communication strategies and methodologies. The success in navigating the information landscape hinged on multiple factors, including media accessibility and daily briefings from military officials and the Ministry of External Affairs. This approach not only accurately depicted the realities of the conflict but also galvanized the nation behind its armed forces. Notable personalities during this period, like Raminder Jassal, Colonel Bikram Singh, and journalists from various media houses, became pivotal voices in the narrative, amplifying patriotic sentiment across the nation.

Initially, however, there were challenges. Journalists were initially restricted from accessing critical areas due to military operations, fostering a sense of urgency to correct this as public curiosity grew. Despite the military's efforts to control information flow, the grassroots involvement of local populations and the presence of journalists rendered complete blockage unfeasible. As the dynamics shifted, public relations officers—often lacking combat experience—struggled to respond effectively to the media, leading to bureaucratic delays that hampered the flow of accurate information.

To facilitate effective communication, the Army Liaison Cell was established and swiftly restructured, with ad hoc media centers set up in strategic locations. An interactive website was launched as part of a broad strategy to keep the public informed. Experienced personnel, such as Major General Arjun Ray and Colonel Bikram Singh, spearheaded the initiative, ensuring that national and international audiences received timely and truthful updates on the war.

Our directives were simple yet resolute: expose disinformation propagated by the enemy, clearly communicate our military capabilities, convey news without compromising security, and adhere firmly to the truth. As the conflict unfolded, we adeptly countered Pakistani claims of non-involvement through the dissemination of captured documents and live broadcasted evidence. The media played a vital role in bridging the gap between the armed forces and the public, ensuring full engagement and support for the troops.

However, the path was not without obstacles. Political complexities and inter-departmental rivalries occasionally threatened to undermine unity. The military's proactive stance in public relations at times clashed with traditional protocols adhered to by the Ministry of Defence, leading to miscommunications that resulted in damaging public briefings at critical junctures.

Media competition also added an unpredictable dimension. Some media personnel felt sidelined in favor of specific outlets, sparking internal contention that required deft navigation to maintain harmony. Nonetheless, over time, the military adapted, allowing broader media freedoms while balancing security concerns.

As we reflect on the Kargil experience, the importance of a well-structured information warfare approach becomes evident. The war took place during a politically charged environment, yet the media's portrayal often became entwined with prevailing political narratives, further complicating public perception. Some reports did veer into unverified territory, which fueled speculation and discontent, prompting official complaints to the Press Council of India to safeguard the integrity of information.

In hindsight, both the military and media found themselves in a period of introspection post-war. Journalists acknowledged that while there were areas for improvement, the collaborative coverage of the war largely achieved its intended message. Many foreign observers noted that the Indian narrative on Kargil was compelling and often provided critical insights into the conflict's realities.

Yet, as the media landscape transforms rapidly, it is clear that the lessons learned from Kargil must inform future approaches. While the earlier paradigms sought to control the narrative, today's realities necessitate flexibility and adaptability. Real-time reporting demands accuracy and dependability, and the Indian military, alongside its media partners, must continue to evolve these frameworks to adequately

prepare for future conflicts.

As we stand at this crossroads of technological advancement and media evolution, we must rethink the constructs of information warfare—embracing a model that resonates with our unique socio-political landscape while remaining vigilant against misinformation. Building a more professional communications infrastructure within the armed forces and fostering deeper collaborations with media will be paramount in ensuring that the voice of the people remains unified, informed, and engaged during times of conflict.

The intricate balance between the military and media is what will define not only future engagements but the very fabric of public support and national morale. Through solidarity, transparency, and an unwavering commitment to truth, the legacy of Kargil can guide us forward into a new era of warfare where information and understanding are the greatest weapons of all.

Chapter 18

The Kargil Impact

The kargil impact

In the ever-evolving landscape of military strategy and international relations, the past fifty years have witnessed a seismic shift in the nature of warfare. What was once predominantly conventional warfare has now devolved into various forms of limited and unconventional conflicts. The daunting specter of potential nuclear warfare has given way to a regime of restricted nuclear deterrence. As wars have increasingly become limited in scope and intensity, low-intensity conflicts are being waged with greater frequency. The strategic application of military power for coercive diplomacy has surged but rarely results in full-scale wars. More often than not, aggressors and victims alike have compromised to avert the outbreak of armed conflict, revealing a notable decrease in the likelihood of regular, high-intensity warfare.

With this context, it is essential to recognize that contemporary wars no longer conclude with unequivocal politico-military victories as they once did. Even the United States—recognizable as the world's sole superpower—and its multinational allies struggled to secure resolute victories in the Gulf War of 1990-91 and the subsequent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has become evident that the objectives behind modern wars are often political, rather than strictly militaristic.

In this spectrum, armies find that no war—limited or otherwise—can be effectively waged without a robust and secure politico-military foundation. A nation capable of clearly articulating achievable political objectives invariably possesses an inherent advantage in any conflict. This notion was starkly illustrated during the Kargil War, where the Pakistan Army wielded the initiative, catching India unexpectedly off guard.

Reflecting on the historical context, it is striking how India found itself responding to yet another incursion—mirroring a lamentable pattern from previous conflicts in 1947-48, 1962, and 1965. The political aims guiding India's response were not immutably etched in documents; rather, they were discussed among leadership during the hostilities, centered on two core goals: the immediate removal of the Kargil intrusion and the reinstatement of the Line of Control (LoC). A policy of 'restraint' shaped India's approach, underscored by a clear stipulation not to cross the LoC.

Four interrelated factors contributed to this cautious stance. First, the timing of the Kargil conflict, which erupted shortly after the Lahore talks between the two prime ministers, left India's political leadership in shock. The abrupt collapse of the diplomatic goodwill fostered by Tracks 1 and 2 dialogues was unexpected. Intelligence assessments yielded no solid indicators of imminent military threats—no heightened tensions at the border, no recalls of military personnel, and no large-scale troop movements were detected. Although warnings about the likelihood of jihadi infiltrations were issued, there was an utter lack of evidence suggesting that the Pakistan Army would launch a large-scale operation in the Kargil area. This uncertainty, compounded by the Pakistani Army's strategic use of deception by masquerading their personnel as Mujahideen, imbued the situation with a thick fog of war that obscured the reality until late May 1999.

Second, the dynamics of international opinion necessitated careful consideration. A favorable perception towards India on the global stage acts as a crucial force multiplier in times of conflict. With efforts to portray India as the victim of a Pakistani violation of the Shimla Agreement, the necessity to provide concrete evidence of the aggressions became paramount. The world needed assurance that the infiltrators were regular soldiers rather than mere militants. Following India's emergence from nuclear ambiguity, presenting a responsible and restrained image to the international community carried immense significance, which formed the basis for the Lahore Declaration.

The nuclear factor emerged as the third rationale for caution. Though limited war posed minimal threats of nuclear escalation, political and military strategizing needed meticulous control. As has frequently been observed in nuclear-capable nations, the political leadership often reinforces its grip over military assets during periods of high tension, distinguishing between democratically elected regimes and military-led governments.

The fourth reason pertains to the response from major powers during an escalation. Intervention by powerful states could aim at curbing nuclear confrontations, forcing an early end to hostilities that might leave parts of Kargil still under Pakistani occupation—a significant political and military setback for India. Furthermore, Pakistan would likely leverage the international discourse around Jammu and Kashmir in its favor.

Despite the challenges it posed, the 'restraint' strategy adopted during the Kargil conflict was, at least initially, politically justified. The Chiefs of Staff Committee recognized this, although with an understanding that such guidelines were open to review. During media briefings, the necessity for a flexible political approach was emphasized. In the chaos of wartime decision-making, adaptive methodologies were essential. Kargil exemplified a limited conventional war shrouded in the potential of nuclear escalation; while political directives inhibited crossings of the LoC, preparation for escalation was nonetheless underway, authorized at the highest levels.

As Indian forces successfully recaptured critical points like Tololing and Point 5140, confidence surged, leading to further offensive actions in accordance with the established political framework. However, some retired military figures and analysts contended that the Indian Army could have incurred fewer casualties had alternative fronts been opened, but such assertions lacked contextual substantiation. Faced with advanced weaponry and challenging terrains, actual combat resulted in significant casualties: 473 killed and over 1,060 wounded. The nature of warfare in Kargil was exacerbated by environmental challenges; approximately half of the casualties resulted from splinter and shell injuries rather than gunfire.

As the fog of war dissipated, revelations emerged that Pakistan had—against the context of the Lahore Declaration—planned military incursions, authorized at the highest echelons of both political and military leadership. During the Kargil conflict, General Pervez Musharraf openly asserted that 500 square kilometers of Indian territory had been captured, yet the Pakistani establishment strenuously insisted the infiltrators were Mujahideen rather than regular army troops.

However, the emergence of irrefutable evidence discredited Pakistan's narrative. India produced maps bearing Pakistani signatures from the post-1972 Shimla Agreement, which delineated the LoC, alongside intelligence that showcased captured Pakistani military gear and documentation affirming the military's involvement. The indisputable fact that the Northern Light Infantry and their comrades faced devastating losses solidified the perception of Pakistan's duplicity on the world stage, marking Kargil as a pivotal moment of defeat from both a military and diplomatic standpoint.

As stories of loss and condemnation surfaced in Pakistan—from military officials to journalists—the echoes of Kargil resonated loudly throughout the nation. The criticism was scathing; leaders expressed sentiments of disgrace and a deep-seated sense of betrayal. Prominent voices lamented how Kargil had brought humiliation after a historic struggle and highlighted the weaknesses in Pakistan's decision-making processes, fraught with impulsiveness and secrecy.

The diplomatic fallout was equally dire. Pakistan found itself isolated on the international front while India's international standing grew. Global perspectives shifted, recognizing India not just as a nuclear power but one demonstrating remarkable restraint, thus mobilizing support from countries that had previously been reticent to take sides. As diplomatic temperatures adjusted in mid-1999, the United States, after analyzing the situational realities, surpassed initial neutrality, condemning Pakistan and

championing India's position.

By July 1999, the writing was on the wall, with territorial gains reflecting the military's resilience. The simultaneous political correspondences highlighted the urgency of reaching resolutions while also preserving the sanctity of the LoC through dialogue. Yet, internecine distrust festered within Pakistan, signaling the rift between Nawaz Sharif and Musharraf—foreshadowing political upheaval. The discord resulted in the October 1999 coup that would eventually redefine Pakistan's political dynamics.

With the army historically holding sway over Pakistani governance, the Kargil escapade provided a new pretext for military domination, threatening the nascent democratic processes within the country. The evolving political landscape under Musharraf's leadership carried forth, navigating through heightened tensions, and effectively allowing Pakistan to manage its post-Kargil diplomatic baggage.

In India, the Kargil war melded diverse communities into a singular national sentiment, transcending internal differences and unleashing a wave of patriotism that reverberated across borders. However, as domestic politics intertwined with military triumphs, the Kargil narrative quickly became embroiled in electoral currents, prompting debate about leadership efficacy and intelligence failures.

Following the initial euphoria, governmental oversight ensued, leading to the establishment of the Kargil Review Committee to explore the fragilities that could endanger national security in the event of future conflicts. They undertook a rigorous analysis of the events leading up to Kargil, aiming to fortify India's defense apparatus against potential insurgencies.

On the strategic front, Kargil cemented the recognition that while nuclear capabilities might minimize the likelihood of full-scale war, forms of conflict akin to Kargil would persist as long as territorial disputes and ideological tensions endured. The strong sentiment that no inch of territory could be relinquished underscored a national ethos that has since affected military strategy and operational readiness, necessitating improved command structures and readiness to confront both conventional and unconventional threats.

The lessons drawn from the conflict became pivotal as strategic thinking evolved. Command structure reviews catalyzed a transformation in military preparedness while instigating broad assessments of defense systems. Despite establishing integrated command structures and undertaking procurement initiatives aimed at raising operational capabilities, systemic weaknesses continued to linger.

In this complicated milieu, achieving effective command and control, intelligence integration, and a coherent strategy that blends political and military imperatives emerged as paramount. The blurred lines between tactical operations and strategic decisions dictated a need for military leaders to navigate political considerations. The imperatives of coordination, seamless communication, and transparent decision-making are increasingly vital in the face of potential flashpoints.

As regional dynamics evolve and state-centric confrontations linger, the echoes of Kargil serve as constant reminders of the fluid reality of warfare in South Asia. Limited wars remain a strategic possibility, reflecting broader geopolitical realities within the subcontinent. Continued endeavors to build an adept military establishment shall navigate Indian defense policy amid persisting challenges.

Notably, the Kargil War has underscored the necessity of readiness, adaptability, and seamless interoperability across military and civilian realms, ensuring that India remains poised to address the multifaceted challenges of 21st-century warfare while maintaining its sovereign territorial integrity. As we grapple with the constraints of contemporary geopolitics, we must remember that with war as a potential tool of statecraft, vigilance and preparedness become paramount in securing a safer future.

Chapter 19

India And Pakistan Beyond Kargil

What now

The Aftermath of Kargil: Trust on the Line

The Kargil War, fought amidst the treacherous heights of the Himalayas, resulted in significant loss of life on both the Indian and Pakistani sides of the Line of Control (LoC). Yet, perhaps the most profound casualty was the trust and confidence between the two nations, deeply fractured and in dire need of repair.

The Agra Summit: A Ray of Hope in July 2001

In July 2001, after a two-year hiatus marked by the shadows of Kargil, the leaders of India and Pakistan sought to bridge their chasm through the Agra Summit. This political initiative, championed by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, took many by surprise, not only within India but across global political landscapes. The summit was convened to address pressing issues and explore the potential for peace, an ambition complicated by the histories each country carried.

Walking into the summit, Pervez Musharraf had newly declared himself President of Pakistan just days earlier. However, he bore a complicated legacy as the ‘saboteur of the Lahore Summit’ and the orchestrator behind the Kargil War. His prior actions had done little to inspire confidence, either in his nation or on the international stage, a reality he himself recognized.

For India, the desire for dialogue stemmed from long-term strategic considerations with emotional underpinnings, while Musharraf faced urgent national pressures. Pakistan grappled with dwindling political credibility, a crisis of governance, and severe economic sanctions that exacerbated its socio-economic dilemmas - all ramifications of the Kargil conflict.

The Agra Summit commenced on 14 July 2001, radiating a superficial warmth, helped by India’s unilateral declaration of ‘people-to-people’ confidence-building measures. During the banquet, Musharraf expressed a passionate commitment to advancing normal relations—a hope for a future where both nations could overcome stereotypes and poverty. He envisioned a landscape where children could live unshackled from the burden of conflict.

However, as is often the case in geopolitical dialogues, aspirations faced immediate hurdles. Musharraf’s unyielding focus on the Kashmir dispute quickly overshadowed the summit’s initial goodwill, steering discussions down a contentious path.

> “I had previously asserted that Musharraf was arriving at the Agra Summit with an ‘open mind,’ yet fully prepared to place Jammu and Kashmir at the forefront of the conversation,” I noted at the time. “Jammu and Kashmir, within the contexts of Pakistani politics, often morphs into a military agenda—a point of focus that can eclipse other negotiations.”

Expectations, Reality, and a Sudden Departure

The stakes in Agra were incredibly high, but the expectations remained muted. Historically, Pakistan's military leadership demonstrated a mix of courtesy and political deception during talks, yet their strategic myopia left much to be desired. It was evident early on that without substantial groundwork in trust-building, negotiations would struggle to advance.

As tensions escalated, neither side managed to reach a consensus or even issue an acceptable joint statement by the tumultuous end of the summit. Musharraf's subsequent stormy exit revealed a rift deeper than either side had anticipated, compounded by differing conceptual frameworks—Pakistan's unilateral focus on Kashmir contrasted sharply with India's insistence on homeland integrity.

To make matters worse, Musharraf's provocative choice to meet privately with members of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference—a separatist alliance—dismayed Indian hosts and reignited old suspicions. The question remained: how could effective negotiation take place amid such a fragile framework of trust?

The media frenzy surrounding the summit also complicated matters, inflating public expectations to unrealistic levels. By the year's end, those hopes came crashing down following a violent assault on the Indian Parliament, once again shifting the narrative toward hostility and distrust.

Domestic Pressures and the Phantom of War

Inviting Musharraf to India, shortly after the Kargil War, was perceived as a diplomatic misstep by many within India's military establishment. The sentiments of seasoned military officers, particularly those impacted by the Kargil sacrifices, reflected a collective unease over appeasement strategies in the face of lingering animosities.

Musharraf departed not as a flawed military leader but as a figure of statecraft, maintaining that terrorism in Kashmir was merely a product of an indigenous freedom struggle. His confidence in coercing India into a one-sided treaty masked the reality of Pakistan's situation—caught between internal unrest and international scrutiny.

On the world stage, the fallout of the events of September 11, 2001, further complicated Pakistan's political environment. Facing overwhelming pressure from Western powers, particularly after being branded the epicenter of global terrorism, Musharraf undertook a radical shift. He distanced Pakistan from Taliban affiliations, joining the coalition against terrorism—a strategic pivot meant to solidify ties with the U.S. and redefine Pakistan's identity in South Asia.

A Dark Turn: The Attack on Parliament and Subsequent Mobilization

The terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001, orchestrated by militants linked to Pakistan, darkened the diplomatic landscape further. In the aftermath of the chilling violence, which claimed the lives of five terrorists and several police personnel, Prime Minister Vajpayee articulated a fierce resolve for action against the backdrop of decades-long terrorist aggression.

As India mobilized under Operation Parakaram—a significant and immediate military response—tensions mounted. The operation represented not only a show of military might but also a pivotal moment in the ongoing saga of Indo-Pak relations.

Despite the military's readiness to act, political hesitance loomed large. India did not engage militarily, choosing instead to maintain heightened tensions along the border while navigating complex socio-political dynamics. Factors such as communal riots in Gujarat and U.S. geopolitical considerations played significant roles in this pivotal period—forcing India into a position of strategic introspection.

Lessons from the Standoff and Future Dialogues

As the extended military standoff persisted throughout 2001-2002, it became clear that vital lessons were to be learned. First, it is essential to clearly define the objectives of any military engagement. Second, nations must not allow internal discord to compromise their external security posture. Lastly, prolonged military deployments can erode both defense credibility and the prospect for diplomatic dialogue.

Against the backdrop of such high-stakes military endeavors, the political ramifications remained contentious and unresolvable; however, tentative steps towards peace re-emerged by 2003.

The persistent attacks reinforced strategies of lawfare and state narrative warfare—both Pakistan’s continued reliance on a militarized approach and India’s growing impatience with terrorism. Yet, a breakthrough came with diplomatic efforts initiated through secret talks between India’s National Security Advisor and Pakistan’s military chief, culminating in a ceasefire announcement on the LoC in late 2003.

Constructive Endeavors: The SAARC Summit and Beyond

The successful maneuvering of the regional dynamics during the 2004 SAARC summit in Islamabad opened new channels of dialogue. Both leaders exchanged commitments to combat terrorism while promoting a more progressive handling of sensitive topics like Jammu and Kashmir.

Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf agreed on the need for sustained dialogue to address underlying issues. The optimism was palpable, framed as an opportunity for economic cooperation and mutual growth, while acknowledging the dangers imposed by lingering extremist ideologies.

As progress unfolded, an important element emerged—while Musharraf expressed a desire for reform, the entrenched attitudes of the Pakistani military established significant barriers to realizing true peace. Persistent skepticism remained, particularly regarding the military’s historical involvement with militant elements.

Although a landscape of cautious optimism began to materialize in the years following, it became evident that without a holistic approach to address not only political but also societal grievances, the quest for lasting peace remained precarious. The promise of hope lay in the myriad initiatives driven by people-to-people connections—sports, culture, and communication reducing the bitter memory of an unfinished partition.

In the coming years, dialogues on critical topics would resume, aiming to explore a multilateral approach to security, economic growth, and cross-cultural collaboration—a necessity in transforming history’s troubled past into a hopeful future for generations to come.

Chapter 20

Pakistan Blowing Hot Blowing Gold

pakistan is in ashes

In the evolving landscape of South Asia, India stands poised on the brink of transformation, heralding a new era as a formidable economic and military power. As we look forward into the next two decades, India is anticipated to overcome the myriad internal challenges and formidable external constraints it currently faces. Predictions indicate that India may soon eclipse various European economies in terms of gross national product, establishing itself as an economic magnet in its region. This growth is likely to radiate beyond South Asia, influencing nations in north-central Asia, Iran, and extending into the realms of the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Professor Amitabh Mattoo, a renowned analyst of international relations and the Vice-Chancellor of Jammu University, possesses an insightful vision of India's trajectory. He asserts, "By 2020, India will possess the capability to significantly impact international relations unless we jeopardize our progress through self-inflicted wounds."

To realize this potential, Professor Mattoo underscores five essential components to consider in shaping India's future policies toward Pakistan:

1. **Dialogue as a Cornerstone:** Although many believe that long-term peace and stability in South Asia hinges on the role of armed forces in Pakistan's governance, initiating a comprehensive dialogue with those in power is vital to decrease tensions and improve international perceptions.
2. **Reassessing Military Alliances:** The entrenched animosity exhibited by figures like Pervez Musharraf and his military cohorts toward India may necessitate a reevaluation of their support for jehadi forces, potentially shifting to an active stand against them.
3. **Fostering Civil Society Engagement:** Strengthening people-to-people contacts and maintaining engagement with civil society in Pakistan will play a critical role in ensuring lasting peace.
4. **Addressing Bilateral Irritants:** Establishing mechanisms to resolve minor irritants adversely affecting Indo-Pak ties is crucial for fostering goodwill.
5. **Kashmir – A Pathway to Peace:** A constructive resolution of the Kashmir issue can only occur once hostilities are definitively addressed, allowing South Asia to move towards economic integration, enhanced confidence-building measures, and increased exchanges of ideas and services.

As India forges its policies towards Pakistan, clarity and determination will become paramount. The aforementioned elements offer a concrete foundation for this diplomatic endeavor. Yet, in examining these components, we must also consider the foreseeable political, societal, and economic prospects within Pakistan that could significantly influence the Indo-Pak relationship. An unflinching analysis of the current circumstances in Pakistan, alongside the motivations of its populace, will shed light on the potential for meaningful peace dialogue.

Politics and Civil-Military Relations

There is a growing sentiment in Pakistan that the country cannot effectively address its diverse governance issues, economic mismanagement, and foreign policy challenges unless it reinstates a civilian government governed by constitutional checks and balances. It is widely recognized that restoring democratic norms could alleviate the military's perception of an unceasing conflict with India. Civilian leadership historically exhibits less preoccupation with the tensions around India and Kashmir. For instance, Nawaz Sharif ascended to power in 1997 without prioritizing India or Kashmir as key electoral points.

Contrarily, the Pakistan Army's portrayal of India as a perpetual threat fortifies its relevance within the political fabric of Pakistan. This military primacy has interwoven itself into various social and economic interests within the nation, inadvertently stifling the establishment of definitive democratic frameworks and institutions.

The Pakistani political landscape post-2002 elections showcased military dominance, with General Musharraf's regime leveraging the National Security Council to entrench the Army's political foothold. Both dominant political coalitions falter without credible leadership, revealing a chaotic political arena exacerbated by rising ethnic and sectarian divides.

Musharraf, despite earlier promises to step back from military leadership, has failed to cultivate institutions that would galvanize moderate political forces. The military retains substantial authority over state matters, positioning itself as the arbiter of national security, with the capacity to suppress both terrorism sources and religious extremism—a matter of optional engagement rather than obligation.

The military's entrenched authority casts a shadow over any aspirations for democracy within Pakistan. Analysts like Teresita C. Schaffer lament, "The military's role is a significant impediment to Pakistan's political viability." Ashley Tellis adds that while the revival of democracy might not guarantee escape from current tribulations, its absence almost certainly predicates a continuation of destabilizing trends that may culminate in state failure.

With the U.S. providing unwavering support to the military regime but lacking accountability regarding necessary political reforms, the prospects for genuine political evolution remain bleak. Pervez Musharraf's regime is increasingly under scrutiny to deliver tangible results, reflecting the intricate interplay of internal pressures and international expectations.

Economic Conditions and Challenges

Pakistan's economy is marked by stark challenges. Its gross domestic product (GDP) hovers around \$75 billion—significantly lower when viewed through the lens of purchasing power parity, where it stands at around \$295 billion. Income levels are dismally low, with approximately one-third of the population living in poverty while another 21% barely escape its clutches. Alarming, urban unemployment and rural underemployment add to the socio-economic woes, compounded by an adult literacy rate remaining beneath 40%—a direct consequence of meager educational investment, trailing below 2% of GDP.

The focus on military expenditures, absorbing about 4% of GDP, dwarfs India's defense spending, which is nearly threefold higher, allowing India to continuously advance its military capabilities with lesser allocation from its GDP.

Recent years have witnessed some improvements within Pakistan's macroeconomic framework, driven by compliance with international financial institution mandates, structural reforms, and substantial U.S. economic aid linked to military support during Operation Enduring Freedom. However, long-term economic viability hinges on completing these reforms and ensuring their legitimacy within the political landscape.

The Societal Landscape

Founded as an Islamic state underpinned by the two-nation theory, Pakistan's ideological framework is unlikely to undergo any substantial transformation. Ethnic and linguistic differences could further enhance Islam's role as a unifying factor amidst crises. Islam remains a significant influence in Pakistan's

political landscape.

The legacy of General Zia-ul Haq, who nurtured jihadi ideologies during his rule in the 1980s, paved the way for diverse militant groups to thrive, ultimately marginalizing moderate voices within Pakistan. The military's past engagements in Afghanistan reinforced a belief that low-intensity combat would force India to negotiate over Kashmir, yet this reliance on jihadi forces has ultimately weakened the social fabric of the country.

Presently, the strength of these militant groups often stems from their resource mobilization—financial contributions, recruiting efforts, and substantial grassroots support. In the absence of democratic processes, these factions often usurp the ability to shape political dialogues. Years of intertwining military and extremist ideologies have also permeated the ranks of the younger military personnel.

Strategic Concerns

In foreign policy and security issues, military-led governments prioritize military strategies over broader, long-term strategic considerations. Dr. Ayesha Siddiqi highlights Pakistan's security perception as overly fixated on an external threat without the foresight to expand its strategic vision.

In a post-9/11 context, the U.S.-Pakistan alliance has yielded significant financial advantages for Pakistan while also imposing constraints affecting both domestic stability and international diplomacy.

From this analysis, the following conclusions emerge:

1. Despite some semblance of opposition, an organized challenge to Pakistan's ruling authorities remains scarce.
2. The quest for a truly sustainable democratic model is hampered by enduring polarization across military, political, and societal lines.
3. The jihadi factions cannot be overlooked; only the military holds the capacity to rein them in.
4. While the economic landscape is improving incrementally, the divergence in military capability between India and Pakistan is unequivocally widening.
5. Despite assurances, the Musharraf administration has yet to entirely renounce terrorism as a tool of foreign policy.
6. Military leadership is likely to maintain a constricted and short-sighted strategic perspective.

Ultimately, a viable and lasting Indo-Pak rapprochement, along with the mutual benefits inherent to both nations, will likely depend on promoting economic interdependence and fostering cooperative security—a path that has successfully resolved conflicts in the past. The trend toward globalization may facilitate this process, pushing forth opportunities for peaceful cohabitation.

Looking to the near future, four principal security matters will shape the current Indo-Pak peace discourse: crossborder terrorism, the Siachen Glacier dispute, the Kashmir question, and nuclear confidence-building measures.

Crossborder Terrorism and Jihad

For Pakistan, engaging in jihadi terrorism serves dual purposes: perpetuating the Kashmir conflict to compel Indian concessions and inflicting attrition on India by creating instability. The militarized elite in Pakistan views the current militant ethos in Kashmir as a key leverage point against India, which remains reluctant to abandon its support for these factions even amidst intense international scrutiny.

Militant groups can be categorized into two distinct factions operating within Pakistan: one aligned with Al Qaeda and international jihad, primarily originating from regions like the North West Frontier Province, Balochistan, and urban centers like Karachi; the other focused on Kashmir, mostly active in Punjab and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK).

Efforts led by Musharraf to mitigate terrorism, particularly in the context of international pressure, seem superficially directed toward combating the former group. Yet, the latter continues to proliferate under various aliases, effectively evading significant crackdowns on their activities.

The critical takeaway is that the motivation to engage in terrorism coupled with the existing militant infrastructure allows for a fluctuating degree of insurgency in Kashmir. Political engagement with Pakistan may potentially decrease militancy levels; however, a stagnation in this respect could provoke escalated violence.

Musharraf has struggled to modify the entrenched anti-Indian perspectives held by many within the military, who rationalize their dominance partly through an enduring competitive mentality. His dual aim of appeasing the military establishment while maintaining a liberal image complicates matters further.

Pakistan remains oblivious to the fact that a large, assertive democracy like India cannot afford to compromise on core national interests under duress. Any perception that India might capitulate due to militant threats could undermine its strategic credibility.

Siachen Glacier

A significant number of voices from both India and Pakistan advocate for the demilitarization of Siachen, viewing it as a critical first step toward advancing peace negotiations. However, **demilitarization should not regress to a pre-1984 state**, where ambiguous territorial claims would invite future conflicts. The entrenched mistrust necessitates clarity in demarcating the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL), allowing for verification of compliance.

Expectations from the Pakistan Army to revert to pre-1984 conditions are non-starters in Indo-Pak negotiations.

Jammu and Kashmir

Recently, a subtle shift in Pakistan's strategy concerning Kashmir has surfaced, influenced largely by Musharraf's pressing need to deliver results. His abandonment of traditional reliance on the UNSC resolutions signals a departure from long-held hardline stances, although it has ruffled feathers among conservative factions.

Musharraf's suggestions for "limited accommodation" and demilitarization in specific regions have met vigorous rejections from India, signaling an ongoing stalemate. Kashmir, under the military's auspices, is likely to remain a fulcrum for negotiations on broader economic discussions.

Nuclear Confidence-building Measures

Both nations are under increasing internal and external pressure to address nuclear safety and risk reduction protocols. While progress has been made in identifying nuclear assets and proposing risk management frameworks, classical issues such as no-first-use policies and fissile material controls remain contentious and are often excluded from broader discussions.

In conclusion, the future of Indo-Pak relations hinges on a myriad of interconnected elements that encompass political will, economic interdependence, continued dialogue, and a nuanced approach to conflict resolution. Recognizing and addressing the complex realities each nation faces is essential to avoid potential escalations and foster a more harmonious coexistence.