

An Analysis of Kargil

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Introduction

“The purpose of deterrence is to deter”.

In May 1998 India tested its nuclear weapons, and Pakistan, despite the half hearted attempts of the international community to prevent it, soon followed suit. While many analysts viewed this development as dangerous, there were almost an equally large number, which felt that it was really for the best, since this brought deterrence fully in to place. It was not to be long before they were to be rudely shocked out of their assessment.

In February 1999, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Indian Prime Minister, visited Pakistan, as part of the much touted “bus diplomacy”, with great pomp and show, on the invitation of his counterpart, Mr Nawaz Sharif, little knowing that Kargil had been, or was being occupied.

In early May 1999, the Indian army learnt of some intruders, who had occupied the heights close to Dras. A patrol of ten soldiers sent to investigate was wiped out. Over the next few days the Indian army, without yet reporting to their political leadership (as any other army would do), proceeded to first attempt the eviction of the intruders and, on failing to do so, assess the extent of their intrusion. Somewhere at this point in time, they went to the political leadership to inform them of the intrusion. An event that sent shock waves round the world, according to some analysts, almost led to a nuclear war, resulted in a military intervention in Pakistan and, is still an ongoing process, the final outcome of which will be assessed at some date in the not too distant future¹. For Vajpayee, this was a particularly un-propitious moment in time when he was heading an interim government, coming up for reelection in a few months, and just after his return from a courageous trip to Lahore, in the teeth of opposition from all his colleagues².

India has carried out an assessment of this event in “The Kargil Report”, but Pakistan has neither attempted to produce a similar document, nor is likely to do so. While I have no intention of filling that particular vacuum, I have felt, for a long while, that some kind of an objective analysis is essential, to understand what transpired (if not the exact events, since these are unlikely to be made available within the foreseeable future, then the likely course that events could or should have possibly taken), analyze them and draw lessons therefrom. This is what I plan to undertake in this effort.

Let me state at the outset that, while I have considerable knowledge of the course of events, pieced together from private discussions with friends and colleagues in positions of authority, who played a role, I have neither the official Pakistani version nor, quite obviously, any input from the Indian side. There is, therefore, some conjecture in what I relate. Only the actual actors will be able to judge the accuracy of this conjecture.

¹ Though I do not subscribe to the view that India and Pakistan were on the verge of a nuclear war, for reasons that will emerge later, but it did lead to the military takeover in Pakistan and is still an ongoing process.

² The fact that the Kargil episode, in fact, resulted in his political benefit by returning him to the office of prime minister is irrelevant. Neither he, nor India has yet overcome the personal sense of betrayal.

However, I will be less than fair to myself, were I not to add that the conjecture is based on my personal knowledge of the terrain of that area, the character of the principal actors in the Pakistan army (whom I know fairly well), my knowledge of the decision making process in the Pakistan army, having served in command and staff assignments of a large variety, and my knowledge of the collective character of the Pakistan army, on which basis I also judge the Indian army, being essentially no different.

I state this at the very outset, since the task I have set myself is challenging enough in itself, to be considered daunting. I would find it impossible, were it to be challenged for authenticity. To the sceptic, I state it contains considerable conjecture. To the believer, “take it with a pinch of salt”. If you wonder why I should undertake a venture, for which I possess, what might be, insufficient information; there is probably enough accuracy in it to draw lessons from, but even more importantly, it might result in more open debates on subjects, that have hitherto, been sacrosanct from public knowledge and debate in Pakistan, as elsewhere.

Background

Without going into all the details of the process of the partition, of what was, British India, and how it was undermined by the machinations of Lord Mountbatten, when the British finally decided to leave India in 1947, they decided the territories of India and Pakistan, but left it to the “Princely States” to take their own choice. Junagarh, a predominantly Hindu state, with a Muslim ruler, opted for Pakistan, but was forcibly occupied by India on the principle that the population was predominantly Hindu. Hyderabad chose independence, but was again forced into the Indian Union. The territories that formed the state of Jammu and Kashmir, were governed by a Sikh ruler, who kept delaying his decision until 1948, when finally some tribal *lashkars* (a loosely grouped force) decided to intervene on behalf of their Muslim brethren. He then announced his accession to India over the radio, and Indian troops were air lifted into Kashmir, to reinforce those already there, ostensibly to defend the Prince. Interestingly, India claims that the Maharajah (Prince) also signed the document of accession, but the document has not yet been seen by anybody.

Indian troops managed to evict the *lashkars* from the valley of Srinagar, but could not do so from the heights they occupied, thus creating, what was later to be called the Line of Control (LOC)³. India moved the UN, which unanimously passed a resolution in favour of self-determination by the people of Kashmir, but while Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister accepted the resolution, and promised to abide by it, he later reneged. Kashmir became “disputed territory”, divided into Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) and *Azad* (free) Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K, or AK), as the Pakistanis learnt to refer to them.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars. Of these, two were fought over Kashmir, the one in 1948 and 1965, when Pakistan decided to attempt to liberate the people of

³ Pakistan’s Governor General, Jinnah, had ordered Gen Gracy, the Commander in Chief of the Pakistan army to send in troops in support of the *Lashkars* when India started moving troops in, but he refused on the plea that he might be faced with British troops from India, since at that time both India and Pakistan still had a smattering of British officers. While that might have been a consideration, in which case he could have sent troops from units which did not have British officers, the real reason as Lord Mountbatten’s support to the operation. He was Governor General, India, royalty, popular with parliament, and no British officer could survive, if he got on his wrong side.

Kashmir. The 1971 war was, in fact, imposed by India, to liberate East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Kargil was one of the numerous mini-wars, between the two. Apart from the wars, both sides have, at every given opportunity taken advantage where they could. India occupied the vacant heights at Siachin glacier in 1984, leading to an annual exchange at the highest battle ground of the world, which lasts to date. Pakistan too, has seized every opportunity. Interestingly, Kargil was, in fact on the Pakistani side of the LOC until 1971, when the Indians evicted the troops there by a surprise attack.

The Terrain

Amongst the most beautiful in the world, but also amongst the most difficult to conduct military operations in. The Kargil war was fought over an area extending from Dras to Kargil and Batalik, an area spanning about a hundred kilometers in length. Craggy peaks abound the region, ranging in height from 13000 feet to 18000 feet, with the floor of the valleys at around 7000 feet. Each crest line is followed by another, with ravines in between and, even along the crest line of one continuous feature, there are frequent depressions, which could range from a few hundred feet in depth, to a few thousand. Making infantry attacks, unless backed by surprise, an unbelievably costly venture and, almost certainly doomed to failure⁴. The extremely harsh and inhospitable nature of the terrain was the reason for the Indian troops taking a “calculated risk”, leaving it unoccupied during winters, and returning at the advent of spring.

What are referred to as roads, are usually tracks, which can take heavy traffic, particularly of military vehicles. They invariably run along valleys and, in this case ran from Dras to Kargil fairly close to the heights, in fact, at Dras, the road curves right under the dominating heights⁵, making the entire Main Supply Route (MSR) feeding the area beyond, including Siachin vulnerable to interdiction, even with small arms.

Most valleys in the region range in span from a few hundred meters to a couple of thousand. At Dras the valley is at its widest, ranging between five to seven thousand meters, which enables it to house a small cantonment. It is from this cantonment that troops move in to occupy the heights they have vacated in winters, at the advent of spring.

Preliminaries

Somewhere towards mid November 1998, Lt Gen Mahmud, then commanding 10 Corps sought an appointment with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Gen Pervez Musharraf, through the Chief of General Staff (CGS), Lt Gen Aziz. When he went to see him, he was accompanied by the General Officer Commanding (GOC), Frontier Constabulary of the Northern Areas (FCNA), Major General (now Lt Gen) Javed Hassan.

⁴ The size of the highest point on the feature usually dictates the number of soldiers it can accommodate: usually between 4 to 12 per post. The size of the craggy approach to the top, dictates the number of soldiers that can approach it abreast, usually between 8 to 20, thus heavily weighting the numbers game in favour of the defenders. Apart from this, the final approach in the attack, through what is known to the military as the “killing ground” is made, not only when the attacking soldier is most tired, but at the most difficult part of the climb, reducing the attackers to virtually, “ducks in a barrel”.

⁵ Amongst the heights occupied by Pakistan, this was the most threatening location from the Indian point of view, a fact that dictated subsequent events.

They sought permission to execute a plan, which had been made earlier, as military plans often are, and shelved. The plan essentially visualized occupying terrain in the Dras-Kargil sector, which the Indians were known to vacate every winter, and reoccupy at the advent of summer. The rationale was that it would provide a fillip to the Kashmiri freedom movement. The plan was approved in principle, with instructions to commence preparations, but confine the knowledge of this plan to the four people present, for the time being.

I interrupt the sequence of events here to draw brief pen-pictures of these four characters, as I know them, so as to better understand the Pakistani adventure in Kargil, since their characters played a prime role in the events to follow. Obviously, these will be incomplete, focusing essentially on the traits relevant to the events at Kargil. Equally obvious is the fact that the assessment of their characters is mine and, only as accurate as my knowledge of them, and my ability to assess another human being.

Gen Pervez Musharraf: A sharp and intelligent, artillery officer, who has commanded infantry formations from brigade upwards, and held a large variety of staff and instructional appointments. A bold commander, who takes pride in being decisive, quick to take decisions (a fact he took pains to highlight after his takeover, but cannot be accused of in political matters) and, therefore, a good commander of troops and keen to assume responsibility.

Lt Gen Mahmud Ahmed: Again an artillery officer, with a wide variety of experience. He is sharp and intelligent, with a touch of arrogance that kept growing till it became overwhelming towards the end of his career, and a strong sense of right and wrong. A strong, forceful, decisive and highly ambitious individual, who was secular, but “discovered” the force of Islam late in life. Consequently he tends to see everything in life is starkly either, black or white. On those occasions, as dangerous as any other “who believes himself to be incapable of going wrong”.

Lt Gen Muhammed Aziz: More than anyone else, he has been painted the villain, and the “fundo”, which he is not. Deeply religious, but very balanced, he is born Kashmiri, and has served in some of the most rugged reaches of it, at various stages of his career. Strongly patriotic and deeply committed to the cause of Kashmir, but not to the extent that it might jeopardize Pakistan. He is intelligent, sharp, very balanced, progressive and dynamic.

Major General Javed Hassan: A highly intelligent and well-read officer, who is more an academician than a commander, and bears that reputation. He was the only one, with a point to prove.

While preparations for executing the plan began in November/ December 1999, the subject was casually broached with the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, some time in December, presenting the same argument that the freedom struggle in Kashmir needed a fillip, which could be provided by an incursion into these territories, left unoccupied by the Indians during winters. It would also repay them for their incursion into Siachin. In fact, it would hurt them more. Nawaz Sharif, being the kind of person he is, accepted the statement at face value. Nor did the military leadership, as it is supposed to, present a complete analysis of the scale of the operation or its possible outcome, with a political aim, and how the military operation would achieve the political aim.

Thus far, the rest of the army was unaware of the operation, as indeed were the Chief of Air Staff (CAS) and the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), and preparations proceeded in

secret. Personally, I do not think that the operation was intended to reach the scale that it finally did. In all likelihood, it grew in scale as the troops crept forward to find more unoccupied heights, and finally were overlooking the valley. In the process, they had ended up occupying an area of about 130 square kilometers over a front of over 100 kilometers and depth ranging between 7 to 15 kilometers. They were occupying 132 posts of various sizes⁶. Whereas, the total number occupying these posts, never exceeded 1000 all ranks, but four times this number provided the logistical backup to undertake the operation. While the occupants were essentially soldiers of the Northern Light Infantry (NLI), there were some local *Mujahideen* assisting as labour to carry logistical requirements.

It was at this stage, in March 1999, that the leadership of the army was apprised of the operation and the Military Operations (MO) Directorate in GHQ was tasked to evolve a strategic operational plan, which would have a military aim to fulfill a political objective. Given the fact that they were evolving a plan to justify an operation already underway, the response was no less than brilliant. Given the total ratio of forces of India and Pakistan, which was about 2 ¼: 1,⁷ the MO concluded that the initial Indian reaction would be to rush in more troops to IHK, further eroding their offensive capabilities against Pakistan. As a consequence, they concluded that India would not undertake an all-out offensive against Pakistan, since by doing so it would run the risk of ending in a stalemate, which would be viewed as a victory for Pakistan⁸. This is the cause for my being in a one-man-minority amongst the analysts, that war, let alone nuclear war, was never a possibility.

While the political aim spelt out was, “To seek a just and permanent solution to the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir”, the military aim leading up to the political aim was, “To create a military threat that could be viewed as capable of leading to a military solution, so as to force India to the negotiating table from a position of weakness⁹”. The operational plan visualized the Indian’s amassing troops at the LOC to deal with the threat at Kargil, resulting in a vacuum in their rear areas. By July, the *Mujahideen* would step up their activities in the rear areas, threatening the Indian lines of communication, at pre-designated targets, which would help isolate

⁶ Posts in such areas house between 4 to 12 soldiers per post.

⁷ It is generally accepted that the required ratio for a force launching an offensive to have chances of success is 3:1. However, in mountainous terrain the required ratio may be many times more. It is my opinion that over the last decade the conventional military capabilities of both Pakistan and India have eroded, but the erosion has been more in India than Pakistan, due to their dependence on Soviet support. If the present total military capabilities, including quality, quantity, numbers, etc were quantified, I would support the estimate that MO came up with in 1999. However, this relationship is not permanent, and, given their proposed military spending, will undergo a drastic change in favour of India in a year or two.

⁸ A large number of analysts were of the view that nuclear deterrence, coupled with the resultant diplomatic mileage was the cause of Indian restraint after Pakistan occupied the heights of Kargil. Though diplomatic mileage was a major consideration, but I tend to agree with the conclusions of MO. It is my view that India toyed with the idea of an all-out war in late May/early June, but the military leadership could not guarantee the defeat of Pakistan. Consequently, it was decided to confine the war in space or, in other words “escalate on the vertical scale rather than the horizontal one”. This view is borne out by the subsequent debate, which started in India, that Kargil proved the possibility of a “limited war”, under the nuclear umbrella.

⁹ My input on the subject is from a number of highly placed sources, on the condition of anonymity, during and immediately after the episode. However, it was verbal, though I made my notes after the conversation. Consequently, I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the words, but can vouch for the essence of the two statements.

pockets, forcing the Indian troops to react to them. Thus creating an opportunity for the forces at Kargil to push forward and pose an additional threat, this would force India to the negotiating table. While it is useless to speculate on whether it could in fact have succeeded, theoretically the plan was faultless, the initial execution, tactically brilliant. The only flaw was that it had not catered for the “environment¹⁰”. Quite clearly, it was an aberration to the environment, and the international reaction soon left little doubt of that.

Soon thereafter, the first formal briefing of the entire operation was made for the benefit of the prime minister in April, in the presence of the other services. Since the CNS was on a visit abroad, the navy’s reaction was voiced cautiously, but the CAS was openly critical and skeptical of the conclusion that India would not opt for an all-out war. He also voiced the view that in the event of war, the air force would not be able to provide the support that the army might be seeking¹¹.

The Battle

By the third week of May, the Indian leadership began to have some idea of the extent of the penetration, and from their initial boastful claims of ousting the intruders in a matter of days, they moved to weeks, then months, and finally they hoped that they might be able to evict them before the onset of winters, but were not certain. Meantime, in Pakistan, the decision had been taken to disclaim the intrusion as having been perpetrated by military troops and lay the blame on the *Mujahideen*¹². In the period upto the third week of May, the Indian army made numerous unsuccessful forays and suffered heavy losses. At about this time, the Indians decided to escalate the war vertically, by using air power. They also decided to bring in their 400 odd “Bofors guns¹³”. In fact only about 170 were inducted, but these were destined to play a decisive role.

¹⁰ At the National Defence College, while teaching operational planning, the first factor to be considered is “environment”. It is meant to view the national and international aspects of the environment, so as to decide whether the political aim could be acceptably achieved, and if so, to evolve a military plan that could succeed within the given environment.

¹¹ In the interest of brevity, the other briefings are not being outlined. However, there were three others, the second in May, two weeks after the Indians had started their response, without any success in which the CNS continued to express his astonishment at the undertaking. However, the CAS modified his opposition and decided that he would go along, which might not say much for him but, in all fairness, it must be stated that the second one took place at the corps HQ, instead of GHQ, where a number of junior officers attended, making it very awkward for senior officers to express reservations, which could be interpreted as cowardly. The last briefing was in June, after Pakistan lost four posts to Indian attacks, during which the COAS told the prime minister that he was “prepared to pull back if the political leadership wanted the army to do so”. Given the fact that some posts had been lost, Nawaz Sharif’s confidence was further shattered by this comment, forcing him to head for Washington.

¹² It is my understanding that this decision was taken by the then political leadership, but the military was also favourably inclined towards avoiding direct responsibility. They had probably realized that the operation was likely to prove embarrassing. The sheer idiocy of the decision, which was obviously unbelievable, only added to the diplomatic embarrassment of Pakistan.

¹³ Swedish made field howitzers. Although these were in bad shape due to lack of spares and parts, following a bribery scandal, these were the only weapons light and portable enough to be inducted into Kashmir over the kinds of roads that existed. Consequently, the Indian government paid for the parts and ammunition at exorbitant rates and inducted them into the area.

The inclusion of air power was not very successful. Within a few days two MIGs were shot down by Pakistan on May 28th and two helicopters on May 29th. Their lack of success was no aspersion on their effort, but the nature of terrain was such that bombing had little chance of success, unless it was laser-guided, the only kind that could be accurate in this terrain. Since it was not possible for the Indians to put troops on ground for this purpose, they tried using helicopters, but they had to expose themselves: thus the losses.

Early in June the Bofors guns began to arrive, since Dras was the locality where Indians were most vulnerable, they decided to start here. Since the depth of the valley was also the greatest here, there was the necessary space for deployment. While only forty or so guns could be deployed here, they were sufficient. Under cover of their fire, elements of 2 Rajputana Rifles captured, what the Indians called Tololing top on June 12th, Point 4590¹⁴, the most dominating height directly overlooking Dras, and an adjacent post on June 13th, and Tiger Hills (point 5140), another dominating height on June 20th. Without in any way undermining the courage and determination of the Indian soldier, the deployment of the Bofors could not but result in the capture of these peaks, as is graphically depicted below, but could not have had the same military outcome in other places, merely due to the nature of the terrain, and the lack of space and depth to deploy the Bofors.

As Figure 1 below shows, in accordance with the laws of physics, a gun deployed at a distance of 2700 m from a mountain 4000 m high will fire at an angle of 60° but will ricochet off the top. Whereas, with a distance of 4000 m it gets an angle of 45° and will be able to engage the top, and anything further will enable the gun to engage lower heights and move upward ahead of attacking troops, providing what is called “covering fire” for infantry attacks, without which, an attack in this terrain is bound to fail. Figure 2 also shows why heights in depth, even if greater than the ones in front are impossible to engage. This was the significance of the depth of the valley at Dras¹⁵.

¹⁴ Point heights indicate the height of the feature in meters.

¹⁵ During my service I have served in neighbouring areas of Kashmir, where we have deployed artillery pieces on heights, both manually, with the help of mules, and with helicopters, and used them as direct firing weapons with devastating effect, as also have the Indians, wherever they could. It is, however a time consuming and grueling experience, impossible to manage manually in less than three months per piece, manually. With helicopters, it is extremely difficult, since it involves more than one helicopter, but even more important is the fact that the approach to the top must be secure. It cannot be done under fire of direct weapons by the opponents.

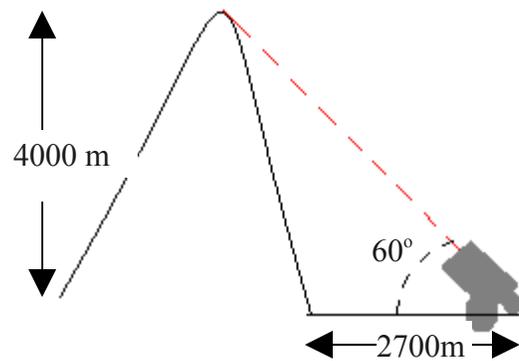


Figure 1

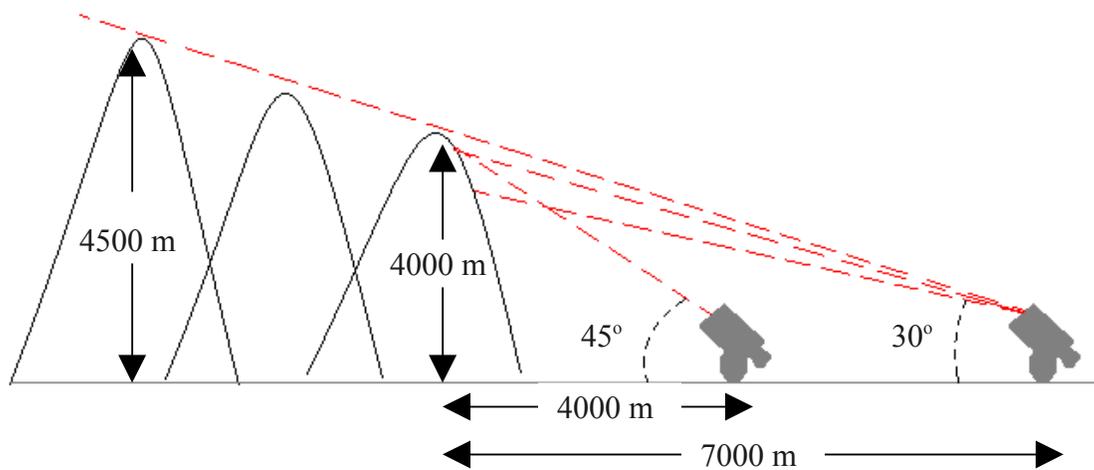


Figure 2

The Aftermath

Nawaz Sharif, who had been gloating over the drubbing that the Indians were getting, began to feel uncomfortable. In all fairness to him, the military leadership had failed to apprise him of the politico-diplomatic fallout and he, being the kind of person he was, had made no effort to analyze this aspect. The international pressure was becoming unbearable and, when the posts at Dras fell, without appreciating the military causes of it¹⁶, he began looking for an escape route, but he was very worried about the reaction of the military leadership and apprehended that a withdrawal might result in his untimely ouster. He, therefore, dispatched his brother, Shabbaz Sharif to Washington, where, after a series of meetings, he managed to get the American establishment to issue a warning that a military coup in Pakistan would be unacceptable to them. Not only did this serve to warn the military leadership of Nawaz' fears, it also shed some light on the possible

¹⁶ I have no evidence that any level of the military leadership even tried to explain this to him, though it might have made no difference to the events that followed even if they had.

course he might pursue later. The Indian leadership had been offering Nawaz an “out”, by saying that the Pakistani army had undertaken the operation without political sanction¹⁷. Had Nawaz picked up on this offer in time, he might have survived, even though it would have made him look foolish, but he lacked the political acumen. By the time he did pick it up, after his ouster, he found few believers.

Meantime, in the last briefing in late June, the COAS told Nawaz that, while there were no military apprehensions of India’s succeeding in ousting Pakistanis from the posts they were holding¹⁸, if the government so desired, the army would pull back¹⁹. After some frantic telephone calls conveying his desperate straits to Clinton, Nawaz went to Washington, met Clinton on July 4th, and with guarantees of his support, returned to announce the withdrawal of the “freedom fighters” occupying Kargil²⁰.

However, Nawaz was still apprehensive and uncertain of his ability to survive his decision to pull back. Had he not been, things might have gone on in routine, and we may still have been saddled with him (nightmarish thought!). He therefore, began to call upon the COAS to proceed against the principal actors in this episode and get rid of them. He also convinced Mr Niaz Naik²¹ to give an interview to BBC stating that India and Pakistan had been working towards a peaceful solution of Kashmir, which was hijacked by Kargil. Conscious that, in fact, if heads were to roll, they should begin with his own, the COAS resisted. Nawaz hatched his plot to get rid of him, and the rest is history. Nawaz went into the past tense and Musharaf into the present and future²².

As already stated, Pakistan’s first error of judgment was to undertake the operation at a juncture when the entire international community was bound to condemn it. Not only was the “Lahore process” being viewed with hope, India had returned to the limelight in U.S.’ eyes, and Vajpayee was making a place for himself. Kargil had the capacity for creating political chaos in India, which was the last thing the world wanted. If it had succeeded, the Advanis and George Fernandes’ would have been India’s future: disaster for everyone including Pakistan. The timing was wrong. If it had taken place a year earlier, the reaction might have been less adverse.

As if this was not enough, Pakistan decided, for some inexplicable reason to disclaim responsibility for the incursion, which was totally unbelievable. Not only did this cause considerable politico-diplomatic embarrassment to Pakistan, it also made other truthful

¹⁷ A full page advertisement was published in newspapers in Washington and London, depicting the Pakistan army as a “rogue army”, which acted independent of political control.

¹⁸ The army had continued to assert that no posts had fallen to the Indians, which reaffirms the contention that no effort was made to explain such a loss, or why it could not recur. However, in this case, it appears that Nawaz found the Indian claims more credible than the Pakistan army’s denials.

¹⁹ It is my distinct impression that by this stage the army leadership had also realized that the operation was a mistake. Though they do not admit to the fact to date, but it is my impression that they too were looking for a way out, without accepting their mistake. This statement was the closest they could get to the admission, and it succeeded in conveying the message.

²⁰ Not only did he call for their withdrawal, thereby giving the lie to his own assertions that Pakistan did not know who they were, nor have any influence over them, but his entire conduct of seeking the statement from U.S. against a military takeover, and the abjectness with which he sought Clinton’s support cost him whatever public image he enjoyed, and made it easier for the military to execute the October coup. No wonder people celebrated his departure by distributing sweets!

²¹ An ex-foreign secretary of Pakistan involved in “track two” diplomacy with India.

²² For the record, I am a strong democrat and opposed to a military rule. Even now, my fears are the form of democracy we might be faced with at the end of this year. However, when I think of the possibility of either Nawaz or Benazir having to face the challenge of the last few months, I thank God for Musharaf.

assertions suspect. American intelligence confirmed military presence there, tapes of a conversation between the COAS, on a visit to China and the CGS in Pakistan only reconfirmed the fact. To top it all, Pakistan was giving away gallantry awards, including the highest military award in Pakistan to soldiers who, we averred, were not fighting a war!

Finally, having suffered the condemnation and the embarrassment of being caught in an unbelievable falsehood, if the planning of the complete operation was as meticulous as I have been given to understand, it might have been better to allow it to run its course. It was indeed brilliantly planned. When it comes to “what might have been, if...”, then the conclusions are often too speculative. However, if the military leadership was convinced (and some of them managed to convince me) of the possibilities of its success, it might have been better to see it to its logical conclusion. But then, we shall never know the answer to that, will we?

The military takeover was “written on the walls of Kargil”. Even if Nawaz had succeeded in his endeavours to oust Musharaf, he could not have lasted. No political government could survive the sacking of two army chiefs in one term²³ in Pakistan: an unfortunate reality. It now appears that Pakistan will return to some sort of “controlled democracy”, whatever that means, with Musharaf as the ultimate untrammelled “check and balance” to a puppet government, for a minimum of five years. Whereas, his steps so far are appreciably in the right direction, whether absolute power will corrupt absolutely, time will tell. Even if it turns out for the best, the idea of democratic dictatorship is unpleasant. Yes, Kargil is an ongoing process, with the ultimate outcome still awaited.

²³ In October 1998, Nawaz sought and obtained the resignation of Gen Jehangir Karamat, then COAS, over a disagreement, when he publicly recommended the formation of a National Security Council.