

To what extent was Operation Gibraltar, August 1965, caused by the legacy of the Sino-Indian War?

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Section 1: Identification and Evaluation of Sources

This investigation will analyze the following research question: 'To what extent was Operation Gibraltar, August 1965, caused by the legacy of the Sino-Indian War?'. This operation was the incursion of Pakistani troops into Indian Kashmir, attempting to overthrow Indian government control. The investigation explores the reasons behind the invasion, analyzing the significance of the legacy of the Sino-Indian War and foreign military aid, the importance of military, religious, and territorial issues, and the role of Pakistan's political leadership.

A speech made by Pakistani President Ayub Khan at the Pakistan Broadcasting Service on 6 September 1965, the official declaration of war on India, is relevant to the research question as it is the Pakistani government's stated rationale for Operation Gibraltar at the time.¹ Delivered just after Gibraltar was launched, the speech provides insights into the official Pakistani perspective on the action. A value of the origin is that it is from the head of state that authorized and launched Operation Gibraltar. A value of the purpose is that it sets out the government's viewpoint for a national audience to influence the 'will of the people', offering the original justification in 1965. A value of the content is the emphasis on the 'religious' factors of the Kashmir conflict and the loaded language accusing India of 'never [having] truly accepted...an independent Muslim state'.² Khan uses India's perceived religious insult to rally his troops, declaring that '[the Shahada]³ will echo in the hearts of [Pakistanis] till the enemy...is silenced'.⁴ A limitation of the origin and purpose is that, as President, Khan must support his regime's actions, it aims to justify the incursion and gather support for the action. The source is also limited in its content. Being an announcement of a government decision on state radio, the language is subjective and jingoistic, for example labeling India's governance of Kashmir as a 'colonial oppression'.⁵

An academic book, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India: An Analysis*, written by historian and ex-Indian Army Colonel Vivek Chadha, is relevant to the research question as it assesses Pakistan's intention and offers in-depth analysis. Since 2011, Chadha has been a Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, a security policy think-tank in Delhi.⁶

¹ Ayub Khan, "Pakistan Is at War with India" (speech, Pakistan Broadcasting Service, Islamabad, September 6, 1965).

² Khan, "Pakistan Is at War with."

³ The Muslim declaration of faith.

⁴ Khan, "Pakistan Is at War with."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "About Us," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, last modified 2016, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.idsa.in/aboutidsa>.

A value of the origin is that it was published in 2005, meaning that it benefits from hindsight and access to sources declassified after the conflict.⁷ Another value of the origin is that Chadha served 22 years in the Indian Army and is an expert on military affairs.⁸ His position at a think-tank allows him access to substantial research resources, and a value of the content and purpose is, as an academic analysis, it may attempt objectivity. However, a limitation of the origin is that, considering his military background, Chadha may have a nationalist and pro-Indian perspective, potentially more so than other commentators. A limitation of the purpose is that the book is written as a general guide to Indian guerrilla conflicts, and may lack depth on Operation Gibraltar specifically. A limitation of the content is the subjective tone and language used to detail Pakistan's rationale, for example when Chadha asserts that it was a 'Pakistani idea of initiating conflict', a direct allegation against Pakistan.⁹

⁷ Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India: An Analysis* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005)

⁸ IDSA, ed., "Vivek Chadha," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, last modified 2016, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://www.idsa.in/profile/vchadha>.

⁹ Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India*, 88

Section 2: Investigation

The Kashmir dispute has been a key barrier to regional stability since the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947, when Cyril Radcliffe's Boundary Commission drew the line that would define the Partition of India.¹⁰ The borders of Kashmir fell awkwardly along this errant divide, and have caused three all-out wars, in 1948, 1965, and 1999.¹¹ The 1965 War began with Operation Gibraltar, wherein Pakistani troops attempted to covertly seize Kashmir by instigating a rebellion against Indian rule.¹² The initial assault of up to 33,000 soldiers was repelled, India eventually going on the offensive and pushing the battle into Pakistan.¹³ This essay will analyze the causes of this operation, first appraising the legacy of the Sino-Indian War and then examining the role of foreign military aid, religious tensions, territorial issues, and Pakistan's political leadership.

The legacy of the Sino-Indian War was a key cause of Operation Gibraltar. In 1962, India had been heavily defeated in a short, brutish border conflict with China, which had greatly damaged its international standing and killed over 2,000 ill-trained and poorly-equipped troops.¹⁴ Prime Minister Nehru, in an internal memo, reacted by recommending that the manufacture of arms 'be speeded up as rapidly as possible'.¹⁵ According to military journalist Sushant Singh of *The Indian Express*, Pakistan subsequently viewed India as a weakened power, loath to enter into another conflict.¹⁶ Added to this was Pakistan's own, false, sense of preeminence fostered by its alliances with Western powers, particularly the United States.¹⁷ Pakistan saw the post-Sino-Indian War period as an opportunity to strike at India and provoke a war which would destabilize it.¹⁸ Additionally, Pakistan was encouraged by its activities in the Rann of Kutch (bordering Western India) in March 1965, where it won

¹⁰ Boundary Commission, "The Awards of the Boundary Commission" (contribution to conducted at Government House, New Delhi, August 16, 1947), <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition9/>.

¹¹ BBC, "India Profile - Timeline," BBC, last modified June 30, 2015, accessed September 5, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12641776>.

¹² Mahmud Ahmed, Lt. Gen., "Gibraltar, Grand Slam, and War," interview by Cyril Almeida, Dawn, last modified August 30, 2015, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1203708>.

¹³ Asad Hashim, "Timeline: India-Pakistan Relations," Al Jazeera, last modified May 27, 2014, accessed August 30, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottenconflict/2011/06/2011615113058224115.html>.

¹⁴ Ishaan Tharoor, "The Sino-Indian War: 50 Years Later, Will India and China Clash Again?," *Time*, October 21, 2012, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://world.time.com/2012/10/21/the-sino-indian-war-50-years-later-will-india-and-china-clash-again/>.

¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru to Chief Ministers of India, December 22, 1962, in *Volume 5: 1958-1964*, vol. 5, *Letters to Chief Ministers 1947-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

¹⁶ Sushant Singh, "Big Picture: 1965, Fifty Years Later," *Indian Express*(Mumbai, India), September 9, 2015, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/big-picture-1965-fifty-years-later/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

350 square miles of Indian territory by initiating skirmishes.¹⁹ Political scientist Meredith Weiss, of Yale University, adds that Pakistan viewed the period from 1962 to 1965 as ‘a window of opportunity that would soon close’.²⁰ Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Aziz Ahmed, assumed that India’s fear of China would prevent them from initiating an all-out war once Pakistan seized power in Kashmir.²¹ Indeed, as Pakistani military historian, Sultan M. Hali, writes, these military factors ‘bolstered Pakistani [command’s thinking: that the use of covert methods followed by the threat of an all-out war would force a resolution in Kashmir](#)’.²² [This overconfidence led Pakistan to act, although later, President Zia-ul-Haq maintained that Pakistan ‘found itself at war...without deliberate attempt’](#).²³

Another factor that propelled Operation Gibraltar was the Cold War context of regional power. Although the United States had hoped to maintain a balance of power in South Asia, a decisive Chinese Communist victory in the 1962 war motivated it and the United Kingdom to supply arms to India.²⁴ However, Indo-American relations were strained by the deepening economic and military ties between India and the USSR.²⁵ Furthermore, India was diplomatically undermined by the Anglo-American lobby, which had been urging it to negotiate over Kashmir with Pakistan.²⁶ Pakistan, on the other hand, a SEATO and CENTO signatory, was viewed more positively by the US, as an ideal moderate Muslim state with a strong anti-Communist stance.²⁷ The US supplied Pakistan’s army with state-of-the-art F104 jets, Patton tanks, and 8-inch Howitzers, all of which could outgun their Indian equivalents.²⁸ Foreign intervention, through diplomatic positioning and material provisions by Western powers, contributed heavily to Pakistan’s plan to launch an attack in Kashmir.

It has also been argued that territorial disputes caused Operation Gibraltar. India, Pakistan, and China all claim, to varying degrees, the area, known at independence as the Princely

¹⁹ Sultan M. Hali, "Operation Gibraltar - an Unmitigated Disaster?," *Criterion Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (January 2012): 113, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/operation-gibraltar%E2%80%94an-unmitigated-disaster/>.

²⁰ Meredith Weiss, "The Jammu and Kashmir Conflict" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2002), 4.

²¹ Agha Humayun Amin, Major, "Grand Slam - A Battle of Lost Opportunities," *Defence Journal*, last modified September 2000, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.defencejournal.com/2000/sept/grand-slam.htm>.

²² Hali, "Operation Gibraltar - an Unmitigated," 113.

²³ Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, foreword to *The Pakistan Army: War of 1965*, by Shaukat Riza (Dehradun, India: Natraj, 1997)

²⁴ Stephen Randolph, ed., "The India-Pakistan War of 1965," Office of the Historian, last modified 2016, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/india-pakistan-war>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India: An Analysis* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), 86.

²⁷ Randolph, "The India-Pakistan," Office of the Historian.

²⁸ Kamal Matinuddin, "Operation Gibraltar Revisited," *The News International* (Karachi), September 30, 2007, accessed May 2, 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20070930015348/http://www.thenews.com.pk/editorial_detail.asp?id=22817.

State of Jammu and Kashmir.²⁹ Pakistan accused India of a 'forcible occupation' of Kashmir, while India claimed it as legitimate sovereign territory.³⁰ On 27 December 1962, the Anglo-American lobby, aiming to maintain regional stability in favor of the Western powers, initiated India-Pakistan talks at Rawalpindi.³¹ Led by the ambitious young Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan demanded a large part of the Kashmir Valley. Despite acknowledging that 'territorial adjustments' might be necessary, the Indian delegation rejected the proposal.³² Pakistan claimed that the 'K' in 'Pakistan' stood for 'Kashmir', and refused to negotiate further.³³ Vivek Chadha, of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, a think-tank, cites the failed conference as proof of the territorial nature of Operation Gibraltar.³⁴ Kanti Bajpai of the National University of Singapore attributes the ensuing war to the Rann of Kutch incursion, arguing that it highlights the territorial ambitions of Pakistan.³⁵

Religious and nationalist tensions in Kashmir may have also played a role in instigating the operation. The theft of a holy relic from a shrine in Kashmir's main city, Srinagar, in December 1963 led to an outpouring of extremist Islamic sentiment, causing riots and anti-Indian demonstrations.³⁶ Historian Victoria Schofield attributes the war to inflamed sectarian tensions, which, for Pakistan, proved that 'all was not well with the so-called secularism espoused by the current rulers of Kashmir [India]'.³⁷ The violent response to the theft was interpreted by Pakistani President Ayub Khan as a sign of Kashmiri support for annexation by Pakistan, and prompted both the planning and rapid execution of Gibraltar.³⁸ Furthermore, Mohammed Ilyas Khan, a Pakistani journalist, claims that Operation Gibraltar was based on the 'assumption that guerrilla attacks would trigger an uprising by the Muslim

²⁹ Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, "Pakistani Rogue Policy on Kashmir," *Sri Lanka Guardian* (Colombo), October 8, 2007, accessed August 23, 2016, <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2010/10/pakistani-rogue-policy-on-kashmir.html>.

³⁰ Pakistan Mission to UN, "Kashmir - The History," Pakistan Mission to the United Nations, last modified 2016, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.pakun.org/kashmir/history.php>.

³¹ Bruce Riedel, "Lessons of 1963," *Indian Express* (Delhi), December 14, 2015, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/lessons-of-1963/>.

³² Memorandum by US State Department, January 27, 1964, accessed August 30, 2016, <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1810/18100490.htm>.

³³ Priyanka Bakaya and Sumeet Bhatti, *Kashmir Conflict: A Study of What Led to the Insurgency in Kashmir Valley* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2005), 14, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://web.stanford.edu/class/e297a/Kashmir%20Conflict%20-%20A%20Study%20of%20What%20Led%20to%20the%20Insurgency%20in%20Kashmir%20Valley.pdf>.

³⁴ Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India*, 85.

³⁵ Kanti Bajpai, *India's Regional Disputes* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013), 115-30, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/books/2013/shaping-the-emerging-world>.

³⁶ John McLeod, *The History of India* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 146.

³⁷ Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 103.

³⁸ McLeod, *The History of India*, 146

majority in Kashmir'.³⁹ He cites the example of a state-run radio station that reported widely on the Pakistan-backed guerrillas in Kashmir.⁴⁰ Military historian Vivek Chadha accuses 'hardline elements' of inciting rebellion over the relic theft in order to destabilize regional Indian power.⁴¹ In the winter of 1964 to 1965, the Pakistani government threatened 'retaliatory steps' against India, ostensibly for their handling of the relic crisis.⁴² On 6 September 1965, after India responded militarily to Operation Gibraltar, war was officially declared.⁴³ President Khan addressed the nation, accusing India of striking first and of never accepting 'the formation of an independent Muslim state'.⁴⁴ When viewed in the context of the events that followed, it is clear that religious tensions in Kashmir, stoked by Pakistan, were a key cause of Operation Gibraltar.

Finally, it could be argued that the main cause of Gibraltar was the role played by Pakistan's leadership. True power was held by Foreign Minister Bhutto, who convinced President Khan that 1965 was a 'now-or-never' opportunity to trigger a conflict in Kashmir.⁴⁵ Emboldened, Khan approved the plan, predicting with satisfaction that 'Hindu morale would not stand a couple of hard blows at the right time and place'.⁴⁶ Indeed, Rudra Chaudhuri of King's College London dubs the conflict 'Bhutto's war'.⁴⁷ He suggests that Bhutto was 'hypnotized' by the idea that a Pakistani-backed rebellion in Kashmir would overthrow Indian rule.⁴⁸ The Pakistani historian Farooq Bajwa counters this, claiming that Pakistan's government wanted to provoke a confrontation to force the United Nations to pay attention to the Kashmir issue,⁴⁹ a view shared by historian John McLeod, who attributes the conflict to Ayub Khan's anger at the failed peace talks.⁵⁰ Bhutto, however, was indeed ambitious and aggressive.⁵¹ Years later, near death, Khan would confide to a Pakistani diplomat that approving Gibraltar was his 'worst presidential decision'.⁵²

³⁹ Mohammed Ilyas Khan, "Operation Gibraltar: The Pakistani Troops Who Infiltrated Kashmir to Start a Rebellion," BBC News, last modified September 5, 2015, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-34136689>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India*, 86

⁴² John Keay, *India: A History* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2000), 151-52

⁴³ Ayub Khan, "Pakistan Is at War with India" (speech, Pakistan Broadcasting Service, Islamabad, September 6, 1965).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ahmad Faruqi, Dr., "Remembering 6th of September 1965," *Pakistan Link* (Anaheim, CA), September 4, 2004, accessed May 2, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070930165129/http://www.pakistanlink.com/Opinion/2004/Sept04/17/05.html>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Singh, "Big Picture: 1965, Fifty,".

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* (London: Hurst, 2013), 104-05.

⁵⁰ McLeod, *The History of India*, 146

⁵¹ Faruqi, "Remembering 6th of September."

⁵² Ibid.

Religious and territorial tensions were long-standing issues in Kashmir, and the leadership of Pakistan may not have acted as it did without perceived discrepancies in military power between themselves and India. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that India's recent defeat by the People's Republic of China led Bhutto to perceive India as weak, and the time ripe for a Pakistani invasion of Kashmir. An explosion of religious resentment provided the catalyst to act and, strengthened by US military aid and the effect of the Cold War on the balance of regional power, Bhutto successfully exploited this to push President Ayub Khan to authorize Operation Gibraltar.



Section 3: Reflection

I believe I gained valuable insights into the methods used, and challenges historians face when writing their accounts of history. I included a range of primary and secondary sources from varying perspectives on the Kashmir conflict, including papers, newspapers, and speeches from the time. Aware of issues of selectivity and bias on both sides of the conflict, I incorporated Indian, Pakistani, and foreign commentators' views.

A challenge historians' face that I found in my research was the 'sensitive' nature of the topic, which is generations-old and involves deep-rooted feelings of religious division. Therefore, most sources from each country contained either explicit or implicit bias. Pakistani historian Sultan M. Hali's article 'Operation Gibraltar: An Unmitigated Disaster?', for example, describes Pakistan's 1948 Kashmir offensive as helping Kashmiris 'liberate their homeland'.⁵³ This suggests that Hali is sympathetic to Pakistan's claims, despite being explicitly critical of Operation Gibraltar. Indian military expert Vivek Chadha's *Low Intensity Conflicts in India*, on the other hand, relies almost exclusively on Indian sources and accuses Pakistan of manipulating India's troubles to initiate a conflict, portraying Pakistan as the aggressor.⁵⁴

The accessibility of primary sources was another obstacle; the Indian and Pakistani governments generally do not make military documents available to the public. I had to use secondary sources that referenced primary sources, or 'foreign' sources. One example was Hali's article, in which he includes extracts from in-person interviews with high-ranking Pakistan Army officials, providing a view into formerly secret military information. The importance of evaluating sources, both primary and secondary, in the historians' methodology before using them as evidence was also made clear to me.

I wished to incorporate different viewpoints to reach an evidence-based conclusion. Historians' may also attempt to do this, in terms of balance. I found the British historian Victoria Schofield's book on Kashmir particularly objective, perhaps due to the author's political and cultural context.⁵⁵ This experience taught me the significance of the context of the historian, and made me think about my own.

Indeed, my personal perspective on this research question is that, being Indian, I was inclined to blame Pakistani expansionism for Gibraltar, a view I attribute to my familial context. However, I have attempted to explore international perspectives, as well as synthesizing the understanding I have gained into the Kashmir conflict during this investigation, to minimize inherent bias, avoiding one-sided views on Pakistan's guilt as is prevalent in India.

⁵³ Sultan M. Hali, "Operation Gibraltar - an Unmitigated Disaster?," *Criterion Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (January 2012): 113, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/operation-gibraltar%E2%80%94an-unmitigated-disaster/>.

⁵⁴ Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India: An Analysis* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005)

⁵⁵ Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2010)

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