

#### WINNERS-HIGHEST GALLANTRY AWARDS

##### *India-Param Vir Chakra*

Major Som Nath Sharma (Posthumous)  
 Lance Naik Karam Singh  
 Second Lieutenant Rama Raghoba Rane  
 Naik Jadu Nath Singh  
 Company Havildar Major Piru Singh Shekhawat

##### *Pakistan Nishan-e-Haider*

Captain Muhammad Sarwar

On 22 Oct 1947, six *Lashkars* commenced their advance from Muzaffarabad, via Domel, Uri and Baramula, with the task of capturing Srinagar airfield and subsequently advancing to the Banihal Pass. However, they halted their advance at Baramula and took to plunder and rape, thus delaying their advance. The attacks from Pakistan forced the Maharaja to sign the 'Agreement of Accession' to India. Indian military assistance followed immediately with an infantry battalion being airlifted to Srinagar.

The preoccupation of the Pakistani force in Baramulla gave time to the Indian forces to halt them on the outskirts of Srinagar.

By 01 Jan 1948, United Nations (UN) gave a call for cessation of hostilities. By then, Indian forces had secured Srinagar and operations were progressing in the Jammu area towards Naushera and Rajauri. UN Security Council passed Resolution 47 on 21 Apr 1948, which was not accepted by Pakistan. In Jul 1948, UN Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) visited both countries and on 13 Aug 1948 adopted a Resolution, which included a ceasefire, a truce agreement and consultations for a plebiscite, but again it was rejected by Pakistan.



**Stuart Tanks (7 Cavalry) in action at Zojila Pass**

Important operations during the war were the Battle of Shalateng, the capture of Zojila, and the link-up with Poonch. By the end of 1948, the Indian Military had driven the Pakistani forces out of the major part of J&K and were in a strong position to recapture the rest of the state, but a number of policy decisions, against the advice of the military, resulted in a UN ceasefire being accepted from 01 Jan 1949 and the Cease Fire Line (CFL) came into being.

The net result was that India had gained control of about two-third of the state (including Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh), while Pakistan continued to occupy roughly one third of J&K, called Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) by India and Azad Kashmir (AK) by Pakistan and Northern Areas, which are now called Gilgit-Baltistan. India was undoubtedly the victor but would have done even better if it was not constrained by policy decisions restricting induction of additional troops and not permitting operations in certain areas. These decisions were, surreptitiously, influenced by Britain. The main aim of this skulduggery was to prevent India having a border with Afghanistan, in pursuit of the old 'Great Game' policy of Britain. An internal reason was that Sheikh Abdullah did not want to include POK because the majority of people living there were not ethnic Kashmiris. He was able to influence the then Prime Minister Nehru to his point of view! The inconclusive result of the war still affects the geopolitics of both India and Pakistan.

### **Second India-Pakistan War: 1965**

The India-Pakistan war of 1965 was preceded by two preliminary operations launched by Pakistan. The first was the skirmishes in the Rann of Kutch in April 1965 (Operation Kabaddi) and the second was the launch of Operation Gibraltar by Pakistani troops, disguised as Kashmiris, who infiltrated in to J&K in early Aug 1965. After operations in the Rann of Kutch, Pakistan convinced itself that a quick military campaign in J&K, preceded by an instigated insurrection would enable Pakistan to annex J&K. The strategy was to confine all operations within J&K and it was assumed that India would not escalate the conflict outside J&K.

It was then Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his cronies, who persuaded Ayub Khan that if Pakistan were to 'wrest' Kashmir from India by force, 1965 was its 'last chance'. India, they said, was "demoralised and vulnerable" because of the "humiliating defeat at the hands of China"; the feedback of Operation Kabbadi in Kutch; Nehru's death; the "palpable weakness" of his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri; a virulent anti-Hindi agitation in south India; and an acute food shortage across the country. It was also highlighted that once expansion and modernisation of Indian Military was completed, the balance of

power would shift back in India's favour, and Pakistan's "last opportunity would be lost". The clinching argument was that "fear of China would deter India" from extending the war beyond Kashmir. This took care of Ayub Khan's prime concern, who had once stated: "While winning Kashmir, I don't want to lose Pakistan". At a sand-model presentation at Murree, Ayub had put his finger on Akhnoor on the model and asked, "Why don't you go for the jugular?" Ayub then embarked on the standard Pakistani self-delusion: *The Hindus could not fight. "Such an opportunity should, therefore, be sought and exploited".*

#### **Pakistani Operation 'Gibraltar'**

On 05 August 1965, between 26,000 and 33,000 Pakistani soldiers, dressed as Kashmiris, crossed the CFL at a number of points and headed for objectives within J&K. Initially, they tried to spread panic by raiding isolated and soft targets. However, as the Indian Army limbered up, by moving 163 Infantry Brigade from Ladakh to the Valley, the infiltrators were on the run. My battalion, 1 MARATHA LI (JANGI PALTAN) was part of this brigade and it was during a search and destroy operation in the Valley that I was severely wounded, in this my second bleeding; the first being in 1961 during the Goa Operations.

Later, with induction of additional troops, HQ Sri Force was formed. Along with anti-infiltration operations commencing from 15 Aug 1965, operations astride the CFL were launched to secure important areas across it. Thereafter, it was a ding-dong battle along the CFL, with attacks and counter-attacks by both sides. By the end of August, both sides had secured a few important dominating heights. While Pakistan had secured important heights in Tithwal, Uri and Poonch, India had captured the prized Haji Pir Bulge and the Pass, and important features in other areas.

#### **Pakistani Operation 'Grand Slam'**

Operation Gulmarg (October 1947) having failed, Pakistan launched Operation Grand Slam on 02 Sep 1965, with the aim of capturing the vital town of Akhnoor and severing supply routes and communications of Indian troops in J&K. They were still

confining their operations across the CFL, as they were sure that the Indian Military would also do the same. In the Akhnoor sector, Pakistan made initial gains on account of the surprise factor, but the Indian Army, supported by the Indian Air Force (IAF), stabilised the situation quickly. Brief details of the operations are elucidated below:

Pakistani troops captured Chhamb but Akhnoor held out. At this stage, there was a pause in the offensive as there was a change of command. Major General Yahya Khan took over from Major General Akhtar Malik. This helped the Indian Army to reinforce Akhnoor.

In a bold move, the Indian Army launched offensives in Pakistan's Punjab, its heartland, initially on two thrust lines on 06 Sep 1965. The thrust towards Lahore reached the outskirts of the city but the troops were called back due to 'logistics constraints'. On the next day, another Indian offensive commenced in the Sialkot sector, where armour-infantry battles were fought at Phillaura and Chawinda.

Thereafter, the war spread all across the international border, as well as across the CFL, but India deliberately refrained from launching any operations in East Pakistan. Notable action during the war was the Battle of Assal Uttar, where Pakistan's 1 Armoured Division was destroyed piecemeal by both, infantry anti-tank weapons and armour; the flooding carried out; and the sugarcane fields, which made movement and observation difficult. It was later referred to as the 'graveyard of Pakistani armour'.



**Abdul Hamid (4 Grenadiers)    Graveyard of Pakistani Armour**

### A HISTORICAL CONONDRUM

*There is confusion about the date of commencement of the war. For Pakistan, it commenced only on 06 Sep 1965. Hence, Pakistan observes this date as 'Defence of Pakistan Day' each year. For India, the war started on 05 Aug 1965, when Op Gibraltar was launched in J&K, but others say it started on 01 Sep 1965, when Pakistan launched its attack on Chamb-Jaurian. That is why it is called the 22-Day War. Unlike Pakistan, India had conducted all operations of 1965 under the rubric of Operation Ablaze. It is also important to note that in all resolutions of the UN Security Council, the demand on both countries was to "withdraw their forces to the positions they had occupied on August 05, 1965".*

*This then became the basis of the Shastri-Ayub Khan agreement at Tashkent on 10 Jan 1966 and possibly the reason why PM Shastri, much against his will and public utterances had to return Hajipir Bulge and other captured areas to Pakistan.*

On 06 Sep, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had stunned India with dusk raids on its forward airbases, particularly Pathankot, where 10 frontline aircraft were destroyed on ground. There were few losses over Halwara and Adampur too. PAF had an upper hand throughout the war, but it did not launch any further daytime raids over IAF bases.

Navies of both countries did not have the size to be able to weigh-in during the war. Pakistani Navy did bombard Dwarka, but it had little military value. Pakistan had superior, and modern, arms and equipment, in both army and air force. The only Indian superiority was in having a larger number of infantry divisions but many of these were fresh, post-1962 raisings, and had not yet settled and were not fully battle-ready. Major inadequacies of Pakistani officers were arrogance of commanders and lack of respect for the opposition. India's better training and leadership at unit level; better performance in the mountains, particularly in battles at night, prevailed.

The hostilities ended after a ceasefire was declared. Both India and Pakistan claimed victories, but most neutral assessments agree that India had the upper hand as Pakistan lost more territory than it gained during the war and failed to achieve its goal of capturing Kashmir.

### **Third India-Pakistan War: 1971**

**Background.** This war had many firsts. In all earlier wars India had fought, the enemy had the initiative but in this war, it was India that called the shots. The reasons were that the then Army Chief of India, General (later Field Marshal) Sam Manekshaw had persuaded the political hierarchy that he needed time to get the army fully ready, as well as selecting the most suitable time climatically and strategically to commence operations. The second reason was that this war directly involved participation of all three Services and the coordination achieved was good, albeit it was not a classic joint effort. Thirdly, the Indian Armed Forces had the intimate support of the population of East Pakistan in general, and that of the *Mukti Bahini* (a guerrilla outfit raised specially by the Indian Army) in particular. Fourthly, political and diplomatic efforts had succeeded in near global support for India despite the pro-Pakistan biased attitude of USA. The India-Soviet Union Friendship Agreement was pivotal in its scope as it adequately countered USA.

Another difference was that it did not involve the issue of Kashmir but was precipitated by the crisis created within Pakistan by the political battle between Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, leader of East Pakistan, and Yahya-Bhutto combine, leaders of West Pakistan. The catalyst was the 'General Elections' in which Sheikh Mujib was a clear winner but Bhutto wanted to be the Prime Minister. The political battle culminated in Mujib being detained in West Pakistan; launching of a violent military operation (Operation Searchlight) against the Bengali population of East Pakistan by the Pakistani Military; the declaration of Independence of Mujib's party, Awami League from the state system of Pakistan; more than 10 million Bengalis from East Pakistan taking refuge in neighbouring India; and the formal start of Bangladesh Liberation Movement.



**Bhutto and General Yahya Khan, Jan 1971**

The 1971 India-Pakistan war saw the execution of a comprehensive strategy, instead of hastily mounting a military campaign, as in the past.

Although the war formally commenced on 03 Dec 1971, it was preceded by a series of border clashes, some of which were prolonged over many days. The Indian Army had encircled East Pakistan and Indian Navy had done the same in the Bay of Bengal. The IAF was also committed before the formal commencement of war and later it gained air superiority within a day in the east. The overall military strategy was a strategic offensive in the East, and strategic defensive in the West, with a bias towards the east. Although no major threat was envisaged from China, one reason for waiting till December was that mountain passes would be closed, thus enabling the army to leave a token force in the North to deal with any mischief from China.

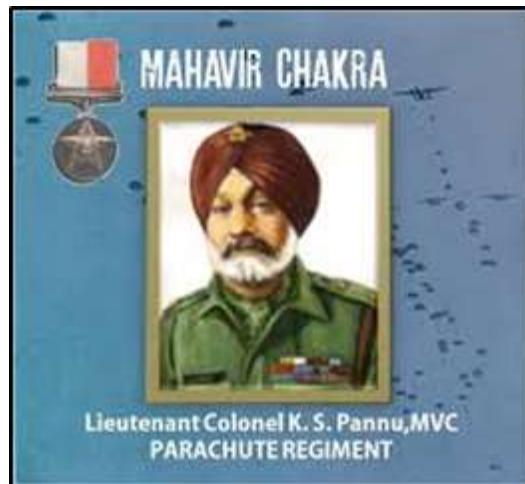
**Operations in the East.** Speedy thrusts and bypassing main opposition nodes were the tactics employed along the various thrust lines, as the enemy had adopted a forward defensive perimeter posture, with negligible forces in the interior areas.

East Pakistan had four divisions plus, with little chance of any additional troops joining in. Against them, Indian Army had massed three corps, plus adhoc forces created to increase the number of thrust lines to keep the enemy engaged. Indian forces in the eastern theatre comprised 4 Corps under Lieutenant General Sagat Singh, 33 Corps under Lieutenant General ML Thapan, and 2 Corps under Lieutenant General TN Raina. While 2 and 33 Corps operations were based on strong defences and set-piece attacks, it was 4 Corps that went into the offensive immediately and maintained the momentum of their attacks with powerful thrusts, in combination with the Mi-4 helicopters of the IAF commanded by an exceedingly bold officer, Air Commodore (later Air Marshal) Chandan Singh.

The other thrust that also made rapid headway was of 95 Mountain Brigade that advanced north to south from Meghalaya and advanced to Dacca via Jamalpur and Tangail. Jamalpur was cleared on 10 Dec by 1 MARATHA LI (JANGI PALTAN) and the historic link-up was effected on 12 Dec between two Maratha Battalions, viz. the JANGI PALTAN and 2 PARA (MARATHA) (erstwhile 3 MARATHA LI) at Tangail where the latter had paratroopered at night. Their leading elements entered Dacca on 16 Dec.



**Mi 4 helicopters during landings in Sylhet Sector during India-Pak War 1971**



**Commanding Officer 2 Para**

Lt Gen AAK Niazi, the overall commander of Pakistani forces in the eastern theatre was forced to surrender. Maj Gen (later Army Commander) JFR Jacob, who was Chief of Staff Eastern

Command, negotiated the surrender, which was formally signed on 16 Dec 1971. The Indian Army pledged to guard the Prisoners of War (PoWs) from the Mukti Bahini and the local population, who were waiting to take their revenge on the Pakistani military and its collaborators. It was the biggest surrender in the history of warfare, as over 93,000 PoWs were in Indian custody. Within two weeks of intense fighting, a new nation, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was created.



**Operations in the West.** Operations in the western theatre were conducted by two armies – the Western Army under Lieutenant General KP Candeth and the Southern Army under Lieutenant General GG Bewoor. The western theatre saw action from Naya Chor in Rajasthan in the south to Turtuk in Ladakh in the north. A number of armour battles were fought in the Shakargarh Bulge. 10 Para (Commando), now 10 SF, under Lieutenant Colonel (later Brigadier) Bhawani Singh, conducted a series of raids across the international border in the Barmer Sector. 9 Para (Commando), now 9 SF, similarly earned glory for its actions in J&K.

The role of the IAF, both in gaining local air superiority and provision of ground support to the army was crucial. IAF actions in Chhamb-Jaurian sector (J&K) and at Longewala (Rajasthan) are worth highlighting.



**Victory at Longewala**

The Indian Navy not only blockaded the Karachi Port, and dominated the Sea Lanes, but even raided Karachi Harbour with missile boats. In the eastern theatre, the first and only amphibious landing was also carried out to secure Cox's Bazaar, besides wiping out all naval assets of the Pakistani Navy.

Among the famous battles of 1971 in the western theatre were Basantar, Longewala, Lipa Valley and Naya Chor. The 1971 war became a game changer in strategic and geopolitical terms, and reconfigured the power balance in South Asia.

As in earlier wars, even in this war what the military had won on the battlefield was frittered away at the political and diplomatic levels. The over 93,000 PoWs captured by us were returned to Pakistan at the Shimla Agreement in 1972, without anything in return. Even our PoWs, languishing in Pakistan, were neither returned nor their whereabouts told to us. The person who was responsible for this war, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, not only went scot free

but became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and the question of J&K remains unsettled, with no end state in sight!

### **India-Pakistan Border War: 1999**

The Kargil war was fought between May and Jul 1999 in the Kargil district of J&K and the adjoining areas of Ladakh, along the Line of Control (LoC). The army and IAF had different code names for the war – unfortunately – indicating lack of jointness amongst the Indian Military!

The *caucus belli* was the infiltration of Pakistani soldiers, disguised as Kashmiri militants, into positions on the Indian side of the LoC. The Indian Army, later supported by the IAF, recaptured a majority of the positions and the Pakistani forces withdrew from the remaining Indian positions. The war was fought in high altitude mountains, with jagged, near vertical hill faces, which posed both tactical and logistical problems. It was also the only instance of fighting a conventional war among two nuclear armed countries. The area that witnessed the infiltration and fighting is a 160-kilometre long stretch of ridges overlooking the only road linking Srinagar and Leh. The military posts on the ridges above the highway were generally around 5,000 m (16,000 ft) high, with a few as high as 5,485 m (18,000 ft). The operational area was divided in two sectors, viz. Kargil and Batalik sectors. Brief details of operations are enumerated below:

During the winter of 1998–1999, Pakistan had covertly inducted troops to the Indian side of the LoC to occupy commanding positions, in an operation code named 'Operation Badr'. The aims were to sever the link between Kashmir and Ladakh, to isolate Indian Army troops on the Siachen Glacier, and force India to negotiate a settlement of the broader Kashmir dispute.

The war had three phases. Firstly, Pakistani infiltration across LoC and occupation of posts to bring down artillery fire on the main highway and Kargil town. Secondly, India discovering the infiltration and mobilising forces to respond to it. Thirdly, major attacks by Indian forces resulting in recapture of most of the posts and withdrawal of residual Pakistani troops back across the LoC.

Commencing in Feb 1999, Pakistani troops from the elite Special Services Group (SSG) and the para-military Northern Light Infantry covertly set up bases on 132 vantage points across LoC, and surprised India. Once India mobilised, it regained control of the hills overlooking the highway and then commenced driving the invading force back across the LoC. The Battle of Tololing, amongst other assaults, slowly tilted the combat in India's favour. Some of the posts put up a stiff resistance, including Tiger Hill (Point 5140).



**Victory at High Peaks in Batalik and Kargil**

Indian artillery, especially the Bofors FH-77B field howitzers, played a vital role, with Indian gunners making maximum use of the terrain. However, lack of space and depth to deploy were major constraints.

The IAF coordinated with ground forces from 25 May. Initial attacks were not effective. On 27 May 1999, it lost two fighters (MiG-27 and MiG-21), both over Batalik Sector. One Indian Mi-8 helicopter was also lost due to Stinger SAMs. IAF's French made Mirage 2000 H used their laser guided bombs with good effect.

The Indian Army mounted direct frontal assaults which were slow and took a heavy toll, given the steep ascents that had to be made. All attacks were under the cover of darkness. Costly frontal assaults could have been avoided if the Indian military had been permitted to block the supply routes of the enemy, and tackling the posts from the rear or flanks or creating a siege. Although the

army had asked for permission to cross the LoC, it was denied by the government due to the likely expansion of the theatre of war and reduced international support for its cause. An analyst had called the frontal attacks as the '*last battle of World War I!*'

Two months into the conflict, Indian troops had slowly retaken 75-80 percent of the ridges that were encroached upon by the Pakistani troops in the intruded areas. When Pakistan found its plan going awry, it sought America's help in de-escalating the conflict. However, President Clinton refused to intervene until Pakistan had removed all forces from the Indian side of the LoC. Pakistani troops commenced withdrawing, but some forces remained in positions on the Indian side of the LoC till they were evicted by 26 July. Pakistan was heavily criticised by most countries for instigating the war. The Indian restraint for not crossing the LoC and escalating the conflict into an all-out war was applauded, although at heavy cost to us.

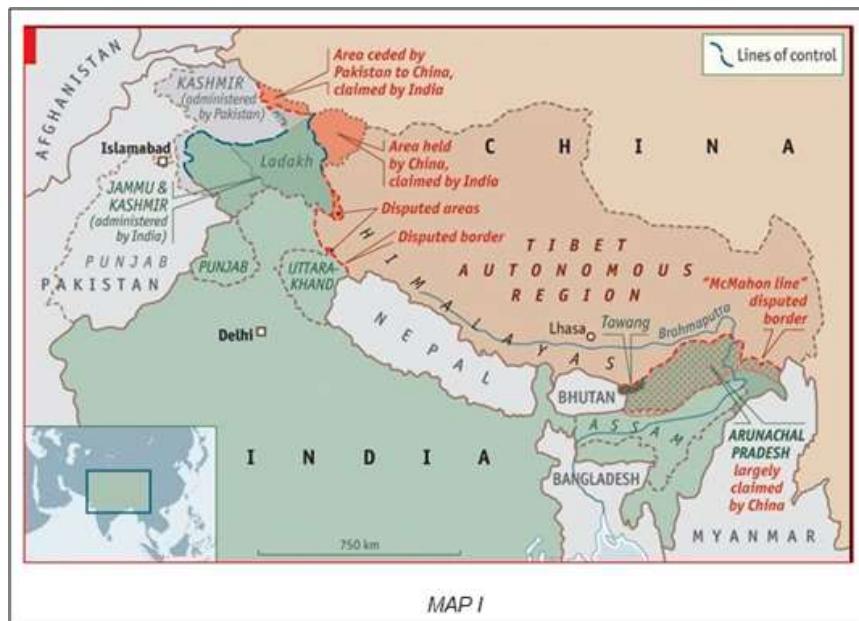
## India-China War: 1962

India fought a month-long border war against China in 1962. Neither nation deployed air or naval resources during the war that was fought in the high mountains of the Himalayas. China ended the war by declaring a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew their forces to the pre-war positions.



## Annotated aerial photograph of Dhola Ridge and surrounding areas where the 1962 war started

On 20 Oct 1962, while the world's attention was on the US-Soviet nuclear standoff in Cuba, China attacked India. The *caucus belli* was the territorial dispute over the long northern border, which was not demarcated or delineated. Tensions over asylum given to the Dalai Lama by India, and over Tibet in general, also contributed to the war. The war was brief and one-sided, with China emerging victorious. However, the war continues to cast a long shadow over Sino-Indian relations, despite substantial improvement over the years.



Had the Indian state been functioning collectively, as a modern and effective one should, it would have realised soon after Mar 1959 — when the Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa and was given asylum in India — that the two countries were moving towards a conflict. The trend became even clearer when violent armed clashes began and at Kongka-la in Ladakh, the Chinese drew blood for the first time. Meanwhile, in Sep 1959, in a curt letter to Nehru, China's then PM Zhou Enlai had categorically stated that China did not agree to India's view of the border. All these red signals were ignored because Nehru had, somehow, convinced himself that while there would be border skirmishes, patrol clashes

and even bigger spats, the Chinese would do 'nothing big'. While in Beijing, Mao Zedong having failed in his 'Great Leap Forward' movement that took a toll of 30 million lives in the famine, needed to refurbish his image. He planned a carefully calibrated limited punitive operation to 'teach India and Nehru a lesson'.

## **The bone of contention**

*The border with China runs 3488 km. It can be divided into three sectors:*

**Western Sector:** *This includes the border between Jammu and Kashmir and Xinjiang and Tibet. India claims that China is occupying 43,000 sq km in this sector, including 5180 sq km illegally ceded to it by Pakistan.*

**Central Sector:** *This includes borders shared by Himachal Pradesh and Uttrakhand with Tibet. Shipki La and Kaurik areas in HP and areas around Pulam, Thag La, Barahoti, Kungri Bingri La, Lapthal and Sangha are disputed.*

**Eastern Sector:** *China disputes India's sovereignty over 90,000 sq km, mostly in Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang, Bum La, Asaphi La and Lo La are among the sensitive points in this sector. Strategically vital Tawang holds the key to the defence of the entire sub-Himalayan space in this sector.*



**Jawaharlal Nehru with Chinese premier Zhou Enlai**

On 08 Sep 1962, the Chinese crossed the Thagla Ridge in what was then North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and is now Arunachal Pradesh. Mired in old beliefs, Nehru announced that he had directed the army to "throw the Chinese out of Thagla" but had fixed no time limit. The age of innocence for India ended on 20 Oct when both in NEFA and Ladakh, the Chinese struck in strength and overran inadequate, and in many cases isolated Indian defences. Having achieved their immediate objectives, they halted their offensive five days later. So terribly shattered was national morale that the then President S. Radhakishnan accused his government of "credulity and negligence". Nehru himself told Parliament ruefully: "We were getting out of touch with the reality of modern world and were living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation". The main advisors who had led Nehru up the garden path were then Defence Minister VK Krishna Menon; Director Intelligence Bureau BN Mullik; Army Chief General PN Thapar; and the ambitious military-bureaucrat Lieutenant General BM Kaul.

The second phase of the Chinese offensive, commencing in mid-November, was even more formidable. In a few days, China gave us a humiliating defeat which, in effect, was a combination of a military debacle and a political disaster. China then declared a unilateral cease-fire and withdrew to positions held before the war. The India-China border issue continues to remain unresolved; the

present face-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a manifestation of this prolonged dispute.



### Never a Dull Moment

Besides the above wars, the Indian Armed Forces have participated in smaller internal conflicts like, Operation Polo in 1948 in Hyderabad; Operation Vijay in 1961 to free Portuguese territories in Goa, Daman and Diu; Sikkim border conflict in 1967; Operation Meghdoot in Siachen Glacier in 1984; the Sumdrong Chu stand-off in 1987; operations in Sri Lanka by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) between 1987 and 1990; and the plethora of counter insurgency operations in many parts of the country, some of which are continuing. In all these, as in the wars, the Indian Armed Forces have shown their mettle and have left a mark for themselves. The Indian Military has also made a name for itself in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and has earned accolades for its professional acumen and dealings with the local populations.

<sup>©</sup>Lieutenant General Vijay Oberoi, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd) is an Infantry officer (The Maratha Light Infantry), who is a former Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS). A prolific writer and analyst, he was the founding Director of CLAWS and is currently a member of the USI Council and President of the War Wounded Foundation, Delhi.

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