The Kargil crisis had several layers of significance for both Pakistan and India, and generally these were very different for the two countries. For Pakistan, Kargil was significant primarily for the following reasons:

• While Pakistan appears to have concluded that Kargil-like\(^1\) operations are not legitimate in the current international environment, violence in the form of low intensity conflict (LIC) continues to be seen as a legitimate tool for attaining political objectives.\(^1\)

• Kargil was yet another example of the failure of Pakistan’s grand strategy. In Kargil, as in the 1965 and 1971 wars, Pakistan failed to comprehend that the international environment would not support its position and consequently did not anticipate or plan for the unanimous international opprobrium and isolation that ensued.

\(^1\)In this report, a distinction is generally made between LIC and “Kargil-like” operations. In LIC, which regularly takes place in Kashmir, India confronts irregular forces, such as the mujahideen, and typically uses paramilitary or police forces for such operations. Moreover, LIC operations have generally taken place only in India, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir. Kargil was a departure from such LIC operations in several respects. First, both sides used regular forces in combat. Second, the conflict involved struggles over territory. Third, the scale of military operations was substantially different in that widespread use of heavy artillery and air power was witnessed during the conflict.
• Both the scale of Pakistan’s covert operation and the rapidity and degree of India’s counter-response were unprecedented in the history of the “violent peace” in Kashmir.

• For many, the Kargil crisis seemed to pose real concerns about the possibility of the conflict widening to conventional war and subsequently escalating to nuclear use.

For India, Kargil was significant for very different reasons:

• India confirmed its belief that Pakistan is a reckless, adventuristic, risk-acceptant, untrustworthy state. Moreover, the Pakistani military came to be seen as a substantial cause of the problems in India-Pakistan relations, as it is understood to be the real power in Pakistan that also happens to be virulently anti-India.

• Kargil motivated India to reconsider whether to engage Pakistan diplomatically on the Kashmir issue. Any Indian inclination to resolve the Kashmir problem with an acknowledgment of Pakistan’s equity, in the manner desired by Islamabad, has been vitiated.

• Kargil strengthened the widespread perception that India’s intelligence infrastructure has endemic deficiencies. It has reinforced the Indian commitment to a more robust forward defense and to improving logistics and intelligence capabilities to prevent future Pakistani incursions.

• India realized that international attention to Kashmir is not altogether undesirable, particularly when such attention focuses on Pakistani misadventures. India, however, will resist international involvement in the final disposition of Kashmir, particularly if such involvement is directed toward “new map-making” in the disputed state.

• Kargil was India’s first televised war. India dexterously made use of the media to shape domestic and international response in its favor.

The next two sections explore the ways in which Pakistan and India perceived the import of the Kargil crisis.
PAKISTAN’S PERSPECTIVE

Kargil-like Operations Are Disavowed, But Violence Remains a Legitimate Tool to Achieve Political Objectives

One of the principal findings of this analysis is that while there is broad consensus that Kargil-like operations are not viable in the current international environment, violence in various forms remains a legitimate—if not the only—means to achieve Pakistan’s political objectives in Kashmir. As will be explicated in greater detail later, Pakistan understands that it paid heavily for its adventurism in Kargil and that the international community will not support the use of overt force to alter the status quo. Stated more precisely, Islamabad has concluded that the use of Pakistani troops in Kargil invited political failure, and consequently its incentive to repeat such an operation is very small at present.

This does not imply, however, that Pakistan has concluded that other forms of violence are either illegitimate or ineffective for altering the status quo. Pakistan perceives its diplomatic and military options to be quite limited as far as resolving the issue of Kashmir is concerned. Given these constraints, Pakistan believes that one of its few remaining successful strategies is to “calibrate” the heat of the insurgency in Kashmir and possibly pressure India through the expansion of violence in other portions of India’s territory. Security managers and analysts widely concur that Pakistan will continue to support insurgency in Kashmir, and some have suggested it could extend such operations to other parts of India. It may be inferred that Pakistan has a range of tactical choices for doing so: it can encourage some or all of the jihadi forces (whether Pakistan-based “guest militants” or indigenous Kashmiri groups) to limit their operations to Kashmir alone or to extend them to other parts of India; it can continue to encourage Pakistan’s social forces, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, to spearhead operations within India while leaving the Pakistani state to concentrate on diplomatic activities relating to Kashmir; or it can focus entirely on state-run and state-managed covert operations (in Kashmir and/or throughout India), leaving substate groups in Pakistan essentially on their own.
Limited Conflicts Under the Nuclear Umbrella

Failure of Grand Strategy Coupled with Surprise and Shock at International Isolation

Several issues loom large when the significance of Kargil for Pakistan is explicated. Most notably, Pakistani informants and public opinion shapers expressed varying degrees of surprise at the international response to Kargil and the nearly unanimous conviction that Pakistan was culpable. However, the ways in which this surprise was rationalized depended greatly upon how much these people knew about the Pakistani Army’s direct role in the operation.

The analysts, retired army officers, diplomats, and journalists who knew of the Army’s involvement argued that Pakistan’s security managers were surprised in part because they did not perceive a difference between Pakistan’s doings and India’s violations of both the LOC and the Shimla Agreement, of which Siachen is viewed as the most egregious example. Another, less salient justification for their surprise was the expectation that the international community would be sympathetic to Pakistan’s moral claims owing to India’s human rights abuses and other excesses in Kashmir. Those who conceded the Army’s role in Kargil but did not think that Kargil necessarily undermined the process of engagement represented by the Lahore Declaration articulated a third reason for surprise at Pakistan’s isolation. These individuals argued that the Lahore Declaration was designed for the consumption of the international community, which was still rankled by the 1998 nuclear tests in South Asia, and was at any rate derailed by Indian statements in the aftermath of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee’s return to New Delhi.2 Thus, these interlocutors sought to dismiss the widely held beliefs that Pakistan’s operations in Kargil exemplified Pakistani duplicity and that Pakistan had in fact sabotaged the much-acclaimed bus diplomacy and the resultant Lahore Declaration.

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2 Upon returning to New Delhi, Prime Minister Vajpayee remarked at a public function, “We have not attacked any country in our 50 years of independence, but we have been attacked several times and lost our land. . . . We are determined not to lose our land in the future.” This was read by Pakistan as a clear signal that India would be unwilling to cede territory on the Kashmir issue and as a clear retrenchment from progress made at Lahore the week before. Consequently, Prime Minister Sharif reportedly threatened to break off bilateral talks over Kashmir. (See, for example, “India Determined Not to Lose More Territory: PM,” The Times of India, March 1, 1999.)
The surprise and alienation felt by members of the Pakistani elite are confirmed by a reading of Pakistan’s English-language press, which strongly suggests that at the time of the conflict, editorialists and other opinion shapers did not know that the incursions around Kargil were *not* a mujahideen operation. The surprise evinced in such editorials seems to stem from the writers’ beliefs that Kargil was not Pakistan’s doing and that Islamabad therefore did not deserve the opprobrium it received.

In the aftermath of the G-8 communiqué,3 which Pakistanis read as laying the blame squarely on Pakistan, several articles spoke out against what was perceived as an unreasonable and unfair interpretation of events by the international community.4 One article poignantly narrates Pakistan’s sense of loss, isolation, and surprise:

> We have come a long way indeed from the time when the world listened to our entreaties on Kashmir with a certain amount of respect. We have come a long way from the time that the OIC [Organization of Islamic Countries] passed a unanimous resolution on allowing the Kashmiris the right of self-determination. We have come a long way indeed from the time that our protector and giver of all, Amreeka Bahadur, was getting ready to mediate between India and Pakistan. . . .Whatever happened to us? Why do we stand at the very edge of the diplomatic precipice today?5

To illuminate Pakistan’s current standing in the comity of nations, the author of this article critically examined some of Pakistan’s more alienating policies, such as its ongoing support for the Taliban.

The editorial pages also suggested a widespread conviction that China was the last possible bastion of support. An editorial in *The Dawn* compared this anticipated Chinese position to the emergent U.S. position:

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3This June 21, 1999, communiqué articulated the G-8 position on the resolution of the Kargil crisis.


[T]he United States has proved to be a fair-weather friend. . . . Instead of showing greater understanding of Pakistan’s point of view and impressing upon India the need to discuss the Kashmir problem . . ., the US is telling Pakistan to effect a withdrawal of the Mujahideen (or the infiltrators, as the US prefers to call them) from Kargil. China does not suffer from the same attitude and its understanding of the Pakistani position on all important matters of national security has always been fair and sympathetic.  

While such writers persisted optimistically in the days immediately preceding Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s visit to China, others sought to dampen any expectation that China would enthusiastically support Pakistan. These articles typically reaffirmed the general contours of Sino-Pakistan relations while vitiating any expectation that China would be totally forthcoming in assistance. A common strategy employed was to contextualize China’s expected stance on Kargil vis-à-vis China’s other pressing objectives (e.g., economic, social, and military development).

Of course, the eventual position taken by China did not live up to any of Pakistan’s highest expectations. In the days and weeks after the disappointing visits to China by Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, there was palpable shock at China’s position and vexation with the Pakistani Foreign Office’s efforts to spin these visits as fruitful. Abbas Rashid’s opinion piece typifies this sentiment:

Even China seems to have forsaken its traditional subtlety to get across the message as plainly as possible that it did not support Pakistan’s position. . . . Sartaj Aziz dashed off to Beijing and was reportedly told by Li Peng . . . that ‘. . . Pakistan should remain cool-headed and exercise self-control and solve conflicts through peaceful means and avoid worsening the situation.’ . . . Certainly, this is

6“PM’s China Visit” [editorial], The Dawn, June 29, 1999.
not the language any country would use to indicate support for our position.  

Apart from the at best neutral posture adopted by China, Beijing’s overtures to India were particularly vexing. Some writers sought to legitimize this Chinese peace gambit with such pithy statements as, “A big mountain can accommodate two tigers.”

By the end of July 1999, after the simultaneously much-lauded and much-loathed Sharif-Clinton joint statement, there was a consensus that Pakistan was diplomatically isolated and marginalized by even its closest allies. By mid-July, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three, there was an emergence of popular discontent with the Pakistani government’s failure to predict both the international community’s response to Pakistan’s role in Kargil and India’s reaction to what it perceived as an act of war.

This accumulating international isolation and opprobrium, among other strategic and tactical concerns, likely precipitated Pakistan’s decision to withdraw from Kashmir. While it seems reasonable to posit that China’s response may have initiated disquiet about the durability of the expected or implied commitments presumed to inhere in Sino-Pakistan relations, senior officers in the Pakistani Army, the political leadership, and high-level civil servants suggested that they did not anticipate wide swings in their bilateral dealings with China.

This international isolation also impressed upon Pakistan the need to be seen as pursuing peace with India to recoup some of the diplomatic cachet it had in the immediate aftermath of India’s nuclear tests. Pakistan’s actions in this regard are difficult at best to interpret. On the one hand, Pakistan seems to understand that India has received high dividends from both its mastery of the rhetoric of restraint and its decision not to cross the LOC during the Kargil conflict. As a result, Pakistan has begun to appreciate that it needs to

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9Abbas Rashid, “Raising the Ante in Kashmir.”
10Afzal Mahmood, “Ties with China in Perspective.”
cultivate the public persona of peace mongering. Indeed, in December 2000, Pakistan made several overt gestures toward pursuing peace. For example, Pakistan’s current foreign minister, Abdul Sattar, offered India a trilateral process to commence before December 27, 2000, when the Indian-called Ramazan cease-fire was initially scheduled to conclude.\footnote{B. Muralidhar Reddy, “Sattar Wants Tripartite Talks Before Ramzan,” The Hindu, December 5, 2000.} Pakistan has followed through with offers of maximum restraint, withdrawal from the LOC, and offers of talks at any time, level, or place. Pakistan also claims that it is trying to crack down on “jihadi elements,” perhaps to counter India’s much- aired exasperation with Pakistan’s entrenched unwillingness to do so.\footnote{B. Muralidhar Reddy, “Pak Vows Tough Measures Against ‘Jihadi’ Outfits,” The Hindu, February 13, 2001; “Pakistan Vows Tough Action Against Extremists,” The Times of India Online, February 13, 2001.} Pakistan’s January 2001 airlift of aid to earthquake victims in India may also be read as an overt effort to reposition itself as a peace broker in the subcontinent.\footnote{K.J.M. Varma, “Pakistan to Airlift Tents, Blankets for Gujarat Quake Victims,” rediff.com, January 29, 2001.} Indeed, General Pervez Musharraf himself is trying to recast his image as “the mastermind of Kargil” to the one who solves the Kashmir conundrum.\footnote{“It’s My Dream to Resolve Kashmir Issue: Musharraf,” The Times of India Online, February 10, 2001.}

A straightforward analysis of Pakistan’s strategy in this peace offensive is complicated by the gap between what Pakistan claims it has done and what Pakistan has verifiably done. One possible interpretation is that Pakistan is simply deploying the rhetoric of peace to regain international standing. There is some evidence to support this interpretation. For example, despite the proclamation of troop withdrawal from the LOC, there is no evidence that any thinning of Pakistan’s peacetime deployments had actually occurred as of March 2000. Pakistan’s claims to rein in the jihadis are even more dubious. Musharraf’s much-heralded efforts to restrict the fund-collecting activities of jihadi tanzeems (organizations that support the jihadi efforts in Kashmir and elsewhere) have not been upheld by the Lahore High Court.\footnote{“Jihadis Cannot Be Stopped from Collecting Fund [sic]: Court,” The Times of India Online, February 22, 2001.} Moreover, the February 2001 controversy with The
The Significance of the Kargil Crisis

Frontier Post illuminates Musharraf’s inefficacy against Islamist elements.\(^{17}\) His lack of will here does not simply reflect inability; rather, it reflects the deep ambivalence that many elites feel about the utility of the jihadis in Pakistan’s overarching strategy. Surely, if Pakistan wants to meaningfully contribute to the peace process, it must make some very difficult decisions, the benefits of which are not yet uniformly clear to many Pakistani elites and to Pakistan’s security managers.

Another possible interpretation of Pakistan’s behavior in late 2000 and early 2001 is that Islamabad is engaged in some sort of tacit bargaining. This explanation is supported by the fact that Pakistan did reduce the number of infiltrations across the border in November and December 2000 after its offer of maximum restraint.\(^ {18}\) Pakistan appears to be trying to signal to India through this effort that it can rein in the jihadis and contribute to resolving Kashmir, conditioned on receiving the right—reciprocal—signals from New Delhi. Unfortunately, the unclassified evidence does not permit any easy evaluation of these competing interpretative frameworks.

The Scale of Operations

Two notions of “scale of operations” emerged during this analysis. One was the scale of Pakistani efforts in the conflict, and the other was the scale of India’s reaction. As with the international response, the impact of these two notions of scale was deeply perspectival and depended greatly upon how knowledgeable the interlocutor was of Pakistan’s true role in the crisis.

Those informants who knew of Pakistan’s role believed that one important difference between Kargil and Pakistan’s other activities was

\(^{17}\)Barry Bearak, “Pakistani Journalists May Face Death for Publishing Letter,” New York Times, February 19, 2001. The Frontier Post accidentally published an editorial that was considered blasphemous. The publication of the editorial precipitated an outcry for the editors’ executions. In the face of this situation, Musharraf offered only weak statements, illuminating his lack of resolve against the jihadis and other extremist conservatives.

\(^{18}\)See “Army Chief for Extension of Truce Beyond R-Day,” The Hindustan Times, January 12, 2001. A competing hypothesis is that reduced infiltration could be ascribed to weather.
simply the scale and scope of the Pakistani operation. Retired high-level army officers, elements of the political leadership, academics, and think-tank analysts expressed this view. Generally, these individuals were not surprised that the Indians would respond in a rapid and decisive fashion. These informants were surprised, however, that Pakistan’s security managers apparently did not have this expectation.

Those informants who did not know of Pakistan’s role (or chose not to reveal such knowledge) generally expressed deep shock and indignation at India’s aggressive response to the incursion.19 These sentiments appear throughout the English coverage of the conflict. India’s use of air power precipitated much bitterness, perhaps because India had not exercised this option since the 1971 war. An editorial from early June exemplifies this response to India’s use of air power:

The military operations in occupied Kashmir have been continuing for more than a decade now; and there is nothing new about them. If at all there is anything new, it lies in the level of force. . . .Never before, for instance, had India used its air force to prop up the sagging morale of its occupation forces. . . .Not content with that, the Indian military has stepped up its artillery bombardment . . . and even attempted small-scale infantry attacks across the Line of Control.20

It is important to note that this surprise seems to have stemmed from the belief that India was using unnecessary force against the mujahideen.21 And in this vein, throughout May, June, and most of July, writers tended to portray Pakistan as aggrieved by what was seen as unjustifiable, naked Indian aggression against a handful of mujahideen. It is an unanswerable question whether these writers would have had the same opinion if they had known that the Pakistani Army was involved. Some evidence pointing to an affirmative

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19Indeed, between June 1 and August 1, 1999, there were some 43 articles in The Dawn that addressed the issue of culpability for the escalation. Twenty-three of those articles clearly held the Indians responsible, compared to 10 articles that were more even-handed in their assessment.
20“Talks at Last” [editorial], The Dawn, June 10, 1999.
answer to this question is provided by the opinion pieces emerging in mid-July that asked why the Pakistani government misled the populace on Kargil. This shift in thought dampened the outrage over what was perceived to be Indian overreaction.  

The Possibility of Conflict Expansion

The final point of significance with respect to Pakistan is that many writers in Pakistan expressed numerous concerns about the possibility of the conflict’s expansion into an all-out conventional war, which could further slip into a nuclear exchange. Indeed, the Kargil crisis, having unfolded in the wake of the May 1998 nuclear tests by both combatants, may have been the most salient opportunity to reflect upon this possibility. However, some Indian observers were rather cynical about this Pakistani concern, feeling that this was simply a disingenuous Pakistani attempt, first, to generate anxiety about the nuclear issue in the international community and, second, to bolster Pakistan’s efforts to precipitate international mediation in the Kashmir dispute. While Pakistan’s desire to raise the profile of the Kashmir issue has been an enduring component of its conventional and nuclear strategies, the Kargil Review Committee Report in this instance may be overstating the argument. A careful review of the chronology of Pakistan’s ambiguous threats to use its “ultimate” weapons suggests that these warnings were issued only after India’s conventional redeployments had reached significant proportions and were increasingly visible to Pakistani military intelligence. Under such circumstances, Islamabad’s nuclear signaling is likely to have been driven, at least partly, by the prudential objective of cautioning New Delhi against any further escalation, vertical or horizontal, in its conventional military response along the international border.

22Dr. Manzur Ejaz, “An Unlikely Beneficiary of the Kargil Crisis.”


24See, for example, India Kargil Review Committee, From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), hereforth referred to in text as the Kargil Review Committee Report.
INDIA'S PERSPECTIVE

India Confirms Its Worst Beliefs About Pakistan

From India’s perspective, the most significant conclusion drawn from Kargil is that dealing with Pakistan—as currently constituted—is going to be deeply problematic and perhaps even justifies minimal contact with Islamabad. This was the view expressed by a wide array of political leaders, analysts, and military officials in India, for several reasons.

First, Kargil demonstrated to India that Pakistan could be a reckless, adventurist, and risk-acceptant state, capable of behaving astrategically and irrationally. Although surprised both by the fact and the intensity of the Kargil operation, almost all Indian analysts argued that—in retrospect—India ought not to have been surprised, because this event comported perfectly with the history of Pakistani adventurism witnessed specifically in 1947, and thereafter in 1964 and in 1965. For many interlocutors, particularly within the Indian government, this raised grave, usually unsettling questions about Pakistan’s ability to assess its strategic environment, its capacity for coherent decisionmaking, and its ability to subordinate its fear and loathing of India to the more rational demands imposed by the nuclearization of the subcontinent and the fact of India’s greater power-political capacity.

Second, Pakistan’s prosecution of Kargil even amidst its pursuit of the Lahore Declaration process was understood to be outrageously duplicitous, irrespective of the strategic calculus—or lack thereof—motivating the operation. This view strengthens the argument within India that New Delhi really cannot “do business” with Islamabad because it is an essentially untrustworthy partner. It also reinforces Indian convictions that the international community cannot be allowed to railroad India into consummating some kind of a “peace process” with Pakistan, given the past failures of both Shimla and Lahore. More significantly, however, the “duplicity” of Pakistan, made evident by the Kargil adventure, is seen throughout the Indian government to necessitate critical changes in attitudes, institutions, capabilities, and readiness in order to deal with future Pakistani surprises in both the conventional military and the nuclear realms.
Third, Pakistan’s chronic civil-military rivalry exacerbates India’s distrust and wariness of the state. The Pakistani Army is and will likely remain the vaunted power in Pakistan, even when under a nominally civilian government. This institution is seen in New Delhi as being virulently anti-India. Given this perception, the fact of Kargil and the sketchy details available in India about the operation’s genesis, planning, and execution only confirm the Indian suspicion that no matter what improvements in relations can be envisaged as occurring with Pakistan’s civilian governments, these improvements will either be held hostage by the Pakistani military or will not be brought to consummation because of military opposition within Pakistan. This problem in turn leads Indian policymakers not only to despair of reaching any viable agreements with Pakistan, but also to avoid expending inordinate amounts of political capital to reach meaningful agreements because of (a) Islamabad’s inability to recognize that the problem of “Kashmir” as defined by Pakistan cannot be enthroned as the “core” problem bedeviling India-Pakistan relations; (b) the Indian fears that even valid agreements reached with Pakistan will not stick or will be diluted by Islamabad depending on the political exigencies of the day; and (c) the concerns in New Delhi that even advantageous agreements reached with Islamabad could strengthen the Pakistani military and reinforce its propensity to continue warring with India. In some sense, then, Indian policymakers and security managers believe that the Pakistani Army is the root of all major problems between India and Pakistan. Colonel Gurmeet Kanwal captured this sentiment exactly when he argued that

India’s problems in Kashmir will remain until Pakistan’s rogue army is tamed. . . . The real problem between India and Pakistan is the Pakistan army and its abnormal influence in Pakistan’s affairs, and not Kashmir or any other issue. Till democracy takes root in Pakistan, Indo-Pak problems will remain irreconcilable.

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25 Many policymakers in New Delhi noted that this issue undercuts India’s willingness to conclude satisfactory deals with Pakistan—for example, with respect to oil pipelines running over Pakistani territory or with respect to trade.

India Strengthened in Its Determination to Marginalize Pakistan on Kashmir

While all but the most fringe elements recognize that the Kashmiri uprising in 1989 had indigenous roots, Indian stakeholders and the polity at large have been divided on the reasons for its longevity. Many have asserted that there is widespread alienation among the Kashmiris that must be addressed before the Kashmir issue can be resolved. This alienation is posited to stem from, inter alia, the poor human rights situation, problems with structures of popular representation, the lack of accountable state government, the persistence of center-state conflicts, and hardships imposed by counterinsurgency operations. Others have taken the position that Pakistan is essentially the only obstacle to the Kashmiris finding a livable solution within India. Within these broad positions, some people have held that there is value in engaging the Pakistanis on Kashmir for the purposes of moderating and attenuating Pakistan’s activities. The Lahore Declaration can be seen in this light.

In India’s view, the Lahore initiative was a legitimate (and, for Vajpayee himself, a determined) effort to achieve normalization on a broad cluster of key issues. Kargil, likely launched around the time of the Lahore initiative, raised serious doubts about India’s ability to deal with Pakistan in good faith. Well-placed interlocutors in the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of External Affairs explained that one of the most important changes in the Indian mindset precipitated by Kargil is that those who formerly were proponents of engaging Pakistan have been silenced or no longer support this position. Even those on the left of the political spectrum who formerly contended that diplomacy was a critical component of resolving the Kashmir problem now opine that Pakistan cannot be trusted, and almost all political constituencies in India are united in the belief that negotiations—as opposed to merely “talks”—are not an option now or in the future. The distinction between negotiations and talks is an important one: whereas the latter involves, among


28See the text of the Lahore Declaration, which can be obtained from the U.S. Institute of Peace Web site: http://www.usip.org/library/pa/ip_ip_lahore19990221.html.
other things, procedural and diplomatic engagement, the former involves some prospect of substantive concessions. While India has time and again affirmed its willingness to engage *procedurally and diplomatically* with Pakistan, its incentives to engage in negotiations that harbor the prospect of substantive concessions of the sort desired by Pakistan—a plebiscite in accordance with the UN resolutions, a redrawing of the territorial boundaries to include a possible transfer of the Kashmir valley to Pakistan, or a trifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir along religious-ethnic lines—have always been minimal. This calculus has only been reinforced by the events occurring at Kargil.

All this implies that the motivation to treat Pakistan as a legitimate party to the Kashmir dispute in the sense traditionally understood by Islamabad—which was never very significant to begin with—is now all but extinguished, and New Delhi will pursue, as best it can, solutions to the Kashmir problem that either bypass or marginalize Pakistan in the substantive (though not the procedural) sense. Any Pakistani engagement on the question of Kashmir is likely to be mainly supplemental to internal Indian efforts at restoring local peace.

**Kargil Was an Intelligence Failure Not to Be Repeated**

Kargil was a significant blow to India’s perception of its security. Media reports, interviews with key military and political individuals, and numerous monographs written to assess the causes and outcomes of the Kargil debacle all conclude that Pakistan’s adventurism in Kargil was a tactical and strategic surprise.²⁹ Several high-level military and political stakeholders in India have described Kargil as India’s Pearl Harbor, which has compelled New Delhi to take various steps to ensure that a similar situation will not occur.

The significance of the strategic surprise is manifested in at least two ways. The first is that the Indian political-military elite has begun to identify the limitations that exist in Indian intelligence’s ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence effectively. Accus-

²⁹The primary public document that addresses this issue is the India Kargil Review Committee’s *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*. This document covers the shortfalls of Indian intelligence equipment and the inherent deficiencies of the Indian intelligence apparatus.
tomed to a seasonal pattern of summer diligence followed by a winter of recuperative retreat, the Indian military and their attendant intelligence agencies did little to anticipate a Pakistani foray into LOC locations typically held by India. The intelligence agencies were described as relying too heavily on the notion that the inhospitable region and the lack of previous Pakistani adventurism precluded any type of incursion into Kargil.\textsuperscript{30}

Second, the \textit{Kargil Review Committee Report} makes clear that there were serious lapses in what can be considered baseline intelligence collection. For instance, the Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) failed to correctly identify as many as five infantry battalions of the Pakistani Northern Light Infantry (NLI) and the de-induction of three others.\textsuperscript{31} Opinion pieces in newspapers following evidence of strategic surprise were equally critical of the intelligence failure. An especially harsh rebuke of the Indian Army represents the most debasing public response to the intelligence failure:

\begin{quote}
[H]ow did these posts get occupied by the infiltrators? This constant shelling should have been taken as an ominous sign. I am afraid we were not prepared. The euphoria since May 1998 has lulled our politicians and public alike. But as a former military intelligence chief, I would not spare the army too. When you are holding posts at those heights and are in eyeball-to-eyeball contact with the adversary, not being able to see their movements, leave alone anticipate them, is inexcusable. It is certainly an intelligence failure.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

The timing of the incursion, the diplomatic context in which it occurred, and Pakistan's tactical audacity occasioned much introspection among India's military, political, and intelligence officials. Kargil precipitated a renewed dedication to military, technological, and intelligence efforts to preclude future Kargil-like scenarios. This issue is further addressed in Chapter Three, which discusses lessons learned from Kargil.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 160. \\
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 153. \\
\end{flushright}
India Realizes That International Attention to Pakistani Adventurism Can Be Positive

The various statements made by the international community were highly sympathetic to India’s position during the Kargil crisis, a condition that India appreciated. A reading of the Indian op-ed pages of major English-language papers suggests that India may have concluded that select types of international attention can be beneficial in some contexts, particularly when focused on Pakistani misdeeds.

The international response to Kargil nearly unanimously cast Pakistan as the transgressor and called for mutual restraint, a bilateral settlement of disputes, and a resumption of the Lahore process—all of which supported India’s position on Kashmir generally and Kargil in particular. As noted above, even China espoused a rhetoric that was consonant with the measured international response.33 For example, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Zhu Bangzao, explained: “China hopes India and Pakistan will exercise restraint and peacefully resolve their differences and problems through patient and sincere dialogue.”34

Conversely, India both maintained the support of old friends and cultivated new bastions of support. Russia, for example, was “the first country to come out openly in support of India by a categorical declaration that it would foil Pakistan’s bid to internationalise the Kashmir issue whilst reiterating its support for New Delhi’s action against the infiltrators in Kargil.”35 (Russia may have been motivated to take such a position because of its own situation in Chechnya.) Given the long history of estrangement between the United States and India and the intense U.S. pressure on New Delhi in relation to

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its nuclear programs, India was particularly surprised by the U.S. reaction to the events in Kargil, which insinuated the Pakistani role in the crisis by insisting upon Pakistan’s withdrawal of the combatants. Moreover, the United States countered the notion that Pakistan was provoked into retaliating against what it was trying to paint as clear Indian aggression by stating that “to our knowledge, India has not struck over the Line of Control, deliberately or accidentally.” The U.S. State Department was also quoted as saying that sanctions might be imposed against Pakistan if it continued with its intransigent posture. Additionally, India received accolades for acting with restraint in the face of naked Pakistani aggression. It may even be suggested that Kargil catalyzed a major shift in U.S. policy away from its traditional formula, which affirms Kashmir as a dispute to be resolved by India and Pakistan, toward a position effectively recognizing the sanctity of the LOC, a development that is welcomed by New Delhi.

The response from multilateral organizations was also viewed by Indian elites as favorable. The United Nations, particularly members of the Security Council, assured India there would be no attempt to intervene in Kashmir, although Pakistan was said to have requested such intervention. Rather, the UN would maintain its position of observer along the LOC. Similarly, the G-8 issued a statement on June 21, 1999, indicating its “deep concern” about the military confrontation in Kashmir, which it saw as being the result of an “infiltration of armed intruders which violated the line of control.”

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36See the July 4 Clinton-Sharif Agreement. See also Sridhar Krishnaswami, “Pull Back Forces, Clinton Tells Sharif,” The Hindu, June 16, 1999.


39See, for example, “Clinton Appreciates India’s Restraint,” The Hindu, June 15, 1999.


41For more discussion regarding the UN reaction to events in Kargil, see Arpit Rajain, “India’s Political and Diplomatic Response to the Kargil Crisis.” See also “Security Council Hands Off Kargil,” The Statesman, May 30, 1999; “Pakistan Crossed the LOC Says UN Chief,” The Hindu, May 31, 1999.

The communiqué called for a “restoration of the line of control and for the parties to work for an immediate cessation of the fighting, full respect in the future for the line of control and the resumption of the dialogue between India and Pakistan in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration.” The language of the communiqué was clearly consistent with the Indian interest in legitimizing the LOC as a border between the two nations based on a bilateral agreement.

The international reaction to the Kargil intrusion, particularly from the United States, G-8, UN, and China, demonstrated to India the power of world opinion to restrict Pakistan’s options at all levels of diplomacy and war. The Kargil Review Committee Report suggested that India was cognizant of the role that international perception played in the unraveling of Kargil and would seek to develop and exploit that perception.43 To the degree that Pakistani support for pariah regimes like the Taliban remains unwavering and to the degree that Islamist radicalism extends its reach beyond Kashmir, India’s location as a front-line state in the fight against political extremism will be all the more obvious.44 India has thus learned to value international attention to Pakistani adventurism, but it should not therefore be concluded that India sees benefit accruing from internationalizing the Kashmir issue more generally. On the contrary, India will persist in its efforts to minimize the role of other countries and international organizations in any discussions regarding the disposition of Kashmir even while it cultivates attention that has the effect of demonizing and ultimately constraining Pakistan.

Kargil Demonstrated the Utility of the Media in Military Operations

The Kargil Review Committee Report states that

The media is or can be a valuable force multiplier. Even in circumstances of proxy war, the battle for hearts and minds is of

44 India Kargil Review Committee, From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report, p. 222.
paramount importance. It is little use winning the battle of bullets only to lose the war because of popular alienation.\textsuperscript{45}

A review of Indian military literature suggests that India has long been aware of the need to develop a media strategy as an instrument of warfare. The need for such a strategy has been reinforced by India’s extensive involvement in counterinsurgency (COIN) and peacekeeping operations.\textsuperscript{46} During Kargil, New Delhi demonstrated its agility in handling a variety of media (e.g., television, print, radio, Internet) to disseminate and control the Indian message, shaping in the process both the international and the domestic perception of events.

The role of the media in shaping domestic and international opinion regarding Kargil is evident in the headlines of major Indian newspapers printed during the time. Numerous Indian newspapers were filled with accounts of how Pakistan “propped up intruders” in a “qualitatively different” infiltration. Such narratives in effect strengthened the view of India as a responsible and restrained nuclear nation victimized by its overzealous neighbor. Some representative headlines are as follows:


\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 215.

Headlines such as these focused attention on a “blitz” of stories that “expose[d] the direct role of Pakistan” in the invasion of Indian territory.47

Various print and television stories also painted India as a nation at the front line of Islamic terrorism. The Indian press made explicit references to the connection between Pakistan and vilified Afghanistan resident Osama bin Laden.48 Such overtures were perhaps symptomatic of India’s efforts to stimulate antipathy toward its unstable, nonsecular neighbor. Conversely, at an early stage in the conflict, India sought to cast itself in an aura of responsibility and trust.49 By publicly disavowing crossing the LOC—despite enormous provocation from Pakistan—India cultivated an international opinion that it was a responsible nuclear nation capable of restraint.

Another important objective in the aftermath of Kargil was the ex post facto recasting of India’s engagement with Pakistan during the Lahore Declaration process. Early in the crisis, the Indian media rushed to proclaim Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s ignorance of Kargil and cast him as the Pakistani Army’s duped stooge. Assuming ignorance was not at issue—an assumption that cannot be taken for granted to begin with—this image had utility for two reasons. First, it was a “carefully calculated move to sharpen the differences between civilian and military establishments in Pakistan.”50 Second, by casting the Pakistani Army as the rogue elephant responsible for Kargil and by distancing the Sharif government from it, India could insist that the Lahore Declaration represented a legitimate form of engagement that was being subverted principally by the Pakistani Army—a strategy that had some attractiveness insofar as it

49 Arpit Rajain, “India’s Political and Diplomatic Response to the Kargil Crisis.”
50 Ibid.
could help vitiate the claims of some of the critics of Vajpayee’s dramatic bus diplomacy.\textsuperscript{51}

One of the positive benefits of the media’s televised depiction of India’s war dead was the galvanizing of domestic support for more-aggressive actions against Pakistan.\textsuperscript{52} This was watched with interest in Pakistan, according to our interlocutors, who read these depictions as a deliberate effort to instigate a frenzied consensus in favor of attacking Pakistan. Indian media agencies also cultivated domestic support with continuous news of activities on the front lines and instant communication via the Internet. Several Web sites (e.g., www.indiainfo.com, www.kargilonline.com, and www.vijayinkargil.org) described numerous episodes of heroism at the front, supported Indian tactical and strategic decisions, updated events in real time, and narrated stories of families of soldiers enduring the loss of their loved ones.

While these Web sites have obvious utility in some regards, the demographics of India imply that only a small fraction of India’s more-affluent population was on-line and therefore accessible through this medium. It is also likely that these Web sites targeted the expatriate Indian population (which has developed considerable political clout within some countries of residence). Some of these Web sites explicitly solicited financial donations. For example, kargilonline.com (a site dedicated to the “welfare of soldiers and their families”) tried to encourage donations to the Army Welfare Fund: “The debt of gratitude the nation owes these heroes is incalculable. Nevertheless, ordinary citizens like you and me must find some small way to chip in.”\textsuperscript{53} The Indian Army’s official Kargil Web site (www.vijayinkargil.org) did so also: “Contributions [for the Army Welfare Fund] including those from the NRI’s [nonresident Indians] are welcome (in any currency).”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid. See also “Sharif, ISI Uninvolved, by George!” \textit{The Hindustan Times}, May 29, 1999; “Nawas Was Bypassed, Feel Western Experts,” \textit{The Pioneer}, May 29, 1999.


\textsuperscript{53}www.kargilonline.com.

\textsuperscript{54}www.vijayinkargil.org.
The mobilization of national and international opinion in support of India is seen as a key component of future conflicts with Pakistan. In fact, the *Kargil Review Committee Report* recommends a well-structured civil-military apparatus to ensure all possible media consistently and adequately portray the desired Indian message.⁵⁵ The significance of incorporating a comprehensive information warfare component—one that is completely integrated with national reportage capabilities—cannot be overstated. Both the declared desire to improve civil-military relations in order to mold positive perceptions among the domestic audience and the implied intention to ensure India’s posture of stability and restraint in the international realm are key pieces of evidence that words are viewed as carrying great weight in the ongoing battle for hearts and minds in the subcontinent and beyond.

**SUMMARY**

The import of the Kargil crisis was generally very different for both countries. While Pakistan appears to have concluded that Kargil-like operations are not likely to be successful for many reasons and therefore are not attractive as a matter of state policy, Pakistan has *not* concluded that violence in general is an illegitimate means for altering the status quo. Pakistan will continue to pursue low-intensity operations within the context of its Kashmir policy, incorporating as best it can ordinary Kashmiris’ alienation from India in support of larger political objectives. One of the reasons why future Kargil-like episodes are seen as not likely to be successful is Pakistan’s understanding that the conflict subverted Pakistan’s position internationally while simultaneously retarding its ability to focus on economic and social renewal domestically.

What remains to be explicated is Pakistan’s continual willingness to take on such risks. In fact, several Pakistani writers have questioned Pakistan’s foray into Kargil, comparing it with the 1965 war as a fine

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example of why Pakistan should resist such adventurism. More generally, prior to launching this operation, Islamabad should well have comprehended India’s ability to inflict pain on Pakistan. Pakistan’s risk acceptance is revisited in the next chapter.

Most of Kargil’s significance for India can be seen in terms of the conflict’s impact on bilateral relations with Pakistan. India believes Pakistan to be fundamentally untrustworthy and capable of acting in ways that appear to be completely irrational and astrategic. This has strengthened the Indian determination to resolve the Kashmir issue without acknowledging Pakistan’s equities in the manner desired by Islamabad. Kargil also occasioned reconsideration of India’s perception of its security and its intelligence apparatus: in particular, Kargil strengthened the belief that Pakistani surprises can and will occur with potentially dangerous results and that they consequently merit anticipatory preparation in India. Kargil also revealed to India that select aspects of international attention—particularly to Pakistan’s misconduct—have significant utility for its grand strategy. Finally, Kargil demonstrated India’s ability to dexterously influence the media to shape the domestic and the international response.