Kargil: Dynamics of a Limited War Against a Nuclear Backdrop

GD Bakshi

Limited War in the First Nuclear Age

The aim of this paper is to examine the Kargil War as a landmark limited conflict that was fought against a nuclear backdrop in South Asia. Kargil, therefore, is very important for the crystallisation of a new Limited War Doctrine that would be more pertinent and specific to the Asian context in general and the South Asian context in particular.

It is noteworthy that most theories of limited war originated in the West during the Cold War era. America had ushered in the nuclear age by employing 20 kilotonne (KT) airburst warheads on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviets had caught up by 1949. Thus, began the nuclear arms race between the two superpowers. The world was trying to come to terms with this paradigm shift brought about by the absolute nature of nuclear weapons. They were so destructive that contemplating their use in a symmetric setting was a logical absurdity. The Cold War in the West, therefore, did not transform into a hot war or a shooting war. Nuclear weapons held the peace. Fielding dominant war-fighting capabilities was the preferred way to deter and dissuade an adversary from provoking conflict. An *arms race, therefore, became a surrogate for actual fighting during the Cold War era*. The first nuclear age (in which the West introduced nuclear weapons), therefore, was a relatively peaceful era. The basic fact was that both the armed camps had just emerged from the most destructive conflict in world history.

Major General **GD Bakshi** (Retd) is a national security analyst.

World War II had left most of Europe and the Soviet Union in smoking ruins. Both sides were exhausted by the violent bloodletting. The Soviet Union itself had suffered 25 million casualties. Nazi Germany had suffered seven million killed. The US, UK, France and the rest of Europe put together had suffered a little over one million casualties. No protagonist of the Cold War, therefore, had any stomach left for large scale warfare. In such a context, nuclear weapons were entirely able to hold the peace during the Cold War. In fact, national energies were consumed in a highly stylised nuclear arms race backed by absurd civilian theories of fighting nuclear wars. Herman Kahn's theories of "thinking the unthinkable", typified this genre. The stability-instability paradox came to the fore in this highly ritualised context of the Cold War. Chris Gagne had succinctly summarised this as follows, "To the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of violence." The Soviet Union and China began testing the status quo by promoting and assisting wars of national liberation in Asia and Africa. This speeded up the process of decolonisation. Faced with these low level provocations, the West found that the threat of using nuclear weapons to respond to every crisis was just not tenable.

Fielding dominant war-fighting capabilities was the preferred way to deter and dissuade an adversary from provoking conflict. An arms race, therefore, became a surrogate for actual fighting during the Cold War era.

Bernard Brodie and William Kaufman were the Yale scholars who devised the theories of Limited War in the Nuclear Age. In the 1950s, Kaufman theorised that given the nuclear balance, "the communists would not only fight in the peripheral areas but would also test the limits of US tolerance. Since the US response was then premised on the "'all or nothing,' the Massive Response Doctrine (i.e. a massive nuclear response to any conventional military violation of the status quo or nothing at all) would be faced with hard choices. It would have *'to put up or shut up'*. Shutting up would involve a serious loss of prestige and damage to the west's capacity to establish deterrence against further communist aggression." Both Brodie and Kaufman, therefore, developed the theories of limited war against a nuclear backdrop. It was Kaufman who first came up with the notion of nuclear thresholds. Robert E Osgood had written in 1957 that the decisive limitation upon war is that of the objectives of war. Bernard Brodie was the leading exponent of

the idea that war can be kept limited by placing restrictions on the use of force in war. Limitations in war can be of three types:

- Limitations in aims and objectives.
- Limitations in space and/or in the time duration of the conflict.
- Limitations in the levels of weapons usage e.g. use / non-use of nuclear, chemical, biological weapons or air power, etc.

The Limited War Doctrine implied that direct conflict between the two superpowers must be avoided at all costs. A limited conflict, however, could take place in the peripheral areas through local proxies. A limited conflict generally ended in a negotiated settlement. Do these conditions apply to Asia?

The Western Experiences of Limited War

Worried about the US nuclear capability, the Soviet Union had refused to demobilise its massive armies after World War II. This raised the spectre of a massive torrent of Soviet tanks bursting across the Fulda Gap into Europe. Since the West could not match the Soviets in sheer conventional military power, the US responded with the "Massive Response Doctrine". Any Soviet attack in Europe would be met with a massive nuclear response that would target the Soviet heartland.

Thus, the first test of the Limited War Theory came in Korea from 1950-53 itself. The Soviet Union had just acquired nuclear capability in 1949 and as such the red lines/nuclear thresholds were not clear or defined. Though a limited war, Korea was a massive conventional conflict—the Chinese had thrown in a million men. The US and its allies had almost matched their force levels and relied heavily on firepower and air power to defeat the highly motivated manpower of the Chinese and North Korean Armies. The battle sea-sawed over the length of the Korean Peninsula for three years. Gen MacArthur was sacked when he proposed employment of nuclear weapons and air attacks on the Chinese mainland. Limitations in the Western conflict implied not using nuclear weapons and not violating the central sanctuary. Overall, the Korean War ended in a military stalemate and a negotiated settlement that partitioned Korea along the 38th parallel.

The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

The Cuban missile crisis that occurred in 1962 clearly highlighted the unviability of the Massive Response Doctrine. The major flaw was its all or nothing format.

The world came to the brink of war but no actual shots were fired and a negotiated settlement led to the removal of Russian missiles from Cuba and that of US missiles from Turkey. In many ways, therefore, the Cuban missile crisis was more analogous to Operation Parakram in 2001-02 in which India and Pakistan came to the brink of war, but no actual shot was fired.

The Chinese built a minimalist nuclear deterrent simply to ensure that nuclear weapons were not used against them by their adversaries. The sub-text of the Chinese minimalists view was that conventional wars could still be waged by deterring the nuclear threat.

The Low Intensity Conflict Phase: Vietnam

This led to the evolution of the "Flexible Response Doctrine" during the time of US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara. Limited war, however, took the form of low intensity conflict (LIC) in Vietnam where the USA threw in some 550,000 troops and made extensive use of air power. This LIC lasted over a decade. Vietnam was a humiliating defeat for the US. However, it took its historic revenge by imposing a similar LIC on the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Limited War Doctrine in the Cold War era, therefore, went through these three stages of evolution – from highly lethal conventional military conflict in Korea, to coercive deployments and nuclear posturing in Cuba, to LIC in Vietnam. By and large, however, the Cold War was relatively peaceful. There was no major deterrence breakdown. Antagonism was sublimated in a military-economic competition, with occasional outbreaks of limited wars or LICs in peripheral areas where the two main protagonists were not directly involved.

The Second Nuclear Age

Paul Bracken (in his book *A Fire in the East: The Rise of Asian Military Power in the Second Nuclear Age*), states that the second nuclear age began with India's peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE) in Pokhran in 1974. Today, there are five nuclear weapon states in Asia. These are Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Israel. North Korea is a de facto nuclear power and Iran is struggling to become one. *What would be the nature of limited wars in this Second Nuclear Age in Asia?* The prime differences are that the *Asian nuclear powers are not separated by vast oceans. They have land borders with one another. In most cases, there are strong rivalries, historical*

animosities and territorial disputes. Unlike in Europe, nationalism is not on the wane in Asia. It is distinctly on the rise. In such widely differing circumstances, will limited war in Asia resemble the Cold War experience in Europe? Will it largely be confined to posturing, coercive deployments and exercises, and highly stylised and over-hyped arms races? On the face of it, the contexts of Europe and Asia are so different. The Chinese built a minimalist nuclear deterrent simply to ensure that nuclear weapons were not used against them by their adversaries. The sub-text of the Chinese minimalist view was that conventional wars could still be waged by deterring the nuclear threat. The Chinese views of limited war (or local wars under conditions of informatisation) envisage very high levels of the use of conventional military force in limited wars. Let us not forget that the Chinese had thrown in a million men into Korea and fought the US to a standstill. In 1979, China decided to teach Vietnam a lesson and threw in 25 divisions. In any limited war over Taiwan, China is likely to employ some 300,000 troops for marine and airborne assault and throw in some 80 submarines and its entire air force and fire some 1,000 conventional tipped missiles to prevent American naval intervention in such a war. It would yet be called limited.

What about the Indo-Pak dyad? Seen superficially, India has tried to emulate the Western nations on post-nuclear restraint. The limited war progression in South Asia has so far, generally followed the Western Cold War model highlighted above. However, it may not remain so for long. To determine which way it is likely to unfold, it is essential to take a deeper look at the Kargil conflict as a seminal limited war in Asia that was fought against a nuclear backdrop.

The Kargil Conflict

There were two competing schools of thought amongst nuclear theorists regarding the nuclearisation of South Asia. The optimists like Kenneth Waltz had felt that *offsetting nuclear capabilities would be stabilising because they would make war simply too costly to contemplate.* The pessimists like Scott Sagan, however, felt that the potential, danger of nuclear weapons would far outweigh any stabilising effect. In particular, they had warned that *the initial phase after nuclearisation would be the most dangerous.* Michael Krepon had specifically highlighted that *the most dangerous phase to control comes immediately after nuclearisation, because the nuclear balance is unclear and red lines and thresholds have not been defined.* The Indian political elite were more inclined to go along with the Kenneth Waltz formulation. Nuclear weapons it felt had made war a completely untenable option. As such, it launched a bold peace initiative with a bus journey

to Lahore, with much publicity and fanfare. Concurrently, Robert G Wirsing reports that a major back channel (Track II) peace initiative was launched to work out a mutually agreeable formula to settle the Kashmir dispute out of the media glare. RK Mishra (representative of the Indian prime minister) and Anwar Zahid (representative of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif) had some nine rounds of discussions in New Delhi and Islamabad. The talks were being held directly between the two prime ministers.

As per Wirsing, the Owen-Dixon Plan to partition Kashmir along the Chenab was also discussed as a probable solution. However, as the dialogue was being undertaken, Pakistan's Northern Light Infantry Troopers had moved into the areas of intrusion in Kargil. This was an amazing response to the Indian peace initiative. It highlighted the highly fractured nature of the Pakistani polity and the bizarre nature of decision-making in that nation. In effect, the Kargil intrusions proved the nuclear pessimists like Scott Sagan and Michael Krepon right. In fact, Krepon had highlighted that the initial phase after nuclearisation would be most dangerous as the nuclear thresholds and red lines had as yet not been defined.

Military Hubris in Pakistan

Viewed in highlight, it is now clearly evident that the Chagai nuclear explosions had induced a dangerous degree of hubris in the Pakistani military leadership. They had pegged the nuclear threshold in the subcontinent at absurdly low levels. They were confident then that they had acquired nuclear weapons capability; it had stymied whatever conventional military edge India may have enjoyed on the subcontinent. They were also convinced that India had no viable response options to Pakistani sub-conventional provocations in Kargil. Should India choose to conventionalise the conflict, international pressure would force India to call it off in a week's time or even less. This would leave Pakistan comfortably in possession of gains it would make by infiltration.

Hierarchy of Motives

Robert G Wirsing highlights the fractured, cryptic and unmediated character of Pakistan's decision-making process that had come to characterise Pakistan's weak quasi-democracy in recent decades. There was not enough restraint on impulse and derring-do. He further highlights the obsessive secrecy and compartmentalisation on the need to know principle that is so destructive of the synergy needed to fight a modern war. Lack of inner consultation within the military on the decision to support such a plan left it unexposed to rigorous

scrutiny. Even corps commanders and other Service chiefs were excluded from the original consultative process.

Rodney Jones points out that the Pakistani plan for Kargil may have had a hierarchy of motives. Wirsing has stated these as under:

- It was to gain an Indian road to shell in response to the Indian shelling of the road across the Neelam Valley.
- It was possibly to pay India back for Siachen in April 1984. Did the plans extend to actual recovery of the glacier by threatening the main logistical lifeline? (Gen V P Malik writes that this plan had originally been proposed in the tenure of Gen Mirza Aslam Beg. It had been proposed again by Gen Musharraf when he was DGMO (Director General Military Operations) but was shot down by Gen Janjua. Apparently, Gen Musharraf resurrected it the moment he became the Pakistan Army chief.)
- Was it only to gain a qualified success to compel global attention on to Kashmir? (Or to highlight it as a nuclear flashpoint and seek American intervention to pressurise India to hand over Kashmir?)

The Lahore peace initiative and back channel diplomacy had lulled India into complacency and greatly contributed to the degree of strategic surprise. Tactical surprise was achieved by Pakistan by not inducting any additional formations but by relying upon the local Northern Light Infantry formations. A clever signal deception exercise was undertaken to generate militant radio traffic to convince India that it was a maverick Mujahideen operation over which Pakistan had no ostensible control. It was a fairly large scale operation in which the Pakistani Northern Light Infantry troops infiltrated over a frontage of 180 km to a depth of 8-10 km to bring the Srinagar-Leh highway under the range of direct firing weapons and observed artillery fire.

India's Response

India's response to Kargil was fairly creative and innovative. After it got over its initial surprise and the fog of war, it reacted in a coherent and deliberate manner. The intrusion was first detected on May 3, 1999, by some local graziers. Initially, it was felt that being terrorists, these were in the competence of the local formations. The local brigade and division sent out a number of patrols and launched numerous probing attacks. These suffered heavy losses but served to fix the extent of the infiltration and generated useful contact intelligence. These probing attacks also cleared the initial fog of war and crystallised the situation.

India then carried out a partial mobilisation of its armed forces. It built up two divisions worth of troops in the area of intrusion and inducted additional artillery. Permission was sought from the Cabinet Committee on Security to use the air force. This was initially turned down. However, permission was finally granted on May 24, 1999. The Indian Air Force came in low to support the ground troops and relearnt the lessons that the Israeli Air Force had learnt in 1973. The shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and air defence (AD) guns proved lethal. Thereafter, air attacks were kept outside the shoulder-fired SAM envelope. This greatly reduced the accuracy of the air attacks. The number of precision guidance munitions (PGMs) was limited but the air force came up with innovative solutions by using global positioning system (GPS) guidance add-on kits. Deliberate ground attacks were now mounted after methodical and systematic preparations. A hundred artillery guns were lined up to support each battalion's attack.

The primary limitation in the Kargil War was a space limitation. India deliberately confined the fighting to the area of intrusions in Kargil.

For this purpose, India milked additional artillery from its strike formations. This preponderant artillery fire support shook up the Northern Light Infantry and induced local shock and awe. The Indian infantry displayed tremendous grit and tenacity as it launched near frontal attacks up narrow and serrated ridgelines. Since India had confined its offensive to its own side of the Line of Control (LoC), the world had no *locus standi* to intervene. It let this shooting war between two nuclear armed neighbours rage on for over two months. Finally, yard by bloody yard, the Kargil ridgelines were cleared of the intruders. The heroism displayed by the Indian infantry was impressive. The young officers led from the front. This had led an American correspondent to remark "The Indian Army is an army that truly fights." Pakistan had not thought beyond the first week or 10 days. They had not catered for the employment of the Indian Air Force or the mobilisation of the Indian Navy.

The Pakistani generals were thoroughly disabused of their absurd notions of a one step escalation ladder in the subcontinent. They were shaken out of their post-Chagai nuclear hubris. Nawaz Sharif rushed to Washington. He was coldly left waiting and then asked to withdraw the remnants of his troops from the few remaining heights they still had with them.

Force Limitations in Limited War: Space Limitations

The primary limitation in the Kargil War was a space limitation. India deliberately confined the fighting to the area of intrusions in Kargil. It instructed its troops not to cross the LoC. As such, the West had no *locus standi* to ask for or impose a ceasefire. It was appreciated that in this difficult mountainous terrain, operations would perforce be slow paced, with slogging matches of attrition. As such, crossing the LoC would have led to major international pressure for a ceasefire. This would have put Indian forces under considerable time pressure and left Pakistan in possession of most of its gains of the Kargil intrusions. Not crossing the LoC stymied the international reaction.

This issue had generated a heated debate. By deciding not to cross the LoC, India had constrained itself to a direct and frontal approach that was heavily premised on attrition. A trans-LoC operation close to the intrusion sites could have addressed the logistical base areas supporting the intrusion and forced Pakistan to recoil. That would have been an indirect and innovative approach. The Indian Army selected the more staid and frontal approach based perhaps on a realist appreciation of the rates of advance in such terrain. The point at issue is that if launched in an area where the force to space ratio is low, such offensive operations, even in the mountains, can make rapid progress after the initial rupture. The Shyok Valley operations of the Ladakh Scouts in the 1971 War are a classic example.

However, India's self-imposed restraint conferred upon it a major diplomatic and information war advantage. In contrast to Pakistan's irresponsible adventurism and recklessness in a nuclear setting, the Indian response seemed highly responsible, mature and restrained. It formed a striking contrast to Pakistan's crass and irresponsible behaviour. The world, therefore, let Pakistan stew in its own juice for over two months. In this time, the determined Indian slog of attrition was able to throw out the bulk of the Pakistani intruders from the Kargil heights.

Long-Term Implications of Not Crossing the LoC

Though the immediate diplomatic pay-offs of not crossing the LoC were high, it had some significant long-term implications. It almost served to cast the LoC in stone and virtually conferred upon it the status of an international border (IB). This could impose needless restraints on Indian options in future wars. Though the violence of the Kargil response thoroughly disabused the Pakistani generals of their post-Chagai nuclear hubris, not crossing the LoC gave a very wrong

signal. Peter Lavoy claims that it convinced the Pakistanis that it was not so much nuclear deterrence that had worked in the Kargil War, but Pakistan's conventional deterrence. The Pakistani military was convinced that its post-Afghanistan, Zarb-e-Momin Doctrine had worked well. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan had freed up Pakistan's XI and XII Corps from its western front and given it perceived conventional military parity with India. At the end of Kargil, the Pakistani military went into a self-congratulatory mode. Its conventional military parity with India, it felt, had worked wonderfully well. It had completely deterred India from crossing the LoC or the international border in hot pursuit operations. Peter Lavoy writes that by the time of Operation Parakram, the Pakistani generals had shifted 95 percent of the weight of deterrence from the nuclear to the conventional level. This emboldened the Pakistanis to raise the ante and enhance the level of provocations. They were certain that they would call India's bluff of conventionalising the conflict.

By deciding not to cross the LoC, India had constrained itself to a direct and frontal approach that was heavily premised on attrition. A trans-LoC operation close to the intrusion sites could have addressed the logistical base areas supporting the intrusion and forced Pakistan to recoil.

Pakistani *jehadi* outfits now attacked the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Assembly and then the most iconic symbol of the Indian Parliament itself. No responsible nation-state could have swallowed such an insult. In response, India now mobilised its entire armed forces. (The mobilisation in Kargil had been partial.) It has been speculated by Lt Gen VK Sood and Sawhney that the initial Indian intention was to launch a limited trans-LoC operation. However, the Indian mobilisation took too long and the initial window of opportunity was closed. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government then came under tremendous international pressure. It was assured by the American government that it had prevailed upon Pervez Musharraf to call off support to the *jehadi* terrorists and wind up their camps. Gen Musharraf did give a watered down speech to that effect on television. The Indian massive force deployment had been highly credible so far. It was now turned into a coercive deployment or a show of force exercise. The credibility of this large force deployment petered off rapidly as there was not even a single actual

combat engagement. The Pakistani perception that their conventional deterrence had been highly effective had worked was reinforced. It had deterred India from launching any live operations across the LoC or the IB. From the point of view of the credibility of India's deterrence, Operation Parakram turned out to be highly negative. It only highlighted India's compulsions and restraints. However, from the deterrence point of view, India's complete lack of any military response post-Mumbai has been an unmitigated disaster for the signalling process that is so very essential to the mind game of deterrence.

The problem with the Operation Parakram exercise was its massive all or nothing format. To that extent, it suffered from the same infirmities as the "massive response" strategy of the Cold War. After Cuba, that had to be transformed into a "flexible response" strategy. In the realm of limited conventional wars against a nuclear backdrop, India, therefore, has to do the journey from an "all or nothing" massive response strategy *a la* Operation Parakram to a flexible war strategy that exploits the full width of the escalation spectrum. To be just and proportionate, Indian responses must start at the lower rungs of the escalation ladder and then graduate upwards based on the enemy responses.

Viewed in these terms, Kargil was a far more effective compellence exercise than Operation Parakram. Despite the difference in the scale of national mobilisation (partial in Kargil, total in Operation Parakram), Kargil was far more effective as a compellence exercise. To begin with, it involved actual combat. Operation Parakram ended up as sound and fury, signifying nothing. In retrospect, the long-term deterrence value of Kargil would have been even higher if India had towards the end, crossed the LoC to hit the logistical base areas of the intrusions in the Shaqma-Thanus bowl or towards Skardu-Gilgit.

Limitations in Use of Air Power

One of the excellent features of the Kargil operations was the innovative use of air power and the credible threat of the employment of naval power. Gen Malik in his memoir *Kargil : From Surprise to Victory*, has highlighted how as the Chairman Chiefs of Staff, he had striven to build up a consensus within the Chiefs of Staff Committee before going up to the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). Thus, on May 18, 1999, the army had sought clearance from the CCS on the use of air power. This was turned down (considerable controversy has subsequently attended this issue). The army was asked to clear the intrusions, exercising restraint to avoid escalation of hostilities. Jaswant Singh, in his memoirs *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India*, has highlighted his initial objections to the

use of air power. On p.203 of his book, he states, "It was my view that the use of the air force at this point was not good policy. My reservations were born out of two or three principle considerations. The sheer optical value of the air force is so much greater, particularly in a limited and continental conflict. That is why the loss of an aircraft becomes so instantly an issue that catches the public eye as compared to the loss of even a platoon of infantry." He continues, "To ask the air force to undertake these air missions within such narrow, tight confines forced by the LoC was to send it on virtual suicide missions. And there was no way the political leadership would permit cross-LoC operations. As such, there were but two routes for the air force to operate on and both were extremely narrow funnels. Our missions could fly in this narrow corridor either east or west or reverse. Thereafter, the fact of the LoC not being a visibly marked line on the ground compounded difficulties."

Despite the difference in the scale of national mobilisation (partial in Kargil, total in Operation Parakram), Kargil was far more effective as a compellence exercise. To begin with, it involved actual combat.

Gen Malik says that once the scale of the intrusion was realised, he tried to build a consensus on the fact that India's substantial superiority in the air and on the seas must be brought to bear on the enemy to create the necessary asymmetry not only in Ladakh and Kargil, but also the entire western border. Gen Malik spoke separately with the two chiefs to build a consensus on this issue. The Chiefs of Staff Committee met on May 23, 1999, to work out a joint stand. On May 24, 1999, the army chief briefed the CCS that in order to gain strategic initiative, it was essential to employ air power and deploy the navy. This was finally given and the IAF went into action on May 25, 1999.

It is true that it did take initial casualties as it flew low into the shoulder-fired AD envelope. This forced the air force to deliver attacks from the mid and high altitudes rather than the 'lo-lo' mission profiles (these are in any case highly risky in the mountains). Since the IAF did not have a large inventory of PGMs, its accuracy suffered greatly. It tried to overcome the same by strapping add-on GPS guidance kits to its dumb (gravity) bombs. The employment of air power in this limited war, therefore, generated a great deal of controversy.

However, in retrospect, it was a very correct and useful decision to employ the air force and *deploy* the navy. It had a tremendous psychological impact

on Pakistan and the rest of the world. It underlined India's resolve not to take the intrusions lying down. It brought to bear India's substantial superiority in air power and naval power on this limited conflict. It made the Indian threat of escalation highly credible. The optical and psychological impact of Operation Safed Sagar indeed was very high. The media leveraged the shock value of the use of air power. The complete domination of the sky by the IAF over the area of intrusion itself served to demoralise the Northern light Infantry troopers in the area of intrusion. In combination with the artillery, it served to mass effects and generate an element of shock and awe. Above all:

- It prevented Pakistani helicopters from resupplying the Northern light Infantry posts. These were reduced to starvation diets and there were reports of the Northern Light Infantry troopers trying to eat ice to survive.
- It interdicted the logistics supplies of the infiltrators by hitting the logistics base of Muntho Dhalo.
- In concert with the artillery, it served to stun and add a significant element of shock and awe over the Kargil battlefield. It was this which disintegrated the resolve of the well entrenched troops to fight. Indian infantry assaults were thereafter able to ferret them out at the point of the bayonet.

In historical terms, one of India's strategic blunders was not to use air power in the 1962 War against China. Most limited wars in Asia have seen restrictions upon the use of air power. China did not use air power against India in 1962 (it was not in its interests to do so, for air operations from Tibetan airfields suffered from significant constraints). That was the least reason, however, for India not to respond with air power. In fact, the non-use of air power in 1962 itself was a disaster. It would greatly have reduced the scale of the disaster and made up for our lack of preparation. China has always been land power- centric and infantry oriented. It made limited use of air power in Korea and no use of air power in its invasion of Vietnam in 1979.This was simply an outcome of its relative weakness in air power.

Mercifully, Kargil was different. The use of air power was a welcome break from the Asiatic traditions of not employing air power in limited conflicts. The trend sprang from China's relative weakness in the domain of air power. India had a relative edge in air power compared to Pakistan (and locally over China). Not to exploit an edge in battle makes no military sense. In fact, the experience of Operation Parakram and our post-Mumbai lack of response indicate that air and naval powers are far more precise and flexible tools with which to respond to sub-conventional provocations. Air and naval mobilisations are much faster

than ground mobilisations. Their optical value in an era of telematic wars is far, far higher. Thomas Schelling calls limited war an exercise in psychological pressure tactics rather than a means of concrete destruction. In classical war-fighting terms, the employment of air power sets the stage for the purposive use of ground forces. Armies can make no headway unless air power and naval power projection sets this stage. That is the prime lesson of recent military history. Kargil has set a fine and healthy trend in this regards. The era of single Service wars is long past. The prime requirement of the modern battlefield is synergy and harmonisation of response. We must resolve never to repeat the mistakes of 1962. The global trends indicate that air or naval power must lead the way for limited wars in Asia. Ground-based operations generate far more of the fog of war and cannot be as precise and flexible as air power or naval aviation and cruise missiles. As we commemorate the heroes of Kargil, we must take its lessons to heart. The best feature of this war was its openness, and the fund of literature generated in India was a refreshing contrast to earlier wars.

References

1. Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon* (Yale University Press, 1952).
2. Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Ageversity* (Yale University Press, 1988).
3. Gen V P Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006).
4. The Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning* (New Delhi: Sage Publishing, 2000).
5. Robert G Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age* (Armonk, NY: M E Sharpe, 2003).
6. Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2006).
7. Gen Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, Simon & Schuster, 2006).
8. Gaurav C Sawant, *Dateline Kargil* (Delh: ABC Publishers,2000).
9. Amarinder Singh, *A Ridge Too Far* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishers).
10. S Kalyanaraman, "Operation Parakram : An Indian Exercise in Coercive Diplomacy", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 26, No. 4 October–December 2002, p. 485.
11. T V Paul, *Asymmetric Conflics: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (London: Cambridge University Press).
12. Henry D. Sokolosky (ed.), *Pakistan's Nuclear Future : Worries Beyond War,* Strategic Studies Institute, US Army, January 2008 (http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army/mil/)

13. Dr E Sridhar, *The India-Pakistan Nuclear Relationship : Theories of Deterrence and International Relations* (New York: New Delhi: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2007).
14. Stephen P Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).
15. Swaran Singh, *Limited War: The Challenge to US Military Strategy* (New Delhi: Lancers Books, 1995).
16. William Kaufman, *Military Policy and National Security* (Yale University Press, 1956).
17. William Kaufman, *The McNamara Strategy* (Yale University Press, 1964).
18. Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979).
19. Robert E Osgood, *Limited War Revisited* (Westview Press, 1979).
20. Herman Kahn, *On Thermo Nuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).