



RESEARCH PAPER

The Kargil Conflict: A case of Civil Military-Split

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ABSTRACT

The Kargil conflict was a small-scale war between India and Pakistan that lasted from May to July 1999 in the Kargil district of Kashmir along the line of control. The goal of this study was to better comprehend the international and national pressures on Pakistan as a result of the Kargil conflict. The fight began when Pakistani forces took the high mountain peaks of the Kargil sector, which the Indian army had left owing to harsh winter weather. This essay explores what were the reasons behind Pakistan's backing for the Kargil conflict. The fight lasted two months, and both sides incurred significant casualties. To support the argument, data were obtained from primary and secondary sources, and the research type is descriptive and historic.

Keywords: India, Kargil, Line of Control, Pakistan

Introduction

Kargil conflict draws world attention towards the two nuclear states of south Asia. The Kargil war left many questions in the minds of researchers; neither military leader general Musharraf nor the civilian government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif shoulder the responsibility of the Kargil issue. Following the wars of 1948, 1965, and 1971, the Kargil conflict in 1999 was regarded as another small war between Pakistan and India. The incident has shaken the world community, as it occurred just a few months after Pakistan's nuclear test on May 28, 1998. The Kargil operation was not immediately owned by either the Pakistani government or the military. The Pakistani government's official explanation was that the Kargil operation was carried out by the Mujahedeen to bring the Kashmir issue to public attention; additionally, the military and Nawaz Sharif's government were unable to withstand international pressure. The Pakistani military interpreted it as a LOC-limited incident (like in Siachen 1984, undertaken by India) overseeing Pakistan's newly acquired nuclear status. With its well-organized diplomatic efforts, India was able to capture the sympathy of the world community. China, Pakistan's steadfast backer, had insisted that the Kargil dispute be resolved diplomatically rather than through coercion. This topic was chosen to investigate the civil military attitude on beginning the small Kargil war and how this issue turned against Pakistan. To accomplish this, we must investigate the historical relationship between military and civilian administrations before attempting to explain the topic based on previous experience.

Literature Review

Khakwani (2003), in his article, presented different theories to study civil-military relations in Pakistan. According to Huntington, it's the bellicosity and authoritarianism of the military, whereas Janowitz believes that military oligarchy and civil-military relations are important reasons for military intervention in the political affairs of the state. Finer, on the other hand, said that disposition and opportunity are the causes of the military's extended role in politics.

Saeed (1997), in his book "Civil Military Relations in Pakistan from Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to Benaizir Bhutto", discussed the Latin American model of civil military interaction according to the Donells model; this model works for industrial countries where civil military authoritarian attitudes leave unrest in the labor class, whereas Pakistan, since its independence, is an agrarian country. Saeed discovers in his book another aspect of military dominance over civil institutions, and that is due to the institutional strength of the military, which helps to overshadow the political and civilian organs of the state.

Regionalism and sectarianism are discouraged in the military; this practice establishes unity within military lines. Trainings and other decisions took place at the military headquarters, which is GHQ in Rawalpindi. In her book, she also discussed the Pakistan-US alliance against the war on terror and the role of the Pakistani military in executing this state policy. (Muzaffar, et al 2021; Schofield (2011).

Haqqani (2005), in his book "Pakistan between mosque and military", discussed different techniques of the Pakistani military to intrude in political affairs and effect the decisions of the elected politicians. How the military of Pakistan cashed the political differences of different political groups and used them in their favor. Haqqani, in his book, said that the military wants to deal with Afghan and Kashmir policy according to their own agenda and is not ready to accept civil authority over these issues. (Muzaffar, et.al, 2019)

Mazari (2003), in her 1999 book "The Kargil Conflict, separating fact from fiction", tries to present the first ever point of view of the Pakistani the Pakistani military over the Kargil issue. According to this book, Kargil was a limited border conflict similar to that of Siachen, conducted by the Indian military back in 1984. The Pakistani army had no intention of a full-scale war, as was clear by the limited number of military presences in that sector. This issue became complex because of secrecy issues on the part of the military, as no inquiry commission was ever established to know the causes and shortcomings of the issue.

Cloughlay (2000), in an edited book "A History of Pakistan Army War and Insurrections (Karamat to Kargil)", discussed the impact of Pakistan's nuclear test on the need for atomic doctrine. He also discussed the military keenness over the creation of the national security council and the role of the army in that institution, as the army works for the defense and security of the state. In his work, he highlights the loose poles in Indian strategy over Kargil.

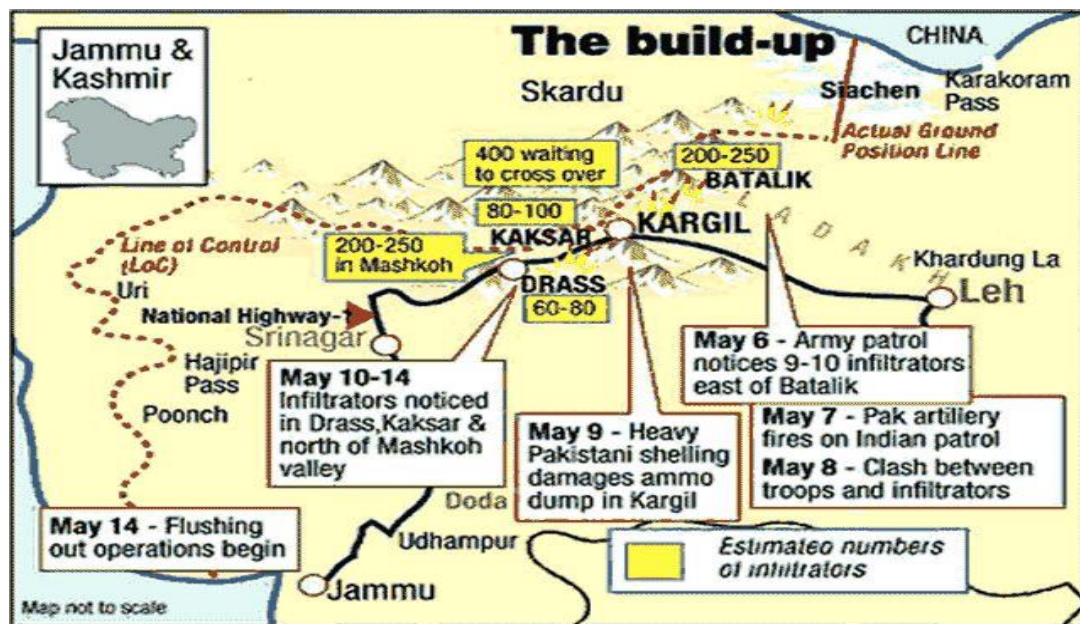
Shafqat (2009), in his article "The Kargil Conflict Impact on Pakistan Politics and Society", discusses the rift over Kargil between the military and political governments of Nawaz Sharif. He also discussed the liberal, Islamist, and realist views of Pakistani society over the issue. The role of English and Urdu media was also discussed as creating awareness among the masses through their article. Urdu media focused on the creation of sensations, whereas English media responsibly reported the issue. Lack of access to information is another hurdle to a free investigation of the issue. (Muzaffar, Yaseen, & Afzal, 2021).

Cheema (2013), in her article "International Community and the Kargil Conflict", draws on the topography of Kargil to develop our understanding and importance of the issue as well. She draws on two main reasons to start the Kargil venture: the involvement of India in the Neelam Valley and the need to draw international attention to the Kashmir issue.

Rizvi (2009), in an edited book "Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia (The Lesson of Kargil as Learned by Pakistan)", discussed the secrecy phobia of the military, due to which no independent research has ever been conducted over the Kargil issue. He also discussed the adventurism of Pakistan's military overseeing its nuclear status, which leaves Pakistan in an embarrassing position internationally.

Geostrategic Significance and Topography of Kargil

Kargil is a district in the Ladakh area of the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir. Kargil is located on the Line of Control, facing Pakistani-administrated Gilgit-Baltistan to the west and the predominantly Indian-administrated Kashmir valley to the south. Zaskar is part of the Kargil district, which also includes the Suru, Wakha, and Dras valleys. The Kargil Complex consists of steep mountains ranging in height from 8500 to 18500 feet. The area, which was once a parabolic drawing, is limited by Zojila Pass on the west, the Shyok River on the east, the Line of Control on the north, and dispersed villages including Zojila, Sanko, Mulbek, Khalsi, and Partapur on the south. The area is sparsely populated and poorly cultivated. Heavy snowfall began in late September and continued until April the following year. During winter, temperatures range from - 20 to minus 40 degrees Celsius (Cheema, 2013).



Map:1 Location of Kargil

Source:<http://vayu-sena-aux.tripod.com/kargil-maps1.html>

Following the dissolution of the British Raj, the subcontinent was partitioned into two territories: India and Pakistan. The Indo-Pakistani War of 1947 over Kashmir's fate ended in Pakistani control over Kargil. However, India took control of Kargil during the Pakistan-India second conflict of 1971, which was sparked by the Bangladesh conflict of Independence. After the 1971 war, Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Shimla Accord in 1972, which served as the foundation for Indian authorities' claim to the territory.

Routes Leads to Kargil from India and Pakistan

Kargil was established as a distinct district in 1979. There are two major highways that lead to Kargil, as well as other fair-weather paths for traffic in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

Srinagar ----- Kargil ----- Leh

The major road begins in Srinagar, continues to Kargil, and concludes in Leh. The road is known as the National Highway 1. This road remains blocked to all traffic from mid-November until mid-May. This is the primary supply route (MSR) for Indian troops stationed near the LOC.

Himachal Pardesh ----- Pathankot ----- Upshi (Ladkah) - Manali Road

The second key route is the Manali Leh route, which runs from Himachal Pradesh through Pathankot to Upshi in Ladakh. This road goes across the Jammu and Kashmir valleys. It is harder to navigate because it runs along the summits. It is more difficult to navigate because it runs along the peaks of mountains that can reach 14,000 feet. The main advantage for Indians is that it is far away from the LOC. (Cheema, 2013).

It is difficult to approach Kargil from Pakistan due to the inadequate road link. There are just two mountainous routes leading to Kargil: the Skardu-Kargil road, which runs through the Dewsay plains, and the Burzil-Gultari-Piyal-Shaqma-Kargil route. There are tracks that can only be utilized for light traffic in the summer. The route Burzil-Shaqma serves as the MSR for both the Pakistani army and civilians. (Cheema, 2013).

Beginning of the Conflict, 1999

The weather in Kargil district is not hospitable for humans in winter, so the Indian Force had to leave higher posts at the start of September 1998 and completely vacate these posts until October 1998. These posts were recaptured by the Indian army once the weather was bearable in the summer of 1999. The Indian brigadier Surinder Singh reported to their authorities the expected threats once the higher posts were vacated, but the report was considered the regular one; no serious action was taken on the report.

Away from the military developments, the politicians of the two countries, prime ministers Nawaz Sharif from Pakistan and Vajpayee from India, met in February 1999 in Lahore to come up with some workable solutions between the two countries. In the beginning of March 1999, Indian military sources spotted activity at the higher post of Kargil, which they vacated at the end of summer 1998. Further inquiry confirmed that some activity was going on in the vacated posts. The Indian military started bashing Pakistan's military for conducting operations in the area. Political and military leaders did not come up with a clear view on the Indian claim. India forces started a large-scale combined military operation of air and land forces. India already had a strategic advantage in the area; henceforth, Indian forces will soon take their posts.

Pakistan's Civil Military Standpoint on the Kargil Issue

Pakistan released its official statement after some time, stating that the operation was not officially conducted by the Pakistani military. However, they did not deny the ongoing operation; rather, they came up with a number of statements that further complicated the situation.

- The first statement was that the operation was conducted by the Kashmiri Mujahideens, who wanted to draw the world's attention towards Kashmir.
- Then there was another statement that the Northern Line infantry was involved, not the military of Pakistan. NLI was working under the interior minister and not under the military when the operation was conducted; later, NLI was officially included in the military. However, there is another interesting thing: the NLI commander was appointed by the military and reappointed to GHQ in Rawalpindi (Cloughley, 2000).
- Once the international community put pressure on the civilian government of Sharif, he denied that the operation was conducted with his consent.
- The Military COAS insisted that Sharif be briefed on the issue.

Rationale for Kargil Incident

On May 28, 1998, Pakistan tested its first nuclear missile and acquired the status of the first Islamic nuclear state. Pakistan entered as a seventh member of the nuclear club after the USA, Russia, France, England, China, and India. Under

- One of the expected reasons for Pakistan's army to capture Kargil Heights was that they wanted to end the interruption in Neelum Valley by Indian sight as they took the edge of sitting on a high hill and disturbed Pakistan's movement in Neelum Valley (Cheema, 2013). However, this argument was not further explored in the research conducted by Mazari (2003) in collaboration with military authorities. They maintained that there was no need for any such operation to stay connected with Neelum Valley, as they had already developed an alternative route of Daras-Kargil Road to access Neelum Valley.
- Another reason was to grab international attention on the issue of Kashmir. However, this argument was again not seconded by Mazari (2003), as the military command maintained that they did not have any need to carry out any such operation for international attention; the issue was already in the limelight after the Pakistan nuclear test.
- To check and disrupt the supply line from India to Kashmir. There was a counterargument by Mazari (2003), and that was that the Pakistani army wants to improve its position on Siachin and to relax the pressure of counterattacks by India on Mujahedeen involved in Kashmiri Jihad.
- ISI reports reflect that India was planning another Siachin (1984) type of operation across LOCs. Pakistan's military this time was not ready to take surprise attacks by India; that's why they planned to capture the heights of Kargil to check Indian military moves in occupied Kashmir (Mazari, 2003).

Politicians' Viewpoints on the Kargil Issue

Benazir Bhutto revealed in an interview that the Kargil plan was first presented to her by General Karamat in her second tenure as prime minister, but she rejected the plan. This view of Ms. Bhutto was rejected by General Karamat; he denied any such briefing, as the military had not been planning this issue long before (Mazari, 2003). Nawaz Sharif, the then PM, denied any knowledge of the issue, but military sources insisted that he was briefed in January 1999 on his visit to Skardu and in Kel on February 5, 1999. Again, full-scale meetings were arranged by military operations and the director of GHQ in March and May, respectively. The Defense Committee of the Cabinet was also briefed in July 1999, in which Navy and Air Force military chiefs were also present. A military official insisted that on July 5, 1999, PM Nawaz Sharif was again briefed about the operation (Mazari, 2003).

However, Sharif denied knowledge of this operation and claimed that he learned about the issue through his counterpart Vajpayee, and Pakistani military high command kept him in the dark. Sharif knowledge proved with the available meeting records held between him and the military high command; the level of knowledge may be questionable, but for sure it cannot be denied that he was not informed. Later, when Sharif went to the USA to see President Clinton during his visit, he announced the withdrawal of forces, which further put Pakistan in an embarrassing position, first denying its presence, then concluding the withdrawal agreement. The USA played a major role in forcing Pakistan to quit unconditionally. The military was neither asked nor informed about the decision, which detested Pakistani military authorities.

PM-Cabinet Split

Sharif does not take the cabinet and ministry of foreign affairs under confidence before taking the decision; they learned about the issue in the briefing held by GQH and Military Operations. As ministers were not informed, they were also not ready to respond to the situation with a single voice and make some policy statements for the nation generally and the international community in particular (Rizvi, 2009). In contrast to Pakistan's, India, in a short time, created a successful diplomatic campaign launched by its diplomats and won over international sympathy in its favor.

Government-Civil Split

Initially, it was established that the operation was for the Kashmir cause operated by the Mujahideen; this statement satisfies the pro-Mujahideen faction in Pakistan. There is another section of society that believes that the Kashmir problem might be solved (Masood, H. & Muzaffar, 2019) The government of Pakistan failed to build consensus not only within its own lines but also to satisfy other factions of society. Islamic parties and the educated class did not like the move of Sharif, as Islamic parties believed it was deceitful with Kashmiri Mujahideens. The educated masses believe it was disgraceful for the Pakistani military to retreat in this manner; generally, Sharif decisions were not liked by the masses (Shafqat, 2011; Masood, Sultana, & Muzaffar, 2020).

Split in the Armed Forces

There was a split in the armed forces as well as the Navy, and air force chiefs were not informed by their counterpart land forces; they were briefed by the Defense Committee of the Cabinet. It reflects a lack of coordination among the three sections of the defense forces. Whereas, Indian forces respond with their full capacity and coordination between their three armed forces. The land forces of India jointly conducted this operation with the help of air and land forces (Rizvi, 2009).

Over view

The above-mentioned and discussed statements reflect knowledge of Pakistan's military regarding the issue; they were not aware of the situation initially. It was not an effective move on behalf of the army and the Sharif government. What was lacking was not the question of whether the operation was right or wrong; the more important question was how the authorities responded to the issue. India in 1984, despite being a belligerent state, managed international pressure and did not withdraw, as the operation was fully coordinated between the political and military institutions of the state.

Pakistan's missing links between civil-military, military-military, and civil-civil left Pakistan alone in the international community. Even our most trusted friend China gave a statement on the Sharif visit to China during the crisis that Pakistan should solve the issue diplomatically. The USA also played an important role in forcing Pakistan to take its forces out of Kargil; all this happened because the Pakistani government and military overlooked key facts.

- Pakistan acquired nuclear status on May 28, 1998, which changed the whole nature of the conflict between India and Pakistan. Pakistan action was not taken as a limited LOC incident by the International Community; rather, they were concerned that two nuclear states were in conflict and every possibility of the use of nuclear weapons put the world at large and the Asian region in particular.
- Pakistan's economic condition was not very good due to the economic sanctions of 1998, and in such a situation, war was not Pakistan's cup of tea.

- India was a power in the region, if not more, but no doubt, with equal potential to respond to any attack.

Findings

- Pakistan should recognize that armed conflict resolution has not been effective in the past and will not be in the future. Therefore, new peaceful solutions must be found.
- Both the military and civilians require mutual cooperation to achieve their goals.
- Civilian governments must involve the opposition and other groups in decision-making, as every issue, especially national ones, cannot be handled in a win-win situation.
- Pakistan has a single international voice. If each group speaks for themselves, the state's national interests will be jeopardized. There should be one representative from Pakistan in both the military and the civilian government.
- Pakistan's foreign office was frequently unable to secure international backing for Pakistan, despite the fact that this was their primary role. Indian diplomats, on the other hand, are more effective at responding collectively to national threats.

Conclusion

The year 1999 was historic, when the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India met in Lahore in February. Later that year, Pakistan undertook the Kargil operation from March to May. The main goal of Kargil was to relieve Indian pressure on Mujahideen, who were fighting alongside NLI. The other was to relieve Indian pressure by cutting off their supply lines by conquering higher-ranking positions in the region. Pakistan failed to meet its goal due to a civil-military split over the issue. The policy was divided on the topic, which embarrasses Pakistan at the international level. The civilian administration cannot maintain international pressure because Pakistan has been left alone on this matter. Sharif attempted to project an appearance of being unaware of the problem in order to relieve pressure, but it did not work. The civil-military divide was very clear, which exacerbated the situation. The Pakistani army was regarded as adventurous on a global scale, and it was not afraid to intervene in adjacent countries. Civil-civil differences were also apparent in this subject, as opposition and parties in coalition with the Sharif government denounced the Sharif action of withdrawal.

Recommendations

- A state-level think tank comprised of academics and specialists from many sectors is needed to guide military and decision-making authorities through study and consultation with relevant organizations.
- Show a sense of democratic culture, not just a formal belief. Before any issue involving the state's national and international interests can be addressed, all stakeholders must be consulted.
- Sharing decision-making leads to shared responsibility and accountability.
- The international community considers a state's acts as a whole. Therefore, any actions carried out by any department of state will have an impact on Pakistan, either positively or negatively. All institutions must ensure that their actions or choices benefit the national interest.

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