

The Kargil Review Committee Report

Against the backdrop of an animated public discussion on Pakistan's aggression in Kargil, the Union Government vide its order dated July 29, 1999 constituted a Committee to look into the episode with the following Terms of Reference: -

- i. to review the events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in the Kargil district of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir; and
- ii. To recommend such measures as are considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions.

The Committee comprised four members namely K Subrahmanyam (Chairman), Lieutenant General (Retd) K K Hazari, B G Verghese and Satish Chandra, Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat who was also designated as Member-Secretary.

Given its open ended terms of reference, the time constraint and, most importantly, the need for clarity in setting about its task, the Committee found it necessary to define its scope of work precisely. To deal with the Kargil episode in isolation would have been too simplistic; hence the Report briefly recounts the important facets of developments in J&K and the evolution of the LOC, Indo-Pak relations since 1947, the proxy war in Kashmir and the nuclear factor.

However, the Committee's 'review' commences essentially from 1997 onwards coinciding with Nawaz Sharif's return to office as Prime Minister of Pakistan. This has enabled the Committee to look at developments immediately preceding the intrusions more intensively. The Committee has sought to analyse whether the kind of Pakistani aggression that took place could have been assessed from the available intelligence inputs and if so, what were the shortcomings and failures which led to the nation being caught by surprise.

However, the actual conduct of military operations has not been evaluated by the Committee as this lay outside the Committee's mandate and would have called for a different type of expertise. The Committee's recommendations for

preventing future recurrence of Kargil-like episodes are confined to the country's land borders. Since some of these are generic in nature, they would have a bearing on future threats to the country whether on its land borders or otherwise. The Committee approached its task in a spirit of openness and transparency with its focus on establishing the facts. It viewed its task as a co-operative venture with the concerned Ministries, Defence Services, Intelligence Agencies and other concerned organisations and avoided getting into adversarial relationship with the officials and non-officials with whom it was required to interact. Given this approach it was able to enlist the willing co-operation of all concerned.

Although the Committee was not statutory in nature, as a result of Cabinet Secretary's directions, it was able to secure the widest possible access to all relevant documents, including those with the highest classification and to officials of the Union and J&K Governments. In the pursuit of its task the Committee sought presentations from the concerned organisations and agencies. It held meetings with those who in its judgement were in a position to throw light on the subject.

In this process, it met former President R Venkataraman, Prime Minister A B Vajpayee, ex-Prime Ministers V P Singh, P V Narasimha Rao and I K Gujral, the Home Minister, External Affairs Minister, Defence Minister, the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, the Governor and the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, the National Security Adviser, the Cabinet Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary and a host of other officials and non-officials, including media persons.

The Committee held over a hundred meetings, the records of which are appended to the Report. Detailed questionnaires were prepared by the Committee to elicit information. It made four visits to various parts of J&K to hold discussions with local officials and non-officials, and to get a better sense of the terrain and the prevailing field conditions.

It undertook a visit to Bangalore to obtain a first hand knowledge of certain defence research and development facilities and for discussions with experts regarding technological options. The Committee invited reliable information from

the public pertaining to events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in Kargil through a press note in the national dailies and the regional media. It scanned a large number of news items and commentaries published in the national dailies, journals and magazines. Apart from this, it perused several books published in recent months on the Kargil episode.

The Committee's Findings are based primarily on official documents, authenticated records and copies of documents, while other parts of the Report draw on materials received by the Committee and views of experts and knowledgeable persons who were invited to interact with it.

The Committee's Report comprises 14 Chapters in addition to a Prologue and an Epilogue. Important documents referred to by the Committee are enclosed as annexures with the main Report. Other relevant documents, Records of Discussions and source materials have been put together in 15 volumes and appended to the Report. The Findings and Recommendations of the Committee are set out in the succeeding sections of this summary.

FINDINGS

I- Developments leading to the Pakistani aggression at Kargil

The Review Committee had before it overwhelming evidence that the Pakistani armed intrusion in the Kargil sector came as a complete and total surprise to the Indian Government, Army and intelligence agencies as well as to the J&K State Government and its agencies.

The Committee did not come across any agency or individual who was able clearly to assess before the event the possibility of a large scale Pakistani military intrusion across the Kargil heights. What was conceived of was the limited possibility of infiltration's and enhanced artillery exchanges in this Sector. A number of former Army Chiefs of Staff and Director Generals of Military Operations were near unanimous in their opinion that a military intrusion on the scale attempted was totally unsustainable because of the lack of supportive

infrastructure and was militarily irrational. In the 1948, 1965 and 1971 conflicts, the Indian Army was able to dominate the Pakistani forces on these heights. This area has been the scene of fierce artillery exchanges but minimal cross-LOC military activity. These factors, together with the nature of the terrain and extreme weather conditions in the area, had generated an understandable Indian military mindset about the nature and extent of the Pakistani threat in this sector. The developments of 1998 as reported in various intelligence inputs, notably the increased shelling of Kargil, the reported increased presence of militants in the Force Commander Northern Area region and their training were assessed as indicative of a likely high level of militant activity in Kargil in the summer of 1999 and the consequent possibility of increased infiltration in this area.

The Pakistani reconnaissance mission in August 1997 in Gharkum village was noted and a patrol base established in Yaldor. An operation was also planned to apprehend the infiltrators if they returned in the summer of 1998. They apparently did not do so.

The nearest approximation to the events of May 1999 was a 15 Corps war-game in 1993 which envisaged a Pakistani long range penetration group positioning itself south of NH 1A and bringing the Srinagar-Leh highway under fire from both sides. Even that assessment did not visualise an intrusion to hold ground by hundreds of Pakistan Army regulars.

Intrusions across the LOC are not uncommon. Pakistan had in the past intruded into the Indian side of the LOC and the Indian Army had responded adequately. There had, however, been no intrusions since 1990. An attempt to capture a post or two on the LOC was, however, anticipated as revealed in the press briefing of the acting GOC 15 Corps on January 11, 1999. Even this was not the kind of intrusion that actually took place in the Mashkoh, Dras, Kaksar and Batalik areas. The terrain here is so inhospitable that the intruders could not have survived above 4,000 metres for long without comprehensive and sustained re-supply operations. They were even running short of water at these heights towards the end of the operations. Though heavily armed, the intruders did not have rations for more than two or three days in many forward 'sanghars'. Re-supply could

have taken place only if there was no air threat and the supply lines could not be targeted by Indian artillery.

In other words, it would appear that the Pakistani intruders operated on the assumption that the intrusions would be under counter attack for only a few days and thereafter some sort of cease-fire would enable them to stay on the heights and be re-supplied.

Such an assumption would be totally unsustainable in purely military terms. It would only be logical on the expectation, based upon political considerations, that Pakistan would be able to engineer international intervention to impose an early ceasefire that would allow its troops to stay in possession of the territory captured by them. Such an assumption could not have been made without close consultation with the Pakistani political leadership at the highest level.

General Musharraf has disclosed that the operations were discussed in November 1998 with the political leadership and there are indications of discussion on two subsequent occasions in early 1999. The tapes of conversations between General Musharraf and Lieutenant General Aziz, Chief of General Staff, also revealed their expectation of early international intervention, the likelihood of a ceasefire and knowledge and support of the Foreign Office.

In retrospect, such an expectation was unreal. The Pakistani establishment has a long and consistent history of misreading India's will and world opinion. In 1947, it did not anticipate the swift Indian military intervention in Kashmir when it planned its raid with a mix of army personnel, ex-servicemen and tribals under the command of Major General Akbar Khan. In 1965, it took Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's advice that India would not cross the international border to deal with Pakistan's offensive in the Akhbur sector.

In 1971, it developed high but totally unwarranted expectations about the likelihood of US-Chinese intervention on its behalf. The same pattern of behaviour was evident this time too. This is presumably the price the Pakistani leadership has paid for its inability to come to terms with the military realities. It has obviously been a victim of its own propaganda.

It is evident from Pakistani pronouncements and the writings of those with access to the highest decision making levels, that at least from 1987 onwards, when Dr A Q Khan conveyed a nuclear threat to India in a Press interview to an Indian journalist, Pakistan was convinced that its nuclear weapons capability would deter India's superior conventional forces.

Written accounts of foreign observers have highlighted that since 1980, the Pakistani military establishment had entertained ideas of deterring Indian nuclear and conventional capabilities with its nuclear weapons and of carrying out a brash, bold strike to liberate Kashmir which would go unchallenged if the Indian leadership was weak or indecisive.

Successive Indian Chiefs of Army Staff and Director Generals of Military Operations told the Committee that bringing to bear India's assumed conventional superiority was not a serious option in the last ten years for a variety of reasons; commitments in Sri Lanka, subsequent deployments in Punjab, the northeast and Kashmir, and a drastic reduction in Defence outlay. Pakistani writings over the years have highlighted the Indian Army's involvement in counterinsurgency in Kashmir and its perceived degradation as an effective fighting force.

Several Pakistani writers agree that the 'Kargil plan' was formulated in the eighties in the last years in General Zia-ul Haq. There are different versions on whether it was sought to be operationalised during the tenures of Benazir Bhutto and General Jehangir Karamat, Chief of Army Staff. General Musharraf's disclosure that it was discussed with the political leadership in November 1998 soon after he assumed office has been referred to in the Report. It is difficult to say whether the initiative for this move came from the Army or was politically driven.

There was a heady combination of circumstances and personalities. Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister, had successfully removed from office the President, the Chief Justice and the then Army Chief, General Karamat, in whose place he appointed General Musharraf who superseded two others.

General Musharraf himself served in Afghanistan and had ties with Osama Bin Laden and other extremists. He is a Mohajir and an ambitious, hard driving man. He had served in the Northern Areas for several years and had been associated with the crackdown on the Shias. He had commanded the Special Services Group with launched an attack on Bilafond La in Siachen but was frustrated.

Some Pakistani columnists claim that Nawaz Sharif thought that if he succeeded in seizing a slice of Indian territory in Kashmir, he would be hailed as a 'Liberator' and thereby enabled to gain absolute power through amendment of the Shariah law. There is no clear evidence on the basis of which to assess the nature and extent of Nawaz Sharif's involvement in the Kargil adventure. The balance of probability suggests that he was fully in the picture. This is borne out by the tapes referred too earlier and the repeated assertions of General Musharraf. Those who know Nawaz Sharif personally believe that he has a limited attention span and is impatient with detail. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that Nawaz Sharif was at least aware of the broad thrust of the Kargil plan when he so warmly welcomed the Indian Prime Minister in Lahore.

Influential sections of the Indian political class and media have been outraged at the duplicity of the Pakistani leadership. Some argue that Nawaz Sharif could not have been so duplicitous and therefore tend to absolve him and lay all blame on General Musharraf. However, having a declaratory policy different from that actually pursued is not unknown in international realpolitik and diplomacy. This existentialist divergence between the two necessitates diplomatic interaction, continuous political analysis, Track-II diplomacy and intelligence collection, collation and assessment.

The Committee has not come across any assessment at operational levels that would justify the conclusion that the Lahore summit had caused the Indian decision-makers to lower their guard. This has been confirmed by the discussions the Committee had with a number of concerned officials. Nonetheless, there was euphoria in some political quarters, among leaders in and out of office, though some others saw serious pitfalls in the Lahore process.

The Committee has attempted a partial reconstruction of Operation BADR based on diaries and notebooks recovered from Pakistani personnel during the operation as well as intercepts. It would appear that reconnaissance parties comprising officers started crossing the LOC in late January/early February 1999. They established a first line of administrative bases within a limited distance across the LOC in February. March saw heavy snowfall and so they could move further forward only in April.

At that stage, more men joined them and perhaps the bulk of the intruders entered Indian territory in late April. This sequence of events appears logical as earlier induction of larger numbers would have added to logistic problems and increased the risk of detection. Care was exercised by the intruders to move only in the gaps between the Indian winter posts and to avoid detection by Winter Air Surveillance Operations. They were equipped for extreme cold and snow conditions. In the initial advance, they used Igloo snow tents and constructed 'sanghars' of loose rock.

Perhaps late in April, they moved up a further two to three kilometers. WASO helicopters and operational reconnaissance flights repeatedly flew over them as is evident from one of the diaries captured in Mashkoh Valley. A combination of factors prevented their detection: camouflage clothing; helicopter vibrations which hampered observation; opportunity for concealment on hearing the sound of approaching helicopters; and peace time safety requirements of maintaining a certain height above the ground and a given distance from the LOC.

Since the effort was largely to detect infiltration, most flights flew along valleys and not across the ridges. All these factors made the WASO patrols of negligible value as is also evident from the records of previous years.

After a lull in the winter from late December 1998, there was very heavy snowfall in March 1999 which compelled 121 Infantry Brigade to vacate one of its 25 winter posts in the South west Spur of Point 5299 in the Kaksar sector, popularly known as Bajrang post. Winter patrols sent out in early April 1999 were unable to carry out their task due to adverse snow conditions. The Pakistanis creeping

forward also suffered avalanche casualties in the month of March 1999 as revealed by a diary captured in the Mashkoh Valley.

All the Indian military commanders the Committee met emphasised the point that while it would have been possible for patrolling to be carried out even under these conditions, it would have required the troops to be specially equipped to withstand glacial conditions, as in Siachen, and a willingness to accept possible casualties. Until now, this had not been considered necessary or acceptable.

It would appear from the locations of 'sanghars' that the plan was to avoid initially confronting the Indian forces by moving stealthily along the unheld gaps. The Pakistani intruders were meant to disclose themselves in the later part of May 1999 and demonstrate that they were in possession of the Kargil heights along a "new LOC" before the normal opening of the Zojila pass when regular patrolling by the Indian Army would commence.

Presumably they felt that with the advantage of the commanding heights, their better acclimatisation and by now their more secure logistics, the situation would be distinctly in their favour. The Indians would need time to assemble their forces, acclimatise their troops and build up their logistics which would be difficult before Zojila opened. They would also have to suffer unacceptable casualties in attacking the heights. This would ensure time enough for an internationally arranged ceasefire.

This was probably Pakistan's expectation. In fact, however, the intrusion was detected on May 3 1999, by "shepherds" who are occasionally retained by the Brigade Intelligence Team for forward information gathering. The patrols sent out in the next few days confirmed the presence of intruders on May 7. The Indian Army's response was very rapid and by May 9, two well acclimatised battalions returning from Siachen had been concentrated in the Batalik sector to contain the intrusion.

In the next few days, three more battalions were moved from the Valley into the Kargil sector to counter known and possible intrusions in other sub-sectors. By May 24, two additional Brigades had moved into the area and the Indian Air Force was committed on May 26. By the end of May an additional divisional

headquarters had been inducted to take over command of a portion of the Kargil Sector from 3 Infantry Division.

This rapid and strong Indian reaction was obviously not expected by the Pakistanis.

It was now their turn to be totally surprised. Simultaneously, Pakistan tried to lobby with the international community for a ceasefire, which would leave it with some Indian territory and thereby justify its misadventure. Initially, there was support for a ceasefire, but once Tololing fell and the Indian Government and Army exhibited their determination to clear the entire intrusion, the international community called on Pakistan to withdraw from and respect the sanctity of the LOC.

The sitrep issued by 15 Corps on May 11, 1999 was explicit on eight identified intrusions in the Batalik sector involving 160 to 240 intruders. The Northern Command had already made a request for the use of helicopter gunships on May 8. The Northern Command issued orders on May 12 that the whole J&K theatre be put on alert and additional troops be inducted into the Kargil sector.

There are obvious discrepancies between the documented responses of 15 Corps and the Northern Command and the information regarding the nature and extent of intrusions at that stage, then available in the Ministries of Defence and Home in Delhi as is evident from the statements of concerned officials.

Movement of forces within a corps is entirely within the competence of the corps commander and does not require clearance from any other authority. For the 15 Corps, an operation on a single brigade front was a 'localised' action. The record establishes that the 15 Corps Commander carried out his deployment with commendable expedition and competence providing adequate margins for all possible contingencies.

The Committee found that though the Corps Commander had moved adequate forces to contain the intrusion in the Batalik sector and followed it up with a similar deployment of forces in the Kaksar, Dras and Mashkoh valley sectors, there was still no clarity in the assessment of the magnitude of the intrusions and

the composition of the intruders. This is evident from the statement of the Corps Commander on May 19.

Pakistan insists on projecting most of the intruders as Mujahideen, with NLI troops in a supporting role. The assessment of the nature and composition of the intruders was hampered by a number of factors. Pakistan deliberately violated the normal rules of war by sending in servicemen as Mujahideen and obfuscating their service identities.

Secondly, as pointed out elsewhere, there was inadequate coordination at the ground level among Army intelligence and other agencies.

This was lacking even at the Joint Intelligence Committee because of the low level of representation by DGMI at the assessment process and the DGMI representative not coming fully briefed on the latest situation. It is also apparent that the assessment was conditioned by the two-decade-old mindset that Kargil was unsuitable for cross-LOC military action.

There are reports in the media, some of which are said to have originated from young officers, JCOs and other ranks, that in the initial stages, the Indian Army suffered avoidable casualties, taken as it was by surprise. However, the progressive data of Indian casualties from May to July 1999 obtained by the Committee does not entirely support this hypothesis. The Committee did not go into the matter further as its terms of reference do not require it to do so.

There were also comments in the media that Army jawans were inadequately equipped for the extreme cold and hazardous conditions when ordered to assault the Kargil heights. Their weapons and equipment compared unfavourably with those of the Pakistani intruders. The Army had prescribed extra-cold clothing meant for heights between 9,000 to 13,000 feet in this sector for use in normal times, and special (glacial) clothing for heights above that. Special clothing is issued for use in the Siachen area and certain limited reserves were held in stock. When hostilities commenced, this reserve clothing was issued to the men. Troops returning from Siachen duty discard their special clothing which is then usually disposed of by auction. However, in the previous year, the Corps Commander had ordered that part-worn serviceable Siachen clothing be preserved. This PWS stock

was also issued to the troops during the Kargil action. Despite this, there was still an overall shortage.

This warrants a review of standards of provisioning for reserves as well as a policy of holding special clothing for a certain proportion of other troops in the Kargil and other high altitude sectors.

Though the new light rifle (5.56 mm Insa) has been inducted into service, most troops are yet to be equipped with light rifles. Adequate attention has not been paid to lightening the load on infantry soldiers deployed at high altitudes. In broader terms, increasing the firepower and combat efficiency of infantrymen has also suffered as has the modernisation process as a whole. This needs to be speedily rectified.

[Government Security Deletion]

The Air Chief further maintained that if air power was to be used, the country should be prepared for a Pakistani response. Therefore, the relevant Air Commands and units were activated. The CCS finally authorised the use of air power on May 25.

[Government Security Deletion]

'The Kargil battle was fought with less than optimum communications capability' It would not be unreasonable for Pakistan to have concluded by 1990 that it had achieved the nuclear deterrence it had set out to establish in 1980. Otherwise, it is inconceivable that it could sustain its proxy war against India, inflicting thousands of casualties, without being unduly concerned about India's 'conventional superiority'. Even as late as May 1998, when both sides conducted their nuclear tests, India had not used its conventional superiority during the preceding nine years of sustained proxy war by Pakistan in Kashmir.

Successive Indian Army chiefs and Directors General of Military Operations told the Committee that the idea of using India's conventional superiority did not arise for various reasons other than the nuclear factor.

The 1998 Pokhran tests were the outcome of a policy of consensus on nuclear weapons development among Prime Ministers belonging to the Congress, Janata

Dal, United Democratic Front and BJP. For reasons of security, none of these Prime Ministers took anyone other than Chairmen of the Atomic Energy Commission (not all), and the Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister into confidence. The Chiefs of Staff, senior Cabinet Ministers and senior civil servants were kept out of the loop.

The nuclear posture adopted by successive Prime Ministers thus put the Indian Army at a disadvantage *vis-a-vis* its Pakistani counterpart. While the former was in the dark about India's nuclear capability, the latter as the custodian of Pakistani nuclear weaponry was fully aware of its own capability. Three former Indian Chiefs of Army Staff expressed unhappiness about this asymmetric situation.

Successive Indian Prime Ministers failed to take their own colleagues, the major political parties, the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Secretaries into confidence on the nature of Pakistan's nuclear threat and the China-Pakistan nuclear axis. The Prime Ministers, even while supporting the weapons programme, kept the intelligence and nuclear weapons establishments in two watertight compartments. Foreign policy was being conducted without Foreign Ministers and Indian diplomats being apprised of the nature of the threat to the country or of India's own nuclear capability. It is quite likely that this secretiveness on the part of the Indian Prime Ministers and the country's inability to exercise its conventional superiority could have confirmed Pakistan in its belief that its nuclear deterrent had indeed been effective in Kashmir since 1990 and it could therefore pursue the proxy war and the Kargil adventure with impunity on the basis of its own prescribed rules of the game.

Pakistan fully understands that nuclear deterrence can work both to its advantage and detriment. In a speech on April 12, 1999, General Musharraf stated that though the possibility of large-scale conventional war between India and Pakistan was virtually zero, proxy wars were not only possible but very likely.

At the height of the Cold War, when mutual deterrence was in operation between the superpowers, it used to be argued by strategists that 'salami slicing' of small pieces of territory, which the adversary would not consider worth escalating to

nuclear levels, was always feasible. To counter the risk, the US developed a strategy of flexible response. What Pakistan attempted at Kargil was a typical case of salami slicing.

Since India did not cross the LoC and reacted strictly within its own territory, the effort to conjure up escalation of a kind that could lead to nuclear war did not succeed. Despite its best efforts, Pakistan was unable to link its Kargil caper with a nuclear flashpoint, though some foreign observers believe it was a near thing. The international community does not favour alteration of the *status quo* through nuclear blackmail as this would not be in the interest of the five major nuclear powers. Pakistan obviously overlooked this factor.

The P-5 statement of June 4, 1998 and the Security Council Resolution 1172 of June 6, 1998 condemned the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests. It exhorted both countries to sign the CTBT and NPT and referred to Kashmir as a root cause of tension between them. This could have encouraged Pakistan to conclude that what its caretaker Prime Minister in 1993, Moeen Qureshi, claimed as the objective of linking Kashmir with the nuclear issue had been achieved and that Pakistan was in a position to implement a strategy outlined as far back as 1980, namely, to seize Kashmir in a bold, brash move when the Indian leadership appeared weak and indecisive.

President Clinton's statement in China assigning a role to that country in South Asia must have further encouraged Pakistan. The US also tilted in favour of Pakistan in imposing sanctions following the nuclear tests on the ground that its economy was weaker.

At the same time, Pakistan would have realised that the sanctions on India was only marginal and should the Jaswant Singh-Strobe Talbot talks make progress, the nuclear card might not be available for too long. With the passage of time, 'crying nuclear wolf,' even if linked to Kashmir, would progressively lose credibility.

Further, Pakistan's image was damaged by its association with the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and increasing Islamisation. Within Kashmir, the Indian security forces were steadily gaining ascendancy over militancy. It is possible that

Pakistan's political and military leadership concluded that the window of opportunity for internationalising the Kashmir issue by projecting it as a nuclear flashpoint was fast closing. Pakistan, therefore, needed to act in 1999.

This conclusion is borne out by the veiled nuclear threats held out by Pakistan's political leaders and officials at the time of the Kargil crisis. Except for one irresponsible editorial in an Indian party paper, there were no analogous pronouncements in this country.

Some accounts claim that the Kargil intrusion was planned in 1997 and that preliminary reconnaissance and training of personnel commenced that year. If this is accepted, while Pakistan's reliance on its nuclear deterrence to prevent India from escalating would still be important, the actual nuclear tests conducted in May 1998 would not in themselves be all that significant as nuclear deterrence between the two was in place as far back as 1990.

IV- CI Operations, Kargil and Integrated Manpower Policy

In going on alert to deter any Pakistani escalation and then focussing on eliminating the intrusion at Kargil, the Army had to withdraw battalions deployed in J&K from their counterinsurgency role. This caused consternation in the State Government and some worry even to the paramilitary forces, which were largely reliant on the Army in this regard.

The heavy involvement of the Army in counterinsurgency operations cannot but affect its preparedness for its primary role, which is to defend the country against external aggression. This point has often been emphasised by Pakistani analysts. Such a situation has arisen because successive Governments have not developed a long-term strategy to deal with the insurgency. The Army's prolonged deployment in a counterinsurgency role adversely affects its training programme, leads to fatigue and the development of a mindset that detracts from its primary role. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs, state governments and paramilitary forces tend to assume that the Army will always be there to combat insurgency.

This was vividly demonstrated when the Committee was referred to the Union Home Ministry's Action Plan for fighting military and the proxy war in J&K prepared in May 1998. This defined the role of the Army as being to ensure 'zero infiltration' across the LOC.

The paramilitary and Central Police Forces are not trained, raised and equipped to deal with trans-border terrorism by well-trained mercenaries armed with sophisticated equipment who are continuously infiltrating across the border/LOC. Over the years, the quality of these forces has not been appropriately upgraded effectively to deal with the challenge of the times and this has led to the increased dependence on the Army to fight insurgency.

The net result has been to reduce the role of the Indian Army to the level of a paramilitary force and the paramilitary forces, in turn, to the level of an ordinary police force. Pakistan has ruthlessly employed terrorism in Punjab, J& K and the North-East to involve the Indian Army in counterinsurgency operations and neutralise its conventional superiority.

Having partially achieved this objective, it has also persuaded itself that nuclear blackmail against India has succeeded on three occasions. A coherent counterstrategy to deal with Pakistan's terrorist-nuclear blackmail and the conventional threat has to be thought through.

The Committee believes that a comprehensive manpower policy is required to deal with this problem. In the present international security environment, proxy war and terrorism have become preferred means of hurting a neighbour's social, political and economic wellbeing. Given Pakistan's unrelenting hostility towards this country, it is necessary to evolve a long-term strategy to reduce the involvement of the Army in counterinsurgency and devise more cost-effective means of dealing with the problem.

There has also been criticism that redeployment of military units from CI duty in the Valley to the Kargil sector resulted in providing easy passage for a large number of hardened militants who were infiltrated by Pakistan across the Shamsabari Range into the Kupwara-Uri area and even South of the Pir Panjal.

The Unified Command was also reorganised, with the Director General Rashtriya Rifles being brought in from Delhi to replace GOC 15 Corps. The latter was relieved of this responsibility to enable him to devote full attention to his principal national defence task. However, within weeks of the conclusion of Operation Vijay, the *status quo ante* was restored. DG RR returned to Delhi and GOC 15 Corps resumed his place in the Unified Command.

The Committee also found Unified Command HQ's intelligence structure lacking in timely and continuous analysis and assessment of intelligence, which is critical of the success of CI operations.

More thought must be given to all these issues. Unified Command HQs have also been set up in Assam from time to time under different circumstances and with a somewhat different structure. But whether in J&K or Assam, there has sometimes been tension both between the Army and paramilitary/CPO/Police formations and between the civil and military authorities. This is an unhappy state of affairs and should not allowed to linger. The kind of manpower reorganisation the Committee proposes could provide a partial answer, but would still leave untouched the question of how best to structure Unified Command HQs in the future, wherever they might be required.

The decision taken two years ago to reduce the Indian Army's strength by 50,000 men and reinvest the savings on establishment costs in force modernisation, was a wise one. This reduction in numbers had no bearing on the Kargil crisis and it would be a gross misunderstanding of military realities to believe otherwise.

In spite of continuing counterinsurgency operations over the past many years, there has been no integrated equipment policy in respect of the Army, paramilitary and Central police forces. The manpower integration proposed would also ensure compatibility of equipment and render it easier for the Army and the other forces to operate side by side effectively when required to do so.

There is an equally pressing need to fashion an effective border management policy which covers not only terrorist infiltration, but illegal migration, smuggling and the flow of narcotics. These are all matters of national concern but are being looked at compartmentally. The inevitable result has been sub-optimal border

management at a time when the narcotics trade has been playing a crucial role in Pakistan's promotion of cross-border terrorism.

V - The Technological Dimension

Technology has added significantly to the potential of armies and terrorists. The AK-47 has transformed the lethal potential of the terrorist who has often outgunned the country's security forces in Punjab and J& K. The terrorist comes equipped with rapid fire, stand-off weapons, high explosives, wads of currency (real and fake) and sophisticated communications equipment. He can act alone and also as a member of an integrated team. He is highly motivated and often a person conditioned by years of fundamentalist schooling.

Despite the challenge of terrorism over the past many years, the Indian Army and other security forces have lagged behind in the quality of their surveillance and communication equipment although technologically superior equipment is readily available the world over. Only after the Kargil intrusion was direction finding equipment acquired in increasing numbers. Helicopters employed for air surveillance patrolling do not have sophisticated monitoring and sensing devices. The Kargil battle was fought with less than optimum communications capability. While self-reliance and indigenisation are sound principles, the availability of critical equipment in time of combat is the supreme consideration that must govern acquisition policy. This does not appear to be the case at present and there is no mechanism to monitor that the process of equipment acquisition serves the best interests of the country.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation and the chain of defence laboratories under its jurisdiction is responsible for indigenising and constantly upgrading the country's weapons and equipment inventory and related supplies. The dilemma has always been to determine the correct balance between 'make or buy.' There are obvious constraints such as of foreign exchange and the non-availability of state-of-the-art technology from advanced nations which are at

best only prepared to share these with their military allies. As a non-aligned power, India has not had access to some of the Western technologies that have flowed to Pakistan. Dual-use technology-denial regimes have also operated against India.

These considerations demand that the country develop a degree of self-reliance in defence-related technology and military hardware. Considerable progress has been made in this direction. The achievements in this field can neither be denied nor denigrated.

Nevertheless, a number of instances were brought to the notice of the Committee in respect of which there have been significant cost and time overruns in the development and induction of indigenous weapons and equipment for the three Armed Services. While extenuating circumstances can be cited, the fact is that the Services have had to do without such items whereas Pakistan has not been similarly handicapped. Some of these issues were in fact examined in detail by the Committee on Defence Expenditure (1990-91). This report has unfortunately not been made public and, the committee understands, many of its more substantial recommendations await implementation.

VI- Media Relations and Information

If the media served the country well, much of the credit goes to the initiative it itself took and to some individuals within the Government and the Armed Forces. Information is power, especially in this Information Age. The media moulds national and international opinion and can be a potent force multiplier. This was evident at Kargil -- India's first television war.

All things considered, coverage by the print and electronic media was by and large satisfactory. Yet it was apparent that, with some exceptions, media personnel lacked training in military affairs and war reporting and that the Armed Services lacked training and preparedness to facilitate the task of the media and counter disinformation.

Defence Public Relations is routinely handled by the Ministry of Defence through regular Information Service cadres. This establishment is not equipped to handle media relations during war or even proxy war. The briefing function during the Kargil crisis was taken over by a triad of senior military and civil spokesmen.

Army Headquarters set up an Information and Psychological Warfare Cell under an officer of the rank of Major General with direct access to the Army Chief. This enabled Army Headquarters both to monitor and disseminate information in a better calibrated manner than would have been the case otherwise.

Reporting on the campaign revealed a lack of public information about the command structure of the Armed Forces and how responsibilities are distributed within the national intelligence framework. While arrangements were made for official briefings at Delhi, there were inadequate arrangements at the Corps, Division and Brigade levels. Nor were there arrangements to brief officers and men at the ground level on daily developments nor to interface with the civil authorities.

The result was generation of a lot of inaccurate information such as the reported capture of a number of Indian Army bunkers (whereas the enemy only occupied one permanent patrol post which had earlier been vacated on account of extreme weather conditions), the existence of three-storeyed enemy bunkers equipped with television sets, and the purchase by the intruders of cement from the Dras-Kargil market.

A number of simple misperceptions became apparent in newspapers reports questioning the absence of the Army Chief in Poland during the early part of May 1999 and the Northern Army commander going to Pune about the same time. The early military appreciation was of limited infiltration in Kargil. Nevertheless, the Corps Commander, in whose area of responsibility the intrusion (as it was subsequently discovered to be) occurred, had acted promptly and vigorously to deal with even larger eventualities. There was no need to cancel the Army Chief's visit which had been long planned and was of some political significance.

The COAS remained in touch with developments at home and there was no vacuum in the higher military leadership because of his absence abroad during

the early phase of Kargil developments. The Army Commander, in turn, went to Pune for a briefing from his predecessor, Lieutenant General S Padmanabhan, now Southern Army Commander. He too was in constant touch with his Command and HQ 15 Corps and had already set in motion various precautionary measures.

Some of all this is inevitable in the fog of war. But efforts have to be made to review information handling procedures within the Armed Forces and their public dissemination. The Army needs such improved public relations capability even otherwise when deployed on counterinsurgency duties. Public relations are presently managed by the Ministry of Defence and at the formation level by military officers who have no media background.

A comprehensive account of the Kargil operations remains to be brought out. Pakistani political and military leaders have repeatedly highlighted their nuclear capability and their will to use it. Accounts have also appeared in Pakistan of how India was thrice deterred by its nuclear capability. India's reticence in setting the record straight about the earlier conflicts and the developments in the nuclear field appear to have influenced the Pakistani mindset and led to the adventurous miscalculation over Kargil.

The first overall briefing on the Kargil situation in the Military Operations Room was given to the Defence and External Affairs Ministers on May 17 with the Chiefs of staff committee in attendance. This was followed by a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security chaired by the Prime Minister on May 18 and a briefing of the Prime Minister and Defence Minister on May 24, with the COSC in attendance, by when the magnitude of the Kargil intrusion had been more or less fully assessed. The Army Chief had returned from Poland by May 20 when the CCS met again on May 25, with the COSC in attendance, and the use of the air power was cleared.

War and proxy war do not leave the civil population untouched. Human rights violations, civilian casualties, destruction or commandeering of property, refugee movements and the disruption of infrastructure and livelihoods must be expected. This calls for the creation of a civil-military interface at various levels to deal with

a whole range of problems on an emergence basis. Such liaison was lacking during the Kargil action and points to a deficiency that must be made good. The outcome of the Kargil operation was both a military and diplomatic triumph for India. The Pakistani intruders were evicted with heavier casualties than those suffered by India. The sanctity of the LOC received international recognition and Pakistan was isolated in the comity of nations. While attending to such shortcomings as have been brought to light, the nation can be proud of the manner in which the Armed Forces and the people as a whole acquitted themselves.

VII- Was Kargil Avoidable?

A Kargil-type situation could perhaps have been avoided had the Indian Army followed a policy of Siachenisation to plug unheld gaps along the 168 km stretch from Kaobal Gali to Chorbat La. This would have entailed establishing a series of winter cut-off posts with communications and other logistic support and specially equipped and trained troops to hold these positions and undertake winter patrolling despite risk of cold injuries and avalanche casualties which would have had to be accepted.

Such a dispersal of forces to hold uninhabited territory of no strategic value, would have dissipated considerable military strength and effort and would not have been at all cost-effective. If, however, it has had to be done now, such a policy can only be regarded as no more than a temporary expedient. The alternative should be a credible declaratory policy of swiftly punishing wanton and wilful violations of the sanctity of the LOC. This should be supplemented by a comprehensive space and aerial and based surveillance system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Findings bring out many grave deficiencies in India's security management system. The framework Lord Ismay formulated and Lord Mountbatten recommended was accepted by a national leadership unfamiliar with the intricacies of national security management. There has been very little change over the past 52 years despite the 1962 debacle, the 1965 stalemate and the 1971 victory, the growing nuclear threat, end of the cold war, continuance of proxy war in Kashmir for over a decade and the revolution in military affairs. The political, bureaucratic, military and intelligence establishments appear to have developed a vested interest in the *status quo*. National security management recedes into the background in time of peace and is considered too delicate to be tampered with in time of war and proxy war. The Committee strongly feels that the Kargil experience, the continuing proxy war and the prevailing nuclearised security environment justify a thorough review of the national security system in its entirety.

Such a review cannot be undertaken by an over-burdened bureaucracy. An independent body of credible experts, whether a national commission or one or more task forces or otherwise as expedient, is required to conduct such studies which must be undertaken expeditiously. The specific issues that required to be looked into are set out below.

National Security Council

The National Security Council, formally constituted in April 1999, is still evolving and its procedures will take time to mature. Whatever its merits, having a National Security Adviser who also happens to be Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, can only be an interim arrangement. The Committee believes that there must be a full time National Security Adviser and it would suggest that a second line of personnel be inducted into the system as early as possible and groomed for higher responsibility.

Members of the National Security Council, the senior bureaucracy servicing it and the Service Chiefs need to be continually sensitised to assessed intelligence pertaining to national regional and international issues. This can be done through periodic intelligence briefings of the Cabinet Committee on Security with all supporting staff in attendance.

'Kargil highlighted the gross inadequacies in the nation's surveillance capability'

Kargil highlighted the gross inadequacies in the nation's surveillance capability, particularly through satellite imagery. The Committee notes with satisfaction that steps have been initiated to acquire this capability. Every effort must be made and adequate funds provided to ensure that a capability of world standards is developed indigenously and put in place in the shortest possible time.

It is for consideration whether a two-stream approach -- civil and military -- in regard to the downloading and interpretation of the imagery may not be a better alternative than depending on a single agency. Some countries have created a national surveillance command. Since the Indian system is still in the initial stages, decisions taken at this juncture will have long term implications.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, also known as Remotely Piloted Vehicles, are extremely useful and effective in surveillance, especially if they have night vision and thermal imaging capabilities. UAVs have just been inducted and are operating in the plains under the charge of the Army. Similar efforts should be made for the acquisition of high altitude UAVs.

Institutionalised arrangements should be made to ensure that the UAV imagery generated is disseminated to the concerned intelligence agencies as quickly as possible. UAVs could also prove effective in counter-insurgency operations. They may replace WASO patrols in the long run. However, in the interim, the possibility of using more stable WASO platforms than Cheetah helicopters and equipping them with thermal imaging sensors should be explored.

The most spectacular intelligence coup of the Kargil operations was the interception of a series of high-level Islamabad-Beijing telephone conversations.

This highlights the capabilities of communication intelligence which in India is fragmented among a number of agencies and is not adequately funded. The equipment needs to be modernised in keeping with the advances made by Pakistan in inducting advanced communication technologies. There has also been a gross shortage of direction equipment which could contribute significantly to counter-insurgency operations.

The United States has grouped all its communication and electronic intelligence efforts within a single organisation, the National Security Agency. The desirability of setting up a similar organisation in India with adequate resources for this extremely important and non-intrusive method of gathering technological intelligence calls for examination.

Adequate attention has not been paid to developing encryption and decryption skills. The centralised communication and electronic intelligence agency should feed all the information it generates to the country's premier national intelligence agency which should in turn disseminate this material to all concerned users.

The problems and purposes of monitoring communications within the country and the effort devoted to listen in on external communications within the country and the effort devoted to listen in on external communications are different.

Increasingly, organised crime and anti-national elements are using encrypted communications.

While the effort to build up adequate communication and electronic intelligence capability should be tailored to suit India's particular needs, parochial departmental interests should be effectively countered.

In many advanced countries, technological intelligence collection is undertaken by an integrated Defence Intelligence Agency with adequate resources. In India, the defence intelligence effort is limited in relation to the role assigned to the external intelligence agency (R&AW) except for limited tactical and signal intelligence.

The resources made available to the Defence Services for intelligence collection are not commensurate with the responsibility assigned to them. There are distinct advantages in having two lines of intelligence collection and reporting, with a rational division of functions, responsibilities and areas of specialisation. The

Committee is of the view that the issue of setting up an integrated defence intelligence agency needs examination.

The Committee has drawn attention to deficiencies in the present system of collection, reporting, collation and assessment of intelligence. There is no institutionalised mechanism for coordination or objective-oriented interaction between the agencies and consumers at different levels.

Similarly, there is no mechanism for tasking the agencies, monitoring their performance and reviewing their records to evaluate their quality. Nor is there any oversight of the overall functioning of the agencies. These are all standard features elsewhere in the world.

In the absence of such procedures, the Government and the nation do not know whether they are getting value for money. While taking note of recent steps to entrust the NSCS with some of these responsibilities the Committee recommends a thorough examination of the working of the intelligence system with a view to remedying these deficiencies.

All major countries have a mechanism at national and often at lower levels to assess the intelligence inputs received from different agencies and sources. After the 1962 debacle, the then existing JIC under the Chiefs of Staff committee was upgraded and transferred to the Cabinet Secretariat. It was further upgraded in 1985 with the Chairman being raised to the rank of Secretary to the Government. The Committee finds that for various reasons cited in the Report, the JIC was devalued. Its efficacy has increased since it became part of the National Security Council Secretariat. However, its role and place in the national intelligence framework should be evaluated in the context of overall reform of the system. Pakistan's action at Kargil was not rational. Its behaviour patterns require to be carefully studied in order to gain a better understanding of the psyche of its leadership. In other countries, intelligence agencies have developed large White Wings of high quality analysts for in-house analysis. They also contract studies with university departments and think-tanks with area specialisation. This is sadly neglected in India.

The development of such country/region specialisation along with associated language skills is a time consuming process and should not be further delayed. A generalist administration culture would appear to permeate the intelligence field. It is necessary to establish think-tanks, encourage country specialisation in university departments and to organise regular exchanges of personnel between them and the intelligence community.

The country can no longer afford ad hoc functioning'

There is general agreement that in the light of the new situation of proxy war and large scale terrorism that the country faces, the role and the tasks of the para-military forces have to be restructured particularly with reference to command and control and leadership functions. They need to be trained to much higher standards of performance and better equipped to deal with terrorist threats. The possibility of adopting an integrated manpower policy for the Armed Forces, para-military forces and the Central Police Forces merits examination.

The Army must be young and fit at all times. Therefore, instead of the present practice of having 17 years of colour service (as has been the policy since 1976), it would be advisable to reduce the colour service to a period of seven to ten years and, thereafter, release these officers and men for service here, older cadres might be further streamed into the regular police forces or absorbed in a National Service Corps (or a National Conservation Corps), as provided for under Article 51A(d) of the Constitution, to spearhead a range of land and water conservation and physical and social infrastructure development on the model of some eco-development battalions that have been raised with a fair measure of success.

This would reduce the age profile of the Army and the para-military forces, and also reduce pension costs and other entitlements such as married quarter and educational facilities. The Army pension bill has risen exponentially since the 1960s and is becoming an increasing burden on the national exchequer. Army pensions rose from Rs 1,568 crore in 1990-91 to Rs 6,932 crore (budgeted) in 1999-2000, the equivalent of almost two-thirds of the current Army salary bill.

The para-military and police forces have their own ethos and traditions and might well be chary of such lateral induction as has been proposed. This objection might be overcome were the para-military forces to undertake recruitment on the basis of certain common national military standards and then send those selected for training and absorption in the Army for a period of colour service before reverting to their parent para-military formations.

The Committee is aware of the complexities and sensitivities involved in any such security manpower reorganisation. Nevertheless, national security dictates certain imperatives which the country may ignore only at its peril. The proposed reorganisation would make a career in the armed forces attractive on the basis of the lifetime employment offered by the two or three-tiered secondment formula.

Border Management

Border management has become immensely more complex over the years: It is now handled by the Assam Rifles, the Border Security Forces and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Border fencing in Punjab has produced positive results. Elsewhere, vested interests have come in the way of effective border management. The smuggling of narcotics, many portable arms and explosives, illegal migration and the infiltration of trained mercenaries have all exacerbated border management. Narcotics is dealt with by the Finance Ministry while other aspects are handled by the Home Ministry.

If the country is to acquire increased capabilities for area surveillance and electronic fencing, the present structure and procedures for border patrolling must be reviewed. The Committee is therefore of the view that the entire issue needs detailed study in order to evolve forces structures and procedures that ensure improved border management and reduction, if not the elimination, in the inflow of narcotics, illegal migrants, terrorists and arms.

Defence Budget and Modernisation

A number of experts have at various times suggested the need to enhance India's defence outlays as budgetary constraints have affected the process of

modernisation and created certain operational voids. The Committee would not like to advocate any percentage share of GDP that should be assigned to Defence. This must be left to the Government to determine in consultation with the concerned department and the Defence Services.

Among aspects of modernisation to which priority should be given is that of equipping infantrymen with superior lightweight weapons, equipment and clothing suited to the threats they are required to face in Alpine conditions.

National Security Management and Apex Decision-Making

India is perhaps the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters are outside the apex governmental structure. The chiefs of staff have assumed the role of operational commanders of their respective forces rather than that of Chiefs of Staff to the Prime Minister and Defence Minister. They simultaneously discharge the roles of operational commanders and national security planners/managers, especially in relation to future equipment and force postures. Most of their time, is however, devoted to the operational role, as is bound to happen. This has led to a number of negative results. Future-oriented long term planning suffers.

Army Headquarters has developed a command rather than a staff culture. Higher decisions on equipment, force levels and strategy are not collegiate but command-oriented. The Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of the Army Commanders and their equivalents in the Navy and Air Force so that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broadbased. The present obsolete system has perpetuated the continuation of the culture of the British Imperial theatre system of an India Command whereas what is required is a National Defence Headquarters.

Most opposition to change comes from inadequate knowledge of the national security decision-making process elsewhere in the world and a reluctance to change the status *quo* and move away from considerations of parochial interest. The status *quo* is often mistakenly defended as embodying civilian ascendancy

over the armed forces, which is not a real issue. In fact, locating the Services Headquarters in the Government will further enhance civilian supremacy. Structural reforms could bring about a much closer and more constructive interaction between the Civil Government and the services. The Committee is of the view that the present obsolete system, bequeathed to India by Lord Ismay, merits re-examination. An effective and appropriate national security planning and decision-making structure for India in the nuclear age is overdue, taking account of the revolution in military affairs and threats of proxy war and terrorism and the imperative of modernising the Armed Forces.

An objective assessment of the last 52 years will show that the country is lucky to have scraped through various nations security threats without too much damage, except in 1962. The country can no longer afford such ad hoc functioning. The Committee therefore recommends that the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and the structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces headquarters be comprehensively studied and reorganised.

The fallacy of showing the LOC as running northeast to the Karakoram Pass must be exposed'

The Report clearly brings out that, beginning with Indira Gandhi, successive prime ministers displayed extreme sensitivity towards the nuclear issue and consistently supported an Indian nuclear weapons programme. They judged it necessary to envelop it in the utmost secrecy and consequently did not take their own party colleagues, the armed forces and senior civil servants into confidence. This has caused many to believe that India's nuclear weaponisation programme is a capture from the traditional policy of merely keeping the nuclear option open indefinitely. The record must be set straight.

The contribution of India Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, V P Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Narasimha Rao, Deve Gowda and Inder Gujral to India's emergence as a nuclear weapon state, and the compulsions on them to ensure this, should be made

known. The record clearly establishes that the Indian nuclear weapons programme had a much wider consensus than is generally believed.

The Committee, therefore, recommends the publication of a White Paper on the Indian nuclear weapons programme. This will also bring out the stark facts of the evolution of Pakistan's nuclear capability with assistance from countries who tirelessly decry proliferation, and the threats posed to India through nuclear blackmail.

Media Relations and information

Kargil was the first war which Indian correspondents covered by going to the front in significant numbers. It was also the country's first television war and one in which the Indian Army had to handle the media right on the battlefield. This has been a learning experience for the government, the armed forces and the media. Neither the northern army command nor HQ 15 corps nor the lower field formations had media cells which could cater to the requirements of the press corps. This reveals an obvious lacuna which must be plugged.

The army has decided to revive and upgrade its war correspondents course at the college of combat, Mhow. The media should avail of this opportunity so that there is a cadre of trained war correspondents at any time. Simultaneously, media relations and the techniques and implications of information war and perception management must form a distinct and important module at all levels of military training. It must also be recognised that the media has to be serviced at many levels -- national, local and international. None is less important than the other. While dealing with the information issue, the Committee would also like to draw attention to the fact that Indian security forces are deployed year round in very difficult and inhospitable terrain ranging from high mountains to dense forests and sandy deserts. The US armed forces usually operate dedicated radio and television channels to entertain and inform their armed forces when deployed overseas.

The government should seriously consider similar dedicated facilities for the Indian armed forces. If such facilities had been available at the time of Kargil,

some of the misleading reports and rumours that gained currency could have been effectively countered.

This report brings out the vast gap between the actual policies pursued by the government and developments on the ground on the one hand and popular perceptions derived from public pronouncements on the other. In a democracy, it is incumbent on the government to reduce any such gap.

While the country's nuclear programme must remain confidential, there was a failure on the part of successive prime ministers to educate the people on the realities of nuclear security confronting the country. In the case of Defence policy and insurgency situations, sufficient public information is not available.

There is no single, comprehensive official publication containing details of the Kashmir question, the UN resolutions and why they could not be implemented, as well as of the more recent developments in Kashmir through the years of proxy war, terrorism and ethnic cleansing together with Pakistan's involvement in all of these. The government must review its information policy and develop structures and processes to keep the public informed on vital national issues.

It would appear that one of the major factors influencing Pakistan's aggressive behaviour in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 has been its self-image of martial superiority and a deliberately cultivated perception of an ineffectual Indian Army and a weak and vacillating Indian government.

Though Pakistan was discomfited in all the four military adventures it undertook, it has attempted to portray each of them as a narrowly-missed victory. Even the 1971 defeat is blamed on the Soviet Union. Developments in Afghanistan and its final denouement have been portrayed as projecting Pakistani military prowess in defeating the Soviet superpower.

India has not published authoritative histories of the 1965 and 1971 wars and to establish the facts. While this Report appends, with appropriate security deletions, the three service headquarters presentations of Operation Vijay, Operation Safed Sagar and Operation Talwar, that were made before the Committee, we recommend that an authoritative account of this unique high altitude war be published at an early date.

Further to these, communicating the scope, extent and history of India's nuclear weapons programme should be an essential part of the exercise of deterrence. The record needs to be set right, not through strident propaganda, but by a cold marshalling of the facts regarding contemporary events and past history.

The longstanding controversy between the services and the DRDO on drawing the line between 'make' or 'buy' resulted in the formulation of a new procurement policy in 1995. This liberalised the procedures for the import of equipment as against its indigenous development. However, this policy needs periodic review in the light of changing circumstances. Experience would suggest that such a review is presently overdue.

One problem the DRDO faces is that the armed forces borrow unique features from weapons and equipment on offer from advanced military suppliers around the world and marry these in their 'general staff requirements' to make 'impossible' demands. There is an element of truth in this assertion but none can be faulted for desiring the best.

A true partnership must be established between the services and the DRDO to ensure that the latter gets full backing and funding from the services and the former, in turn, get the indented equipment they require without undue delay. The design and development of special material as well as defence stores and equipment often entails working at the frontiers of technology. It is, therefore, possible and desirable to harness national talent wherever it lies -- in the universities and IITs, and in the private and public sectors -- not only within the DRDO and designated defence undertakings.

Casting the net wider would be advantageous and would ensure a greater degree of competition and technological spin-off into the civil sector. This would also facilitate defence exports, the better utilisation of highly sophisticated industrial capacity and related manpower and enable defence laboratories and defence undertakings to concentrate on those areas which cannot be hived off to the civil sector, public or private, on grounds of high security or limited applicability of end use for civilian purposes. There is a whole gamut of issues here which merits consideration.

Civil Military Liaison

The establishment of a civil-military liaison mechanism at various levels, from the ranking Command HQ to the operational formations on the ground, division, brigade or battalion, is most necessary to smoothen relationships during times of emergency and stress, like war and proxy war, and to ensure that there is no room for friction and alienation of the local population. Situations of no-war no-peace call for norms and procedures that avoid delay and endless red tape.

Relocating villages behind the army's forward defence line in J&K can best be done through an initially limited experimental move and further action on the basis of policies evolved as a result of that learning experience. Likewise, steps should be taken to issue ID cards to border villagers in certain vulnerable areas on a priority basis, pending its extension to other or all parts of the state. Such a policy would also be relevant in the North-East, Sikkim and part of West Bengal. The Kargil sector and other areas along the LOC have suffered loss and damage on account of war and shelling. A rehabilitation programme for Kargil must be put in place as a precursor to a longer term development package that includes the completion of by-pass roads for strategic movements between Zojila and Leh. This will render NH-1A an exclusively civilian highway and not a military target, skirting as it does a part of the LOC in this sector.

The dedication and valour of the Ladakh Scouts and J&K Light Infantry merits recognition through the raising of additional units of these regiments with a higher component of men from Kargil being inducted into the Ladakh Scouts.

Declaratory Policy for LOC

More attention should be given to monitoring and analysing developments and trends in Azad J&K and the northern areas which are in ferment and whose fate and future cannot be divorced from any consideration of the Kashmir question. Likewise, the Kashmiri diaspora overseas must be kept better informed about the situation in J&K and what happened in Kargil.

Misperceptions and ambiguities about the Siachen/AGPL sector need to be dispelled and the facts of 'cartographic aggression' here made known. There is no warrant for departing from the logic of extending the LOC from NJ 9842 and 'thence north to the glaciers' as set out in the delineation of the ceasefire line under the Karachi agreement of July 29, 1949 which was subsequently converted into the Line of Control by the Simla Agreement in 1992. This broadly upholds the current actual ground position line. The fallacy of showing the LOC as running northeast to the Karakoram Pass must be exposed.

The country must not fall into the trap of Siachenisation of the Kargil heights and similar unheld unpopulated gaps in the high Himalayas along the entire length of the northern border. The proper response would be a declaratory policy that deliberate infringement of the sanctity of the LOC and wanton cross-border terrorism in furtherance of proxy war will meet with prompt retaliation in a manner, time and place of India's choosing.

Pakistan and the world must know that India's defence of the integrity of its own territory, including that within its own side of the LOC, is not and cannot be held to be escalatory and that the aggressor and his victim cannot be bracketed and placed on par.

Such a declaratory policy must be backed with credible measures in J&K to win back alienated sections of the population, attend to genuine discontents, political and economic, and enable the victims of ethnic cleansing to return to their homes in the Valley or elsewhere in the state with security and honour. To this end, the Union and state governments must jointly initiate a twin policy of reform and devolution to and within J&K and a dialogue with Pakistan.

India's commitment to maintaining the sanctity of the LOC/AGPL and the international endorsement of this position won during the Kargil crises has within it the seeds of a larger, long-term settlement that can bring enduring peace and tranquility to J&K and stable and cooperative Indo-Pakistan relations on the basis of the Simla-Lahore process within the framework of SAARC.

EPILOGUE

The Committee's review brings out many lessons that the armed forces, intelligence agencies, Parliament, government, media and the nation as a whole have to learn. These have been set out in the preceding findings. These should stimulate introspection and reflection, leading to purposeful action. The Committee trusts that its recommendations will be widely discussed and acted upon expeditiously so that the sacrifices made will not have been in vain.

The best tribute to the dedication of those killed and wounded will be to ensure that 'Kargils' of any description are never repeated.

There is both comfort and danger in clinging to any long established status quo.

There will be many who suggest the most careful deliberation on the report.

Procrastination has cost nations dear. Others will no doubt advocate incremental change. Half measures will not do; synergy will be lost. The Committee has after very wide interaction sign-posted directions along the path to peace, ensuring progress, development and stability of the nation.

How exactly the country should proceed to refashion its security-intelligence-development shield to meet the challenge of the 21st century is for the government, Parliament, and public opinion to determine. There is no turning away from that responsibility.