

Kargil, Kargil everywhere

Dr. Pak. Dg.
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AS A RULE, FORMER CIVIL SERVANTS IN Pakistan either do not write books or when they do, they write bad books. There are always exceptions, of course, such as former ambassador Sultan Mohammad Khan's admirable autobiography and Hassan Zaheer's seminal work on the secession of East Pakistan.

Police officers, barring such distinguished exceptions as the late AB Awan whose book on Balochistan remains perhaps the best work on the subject after independence, have brought little honour either to their service or to themselves by writing the kind of fictionalised fact that master minder of Pakistan's "ideology" Chaudhry Sardar Mohammad "Pulsi" has inflicted on us in recent years. That being so, I am happy to see the just published book by former police officer Hassan Abbas, a resident of Harvard at present.

His book — *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror* — though more populist in tone than academic, does contain a good deal of new and startling information. He writes that Nawaz Sharif was not aware of the Kargil Operation when he received Vajpayee in Lahore. He describes how the Kargil operation was planned and executed by the "Gang of Four", quoting in his support Dr Maleeha Lodhi who said, "Even corps commanders and other service chiefs were excluded from the decision-making process."

According to him, Gen Tauqir Zia (he of the cricket disaster fame), who was head of military operations at GHQ, was not told (which may have been just as well). When the Kargil plan (it is an old army hobby horse) was presented to Gen Zia-ul-Haq, he summed it up by observing, "So in other words, you have prepared a plan to lead us into a full-scale war with India!" However, when the plan was shown to Nawaz Sharif after the Vajpayee visit, he cleared it, despite reservations expressed by his defence secretary, retired Maj-Gen Iftikhar Ali Khan and former Lt-Gen Majid Malik, a senior member of the Sharif cabinet. It is not clear if the Prime Minister was assured that only Kashmiri "mujahideen"

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KHALID HASAN

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would be involved, not the regular army.

India, writes Abbas, was taken by surprise by Kargil. Those who had always argued that Pakistan was unreliable and perfidious felt triumphant. The reaction to Kargil within the Pakistan army was serious. According to the author, "Maj-Gen Javed Hassan, the commander on the spot, was being threatened by words and gestures of subordinates that could only be described as mutinous. Lt-Gen Mahmood, on whom real-

ity started to dawn fatefully late in the day, saw his adequate jaw falling at an alarming rate. And though the conviction and inner reserves of Lt-Gen Aziz, helped by blissful ignorance, kept him as gung-ho as ever and also helped keep Musharraf's optimism afloat, the Prime Minister had become a case stricken by fright.

"Under these circumstance, Nawaz was left to plead desperately for a meeting with President Clinton, who found that his schedule allowed him a few free hours on July 4, 1999."

He writes, "The evacuation of Kargil was followed by a hum of resentment all over Pakistan. The loved ones of those who had given their lives on the desolate and remote slopes there wanted to know that if unilateral withdrawal was to be the end of the whole exercise, what the point was of sacrificing the lives of their sons and brothers? The people of Pakistan had been subjected to the largest whispering campaign in history to expect a great victory.

"When the operation fizzled out like a wet firecracker, they were a nation left speechless in anger and disbelief. Musharraf and the planners could not give any excuses in public, but privately they let it be known that the blame for the scuttling of a brilliant operation lay on a panic-prone Prime Minister, who could not stand up to the US president. Nawaz Sharif, too, could not say anything in his defence publicly, but privately he let it be known that his generals had taken him for a ride, and that he had to bend over backward to get the US President to help Pakistan out of a very sticky situation."

In his recent interview to *India Today*, Nawaz Sharif said, "Mr Musharraf felt we should bring Mr Clinton into the matter. He pushed me to meet him. Mr Musharraf said, 'Why don't you meet Clinton? Why don't you ask him to bring about a settlement?' It was Mr Musharraf who behaved irresponsibly and it was he who planned the whole affair."

Isn't it time we heard from "Mr" Musharraf?

Khalid Hasan is *Daily Times'* US-based correspondent. His e-mail is khasan2@cox.net