

Wars by Pakistan by Vikram Munshi, New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2013, pp. 240, INR 820

*Stuti Banerjee**

The Pakistan-India relationship has been marked by both peaks and troughs, and scepticism and suspicion of each other's motives has never been far behind. The two states were one till independence and, more importantly, the two armed forces were one. They had fought wars together before they fought wars with each other. As the author, Vikram Munshi points out, 'In a little over two months from brother to neighbours to adversaries, the history of India and Pakistan has changed in more ways than anyone could ever have imagined.' In this one sentence, the author has captured the essence of the relationship between the two countries from Partition to present day.

The most important institution in Pakistan is its armed forces, more specifically the army. The British Indian Army that was divided at the time of independence was a mixed force of officers and men belonging to different communities and religions. The general distrust of the British since 1857 meant that there were very few Indian officers. In this minority, the Muslims were a further minority, thus the manning of the officer cadre of the new state of Pakistan fell drastically. The division of hardware was more cumbersome, but there is little to contest that Pakistan was not allocated its fair share. India protested that Pakistan was allocated more assets for fewer personnel, whereas the latter claimed that the former did not fulfil its obligations to transfer all assets assigned to it. Questions were

* Stuti Banerjee is a Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi.



raised then and continue to be raised about the fairness of the distribution of men and resources.

After the division of the armed forces, the next contentious issue was the accession of the various princely states. While most joined India and some joined Pakistan, the accession of the Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir would determine India-Pakistan relations. According to the author, Maharaja Hari Singh suspected the Muslim League of trying to polarise his state and felt that accession to India would ensure the end of his rule. However, when the Pakistan military-supported tribesmen entered the state, Hari Singh's military weakness called for the presence of the Indian Armed Forces, which were available only after the state acceded to India.

Pakistan has always maintained that the 1947 War was led by tribesmen. In a detailed analysis of Pakistani officials' reasoning to invade Kashmir as also the planning and logistics involved, Munshi has debunked Pakistan's claims that the first war was essentially a tribal armed movement with no involvement of the newly-formed Pakistan Army. According to him, the lack of discipline along with deficiency in ammunition posed a roadblock to the Pakistan Army's invasion plans, thus providing India adequate time to build up its forces and establish air links. What has been hinted upon, but not explored in much detail, is the role of the British officials who were part of the force during this period due to a lack of indigenous officers in the Pakistan Army.

Pakistan lost the first war but the valuable lessons it learnt led to the re-organization and re-equipment of the Pakistan Army, helping it to emerge as an important force in the country. The period after 1949 was remarkable for the Pakistan Army. In an interesting analysis of the reforms within the army, the author has charted its path of consolidating power between 1949 to its second war with India. The period coincided with the movement of the military into the political arena. The imposition of martial law in Lahore gave it the opportunity to manage civil affairs, and helped it establish its image as an effective administrator before the people. The author states that by handling civil and national issues with characteristic efficiency, the Pakistan military was flexing its muscle away from the political leadership. Slowly the superiority of the military's power took root in the minds of the population. A few more details on this breakdown of the links between the two would have enhanced the overall understanding of the relationship between the military and civilian

leadership, which continues to guide Pakistan political decision-making in current times.

The defeat led Pakistan to negotiate assistance from the United States and, most importantly, adopt new tactical concepts to overcome its limitations and overpower the numerically superior Indian forces. These new tactics and weapons were used in the 1965 Indo-Pak War, which was carefully planned and executed by the Pakistani Army as that country hoped for a favourable settlement on Kashmir through the war. The war was imposed after studying India's response to the Rann of Kutch incursion and the United States' response to the same. In a well-researched account, the author has been able to bring forward the reasons for Pakistan's need to impose this war on India, as also what it could have done to win it. The 1965 War was India's first major attempt at using its airpower in a decisive manner and this role is highlighted also. The reader is given an understanding of the war, the psyche of the Pakistan Army, the reasons for Pakistan's loss, and the lessons it learnt.

The Pakistan military started to expand to counter the Indian military yet again. It was confident of its strength when the two countries fought a third war in 1971. India's aim to fight on its eastern border was well justified and the lack of territorial ambition, thereafter, proved its cause. Much has been talked and written about the framed 'Tikka Offensive' of Pakistan, which never materialized. The reason for Pakistan's lack of initiative is baffling. In his attempt to explain this, Munshi writes that the secrecy and the predominance of General Yahya Khan contributed significantly to the defeat. The military was entrenched in matters of civil governance, which resulted in lack of planning, training, strategy and execution. There was a lack of coordination between the three services which was further compounded by their geographical separateness.

The logic for the Kargil War (1999) was both political and military as far as Pakistan was concerned, as narrated by the events leading to the war. One reason for it, ironically, was peaceful relations with India. The political nature of the Pakistan military ensured that it could not endorse normalised relations with India, which according to the author is the primary reason for its pre-eminence in Pakistani polity. While the 1971 War was a result of political and ethnic difference within Pakistan—in the eastern and the western halves—the Kargil War was a result of the political difference between the Army and the government. It is interesting for a novice reader on wars to note that the genesis of the Kargil operations was

in the late 1980s, it was simply employed by the generals in 1999. It was Pakistan's attempt to exploit India's vulnerabilities, like, it felt, India had exploited its weakness in 1971. The aim of the war was to capture the Kargil heights and change the status of the Line of Control (LOC), and internationalise the Kashmir issue. Pakistan was unable to achieve its first aims, but one cannot comment surely on whether the second aim was also not delivered on.

The Pakistan Army is the most dominant of the three forces in Pakistan, and its rise has been remarkable. Today, it is part of both the civil and military structure of the country as a result of its organized structure and discipline. The expansion, and amalgamation, of the Pakistan Army into the power structure was facilitated by the political leaders of the day. Once in power, the Army was unable to let go of it. Today, it has reached a situation where it is perhaps not possible for it to give up its powers. It has found the best method to achieve its goals is by retaining the decision-making position. It has complete control over the national defence budget, relations with India, and control over the country's nuclear arsenal. It can be safely said that the Army's first intervention into politics was not premeditated; however, its subsequent endeavours have been deliberate.

Having studied the wars, the author then moves on to discussing the air power element in them. Beginning with the history of the two air forces, to how they were used during the four wars—the total strength, the types of aircrafts used—the losses and the wins. Munshi has also studied the procurement numbers of the two forces and their future structure. Continuing with his role as a soothsayer, he has also explored the possibility of the use of combined Chinese and Pakistani air forces in a future war against India. The author has been candid in his assessment, though backed by facts, that the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be in a position of disadvantage in such a war. He has called for faster procurement and better strategy for India in this two-front war. His premise is that the future wars would be won through the battles fought in air, which may be the reason for his concentration on just the air forces of the three countries, and not on the other services, in this last chapter.

The book is an excellent first attempt by the author. He is able to engage the reader with information in a cohesive manner devoid of military jargon. At the end of his chapters, he has compared each war with the wars fought in the past bringing out deficiencies and reasons for Pakistan's loss. The lack of maps, however, detailing the theatres of the wars is a glaring oversight, which should be rectified in subsequent

editions. There is also repetition and overlap of information as the author revisits the various wars. This should have been checked for, as removing it would not distort the reading experience. It is well known that the Pakistan military is synonymous with Pakistan Army, thus one cannot but concentrate on its actions. The author has mentioned the role played by the Pakistan Air Force but there is no mention of the Pakistan Navy, even if only to state that it played no role in the wars. Similarly, there is no mention of the Indian Navy. Overall, the book is valuable addition to our understanding of the Pakistan military and its behaviour towards India.