

CAPS BOOK: WARS BY PAKISTAN



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On October 21-22, 1947, when military led tribesmen entered Jammu & Kashmir, their final aim was to facilitate occupation and accession of the state by Pakistan. The swift Indian military response to this invasion ensured that while India retained a major part of the province, Pakistan could not achieve its goal. This war, from Pakistan's point of view, was marred by the failure of higher planning and leadership to gauge the advantage and the Indian reaction in Kashmir. During the subsequent period which saw its armed forces transform, Pakistan took the initiative in altering the power equations in the region and its moves culminated in the second India-Pakistan War of 1965. For Pakistan, the war ended with an unexpected outcome. There was bitterness and relief at the same time. The next six years saw a tremendous boost to the military capability of Pakistan to counter the continued expansion of India's armed forces but then the internal ethnic fault lines within Pakistan created fissures which resulted in yet another military confrontation with India in 1971. Twenty- nine years later, the neighbours clashed again in Kargil. This operation did not emerge in a strategic vacuum. Given the long history of Indo-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, the Kargil conflict represented a continuation and a reaction by Pakistan to the Indian control of the Siachen Glacier in 1984. Kargil was thought to be an operation planned and executed by the Pakistan Army with political connivance, without planned combat air support.

Pakistan may not have understood or applied the force potential of air power in past confrontations with India but that may change in a possible future conflict. The prominence in building the air force is indicative of the likely dominant role it would play in tomorrow's war. The Pakistan-China combine has been up against India since the early Sixties. This partnership has grown in all spheres, aimed towards a common foe: India. The added threat of the full PLA Air Force (PLAAF) machinery behind this force is overpowering. The current force deficit against China is one-third the combat squadrons when the western front against the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is

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equally balanced. The need is to augment the existing Indian Air Force (IAF) force levels to a 54-squadron air force to minimally balance the emerging PAF threat by 2020. This figure rises to 66 combat squadrons to balance an augmented PLAAF force from the remaining Military Region Air Forces (MRAFs). Capability flows from numbers and the need is to build adequate force levels to possess the capability and counter the adversaries in a two-front scenario for India. The IAF is in the process of expansion and building up qualitatively and quantitatively. History has caught us having to fight in the same process of expansion and consolidation in 1965, and hopefully, it will not again.

Vikram Munshi: Vikram Munshi is a Wing Commander in the Indian Air Force and Research Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS). He was commissioned in the fighter branch and has flown various types of training and combat aircraft. His current interests are in the war-fighting potential of the Pakistan armed forces and the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Presently, he is studying issues related to nuclear deterrence in the subcontinent.

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