

# Post-colonial Relations of Britain with India and Pakistan, 1947–71

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## Abstract

The decolonization process of Britain in India was completed with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. Because of the long colonial history in that area, it was natural that creating bilateral relations between Britain and the two former colonized parties (India and Pakistan) would be challenging and not free of issues. Furthermore, the two colonized parties were in a bitter relationship with each other. The major concern of this paper is to present the post-colonial bilateral relations of Britain with each country, India and Pakistan, between 1947 and 1971. It argues that multiple factors led Britain to maintain a balanced relationship with its former colony. These are: 1) British trade interests, 2) cold war relations, 3) wars between India and Pakistan, 4) Commonwealth issues, and above all, 5) British national interests in that region.

## Keywords

Britain – decolonization – India – Pakistan – post-colonial relations

## 1 Introduction

Following the British decolonization process, India and Pakistan started their new journey as independent countries in 1947. But growing a relationship between the colonial power and the colonized parties was not easy. Some

gaps have been identified in previous research discussing British post-colonial relations with India and Pakistan. These are, firstly, that some research has often focused on British relations with India and Pakistan separately. For example, Herbart Feldman in his research focuses on British relations with the Pakistan side only (Feldman 1955), while some others (Bhagat 1959; Barooah 1969; Gupta 1971; Chopra 1988) have paid attention to British relations only with India. Secondly, little research has documented the commercial relationship between Britain and India (Lipton and Firn 1975; Banerji 1978). Thirdly, some research has been conducted on issues related to India-Pakistan wars like the Kashmir war or on the Rann of Kutch issue in 1965 from a cold war context (Colman 2009; McGarr 2013). Also, research is scarce on the Commonwealth issue, the war of 1971 between India and Pakistan, and British trade interests. Therefore, in this context, the present study gives new insight by discussing British relations with both countries (India and Pakistan) together with the Commonwealth issue, cold war relations and the wars between India and Pakistan especially in 1971, the trade interests of Britain which acted as important factors in growing formal bilateral relations with India and Pakistan during the given time frame (1947–71). For reconstructing the history of systematic and chronological bilateral diplomatic relations, it is necessary to know the historical backdrop, thus the importance of this research. This study opines that, considering its national interests, every government has tried to maintain a balanced relationship with the other countries in spite of having a different policy.

Britain, with her vigorous power, enjoyed imperialism and dominated through sea power for a long time. To uphold British imperial supremacy, the empire was referred to as a 'wondrous machine' in the extra golden sheet of *the Daily Mail* published in 1897 on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria (*The Daily Mail* 1897, 4). But this 'wondrous machine' began to fall from its supreme status in the early decades of twentieth century. Britain even made an alliance with a non-European power, Japan, in 1902 in order to protect the country from rivals in Europe, thereby projecting the weakness of British power. The changing status of Britain was noticeable in the economic depression of the 1930s, when Britain was compelled to depend on the USA. After World War II, Britain lost her former position (Sked 1987; Barnett 1987; Reynolds 2000; Cawood 2003). The two World Wars, coupled with the economic distress of Britain acted as an important catalyst for the end of British colonial rule, especially in South and East Asia, as well as in Africa. At the same time, the influential international anti-colonial lobby (the USA) played a major role in decolonization. It wanted to remove the economic control of the colonial powers over their colonies and took an anti-colonial line in order to expand

its own trading links (Haynes et al. 2011, 57). In fact, by that time, the USA had already become a leading power. Facing this reality, Britain made its own way in sustaining relations with former colonies. Although many British colonies gained independence throughout different parts of the world at that time, this study specifically discusses Britain's relations with India and Pakistan.

## 2 Method and Materials

A descriptive and analytical method has been applied in this research. Primary sources such as, declassified British archival materials Cabinet Papers (CAB), Dominion Office (DO), Foreign Office (FO), Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO), Prime Minister's office Report (PREM) files, House of Commons (HC) Debate, contemporary newspapers and other secondary sources have been analyzed to conduct the present research.

## 3 Britain's Relationship with India (1947–71)

### 3.1 *Initial Relationship after Decolonization*

British imperialism in British India was considered 'the brightest jewel in the royal crown'. Against the criticism of 'harsh and unsympathetic' British rule, Lord Curzon provided the refutation that their relationship was 'benignant' and 'beneficial' for both parties (Britain and India) by presenting examples of the work of the British in India in areas such as roads, railroads, canals, harbours, docks, telegraphs, posts etc. (Lord Curzon 1910, 12). Similarly, realizing the immense profits in India, on the issue of dissolution of the British presence from there, the British political parties had differing opinions. In particular, the Conservative Party was against the granting of Indian independence in 1947 together with the reduction of British power by decolonization. To some political leaders, such as Winston Churchill, India was not an asset—by then it had become a liability for Britain—while to some others, such as Harold Macmillan, India was 'still a good deal to play for' (Owen 2003, 408). But one thing they understood well was that the loss of India would weaken the British position in the world disastrously. It has been argued by some scholars that a good relationship was needed between Britain and the newly independent India and Pakistan for their own mutual advantage as well as for the general good of post-war Asia (Wint 1947, 19). The wealth and the strategic importance of the Indian subcontinent were well known to Britain. It realized that India would be the centre of South Asia. Therefore, considering all these suggestions

and keeping an eye on British national interest, the British government took necessary steps to maintain good relations even after parting from the region.

British withdrawal from India was a comparatively smooth process in comparison to the French retreat from Indo-China or Algeria; yet it cannot be denied that Britain faced many upheavals. Britain did not ask for any special privileges in India as they did later in Kenya. In Kenya, Britain suggested an alliance, and the Kenyans were asked to apply for the Kenyan citizenship within two years of independence or to retain their British citizenship (Banerji 1978, 182). British dissolution did not mean a total break with India, where British influence was visible in administration, law and society (Rashiduzzaman 1965, 21–27). Britain was also interested in restructuring the relationship on a more co-operative and enduring basis (Darwin 1980, 657–79). Yet making a formal state-relationship with its former colony was not easy, especially when the two colonized parties (India and Pakistan) had bitter relations with each other. Since partition in 1947, a turbulent relationship was visible between India and Pakistan, leading to three major wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971. Apart from this, on a number of occasions both states were on the verge of a war (Rahman 1975, 4). This hostile relationship created a dilemma for Britain.

Following the independence of India, both India and Britain seemed interested in developing new relations. The first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–64), in his speech delivered on the farewell program of the British soldiers, mentioned the close ties with Britain (*The Statesman* 19 August 1947,<sup>1</sup>; *The Jugantor* 19 August 1947, 1). Even before independence on 2 September 1946, he declared in his statement on the foreign policy of India that, in spite of their past history of friction with Britain, the Indian government hoped to have friendly and cooperative relations with it (Appadorai 1982, 4). This friendly attitude was best displayed by the declaration of 11 days of public grieving in India on King George VI's death in 1952. Again, the visit of Harold Macmillan in 1958 was historic in the sense that never had any Prime Minister of Britain in office visited India before. In addition, a great honour was shown to Queen Elizabeth II, when she visited India in 1961, as the Commonwealth Head. Before these two visits, in 1957 India observed the centenary of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, which left bitter memories for Indians. This centenary witnessed the removal of some of the British statues in India; however, Britain did not react to this (Barroah 1969, 286). All these were manifestations of the closeness between the two countries.

### 3.2 *Commonwealth Issue*

Some high-ranking British officials pointed out that if Britain could treat India as an amicable partner in the Commonwealth, then Britain's influence in Burma

(Myanmar), Malaya, China and the Far East would be assured (Mansergh et al. 1974, 127). The British government was also interested in getting India into the Commonwealth to secure its position in the Indian Ocean (Mansergh 1983, 801). Both the Labour and Conservative parties shared a common interest in India remaining a Commonwealth member. Britain thought that if India did not participate in the Commonwealth, then Britain would be in a weak position in the North Indian Ocean and oil supplies from the Persian Gulf would be impeded. A large scale operation in the Far East would also be easy for Britain through using India bases. To have India in the Commonwealth was an important addition for Britain. Because India had a large workforce and vast areas of land, this would help to present the Commonwealth to the world as a powerful force. Britain also thought that it would receive support from India in the United Nations. Along with this, forming a military liaison with India would be easy and Britain would have soldiers in time of need (Singh 1985, 473–75).

Jawaharlal Nehru displayed a positive approach to remaining and continuing membership in the Commonwealth because the absence of India from the Commonwealth would put Pakistan in an advantageous position. Moreover, Nehru believed that remaining in the Commonwealth would be for the betterment of those Indians who were living in British colonies (Mansergh 1953, 847). The decision to remain in the Commonwealth widened the area of co-operation with Britain. On the other hand, India did not forget to make it clear that this relationship was motivated by a non-alignment policy. In the Constituent Assembly, Nehru reiterated that friendship with other nations did not mean fully commitment to them or acceptance of all of their policies (Mansergh 1953, 851).

### 3.3 *Cold War Issue*

The Cold War, mainly between the USA and USSR, shaped major structural changes in international relations throughout the world. The decolonization process of Britain in the Indian sub-continent created a vacuum for the major powers (USA and USSR) to wield influence and to make allies following cold war strategy. Warner Levi in his study commented that South and South-East Asia was 'a region of secondary importance' to the West (Levi 1968, 6). But some steps taken by the USA and USSR towards India and Pakistan do not support the 'secondary importance' phenomenon. The invitation to the new state leaders by these major powers, attempts at persuading the leaders to join in the alliance pact, and increasing development aid showed that the bipolar world lent much importance to these countries (Malik 1987; Baylis and Smith

1997; Chafe 2008). Britain wanted to develop a good relationship so that this region would not fall into the hands of the Communist bloc. To prevent the Communist expansion with other big powers Britain became a member of collective defence organizations. Britain wanted India as its partner, but India followed its own line of non-alignment and showed its displeasure to such attitudes of the West.

Immediately after Indian independence (1947), Britain and the USA wanted to mediate the dispute on the Kashmir issue, but Nehru rejected the suggestion and expressed strong resentment at international pressure. After getting the message from the USA on the Kashmir issue, Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his feelings in a letter written on 17 January 1950 to Benegal Narsing Rau (Constitutional adviser to the Constituent Assembly of India and, from 1950 to 1952, the representative of India to the United Nations Security Council) that he was getting tired of British and American attitudes (Gopal 1979, 62). In fact, India had no intention of committing itself either to East nor West at that time, and the country wanted to remain aloof from the Cold War. Nehru recommended many times to annul alliances and blocs which would discourage the big powers from dominating others. In an interview during his first visit to the USA, Nehru emphatically stated that India would keep a distance from power politics (*The New York Times*, 16 October 1949, 4). Nehru wanted to develop friendly relations with every member of the Commonwealth and to remain neutral in the struggle between Communism and the West while co-operating with the West in economic, social and other matters (Ziring 1978, 707). In fact, India pursued a non-aligned foreign policy during much of the Cold War between the USA and USSR, and, thus, maintained a congenial relationship with the outer world.

### 3.4 *Trade and Economic Issues*

In 1947, when the British were leaving the subcontinent, Indian dependence on Britain in economic matters was overwhelming. A close economic link between India and Britain was visible in the initial period but over the years it perceptibly declined. The table 1 below shows it more clearly.

It is clear from table 1 that the early post-colonial period witnessed a great dependency on Britain but it decreased as time went on. Whereas in 1948–49 the total foreign trade was nearly 26%, it declined to 15.28% in 1964–65. From 1948 to mid-1956, the reciprocal influence of Britain and India remained firm similar to the colonial era but was later reduced. Again, it can be seen from table 2 and 3 that there was, indeed, a substantial number of imports and exports between both countries in the early post-colonial period, but these steadily began depreciating in the late 1960s.

TABLE 1      Direction of India's trade with Britain (in £m).

Year	India's total foreign trade	Trade with Britain	as of %
1948–49	966,23	250,64	25.93
1953–54	1,102,72	296,33	26.87
1958–59	1,425,14	322,86	22.65
1963–64	2,016,09	335,13	16.62
1964–65	2,165,33	330,95	15.28

SOURCE: ARUN BANERJEE (1978, 201).

The above tables 2 and 3 show that both British trade with India and India's trade with Britain were decreasing. Indian exports to Britain and British exports to India also displayed a downward trend. The import side also shows a similar trend. British exports to India reached a record of £176.5 million in 1957 but declined to £72.9 million in 1970 (Lipton and Firn 1975, 104). India was the fourth largest market (£176 million) in exports in 1957, leading to recommendations from some British officials to increase financial aid to India (FO 371, 18 July 1958). Some other British officials gave the opinion that Britain's assistance would not in effect bring more trade to Britain, whether tied or untied, so aid should be extended on the basis of successive short periods (FO 371, 21 July 1958). In fact, the fragile economy of Britain limited the ability of British governments to come to India's assistance. Therefore, for various

TABLE 2      British trade with 'British India', 1949–51 to 1969–71.

Year	British India's % share of		Total British balance of trade (£mn)	Balance of trade with British India (£mn)
	Total British exports	Total British imports		
1949–1951	6.8	4.9	–749.2	+12.4
1959–1961	5.4	4.0	–807.3	+27.4
1969–1971	1.7	1.6	–863.7	–0.7

TABLE 3      British India's trade with Britain, 1949 -51 to 1969-71.

Year	British's % share of		Total British India balance of trade (£mn)	Balance of trade with Britain (£mn)
	Total British India exports	Total British India imports		
1949-1951	22.3	22.4	-81.9	-18.9
1959-1961	24.4	19.7	-294.6	-28.8
1969-1971	11.0	9.3	-258.8	-4.3

SOURCE: MICHAL LIPTON AND JOHN FIRN (1975, 305).

reasons, such as patterns of trade change, India's reliance on other countries to meet her development was responsible for the decreasing tendency. By this time, India attached much more importance to the USA, UAR, USSR and some other Socialist bloc countries like Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia rather than to Britain (Ramu 1971; Gidadhubli 1982; Stanislawski 1983). As Pakistan was getting military and economic aid from Western countries through defence pacts, so India tilted towards those countries. Britain also developed good relations with France and West Germany rather than India (Lipton and Firn 1975, 1). However, Britain provided considerable economic aid to India and diplomatic co-operation at the Geneva Conference over the Indo-China conflict in 1954, thus helping to maintain good relations between Britain and India (Colman 2009, 465-82).

3.5      *Tension in Relations on Some Issues*

Nonetheless, there were tensions in Britain-India relations. Obviously, the hostility between India and Pakistan created problems while Britain was also seeking cordial relations with Pakistan at that time, as did memories of British colonialism and disagreements over racial discrimination elsewhere, especially in South Africa, where Britain had a large responsibility. The emerging post-war military alliances also saw divergences and clashes between Britain and India. For example, India disdained Britain with regard to its joining the SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) in 1954. This initiative was taken mainly by the USA to check Communist expansion in South Asia. Britain and France later joined. Britain wished India to be there and made a persistent effort on



this, but Nehru refused to join as it was against the basic 'non-alignment' policy of India. He furthermore expressed grave concern over the Western plan. Moreover, India was critical as it was against the 'Geneva spirit', which sought peace and security in Indo-China. India not only criticized this collective defence pact but also worked hard for its lack of success. India managed to convince some countries (Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia) not to join. Against the collective defence, India made an alternative plan for 'collective peace' through peaceful co-existence. Thus, India formed the 'Panchsheel agreement' with China in 1954 (Chetty 1981, 615). Again, to contain the Soviet Union in the Middle East, the CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) was formed in 1955, where Britain and Pakistan joined with the USA. India avoided all of these power organizations to maintain its non-alignment policy. Along with this, after the Kashmir war of 1948 between India and Pakistan, both countries avoided joining in any international forum synonymously.

Again, Britain's invasion of Suez in 1956 was criticized by India. The Suez crisis started when Gamal Abdul Nasser, President of Egypt, declared the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. Britain and France reacted sharply to this declaration as they had the lion's share of the Suez Canal Company. In addition, when Israel attacked Egypt on this issue, Britain and France joined in. Thus, Egypt faced a tripartite attack. India had a special intimacy with Egypt referred to as the 'spirit of brotherliness' by Nehru. Nasser was also a supporter of the non-alignment policy and did not join in the defence pacts of big powers. As such, India took this attack on Egypt seriously and made a strong statement on future relations with Europe (Nayudu 2016). When the issue was raised in the UN, India tried to mediate and instructed its permanent representative to the UN to work jointly with the Egyptian delegate. Britain asked India for a speedy settlement. India had an active role ending the crisis by sending an Indian contingent of good repute to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Egypt. However, the attack by Britain on one of India's friendly countries was not received well by India.

The annexation of Goa by India in 1961 was another issue which made relations between India and Britain uneasy. Goa remained for nearly 450 years (1510–1961) a Portuguese colony. The partition of India in 1947 did not settle the issue as Portugal declared Goa as its own metropolitan territory. As a result, tension grew between India and Portugal on that issue and in 1954 some parts were even invaded by Goan nationalists. Again in 1961, when an Indian boat-passenger was attacked by Portuguese troops, India captured Goa by a military attack. In the British Parliament, the Commonwealth Relations Secretary condemned India for using military force (HC Debate, 18 December

1961), while India received support from the USSR and Soviet bloc countries on this issue. This Soviet shadow in India was also a concern for Britain.

In 1962, the Indo-China border dispute witnessed another disappointment in relations. China wanted to build a military road through the Aksai Chin region, whereas India claimed the area as part of her own Ladakh. Furthermore, as India was harbouring the Tibetan resistance movement, China wanted to teach India a lesson. While the big powers were busy with the Cuban Missile Crisis, China took the opportunity and captured the border area in a surprise attack. Later, a unilateral ceasefire declaration by China and return to the line of control of 1959 ended the crisis in the same year. At that time, India sought help from the big powers. Britain was supportive to India, providing the country with financial assistance, but took time on any military commitment to India. India was displeased with this 'wait and see policy' (Devereux 2009, 85). All these issues propelled the relationship into a vexatious state.

### 3.6 *War Between India and Pakistan Issue*

In 1965, the India-Pakistan clash erupted over the Rann of Kutch issue. The Rann was a 7,000-square-mile border area, virtually uninhabited and of no economic value. When the clash began in this territory, Britain acted as an effective mediator and was successful in ending the conflict. Britain was praised by the international community for its mediatory role, especially by USA President Lyndon Johnson, who sent a congratulatory letter to the British prime minister (Coleman 2009, 469). But peace remained only for a brief time.

After a few months, hostilities broke out again over the Kashmir issue. Sensing the acceleration to war, on 3 September, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson sent letters to both countries urging restraint. The matter worsened on 6 September 1965 when the British government issued a public statement criticizing Indian action in the Punjab, while Pakistan was not condemned for their attack in August of the same year. To add to the injury, a second message was delivered from Wilson to Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, asking the Indian leader to ensure that the weapons that were sent by Britain to the subcontinent for use against the Chinese not be deployed against Pakistan. India took this message seriously. Blaming Pakistan for initiating the conflict, Shastri wrote to Wilson on the same day and complained that it was Pakistan that had attempted to seize control of Kashmir by force. He also added that earlier in September, Pakistan had initiated a major military operation in the region of Chumb supported by artillery, tanks and aircraft (McGarr 2013). This condemnation made Britain unable to act as a mediator again or wield influence on India. The British officials also admitted that British loss of

influence in Delhi precluded Britain from playing any mediatory role (Khan 2003, 469).

In his memoir, Harold Wilson blamed the pro-Pakistani group in the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO). Wilson wrote that they briefed him on the situation and persuaded him by issuing the statement. He added that unfortunately Arthur Bottomley, the then Foreign Secretary, was on a brief holiday in Scotland. Returning to London, Bottomley said that if he had been in London on the previous day, no statement would have been given (Wilson 1971). Later, through the United Nations, the USSR mediated an end to the war. From New Delhi, the British High Commissioner was informed that Indian politicians criticized Britain for having remained silent about Pakistani infiltration which had caused intense resentment in India (DO 133/176, 26 August 1965). The 1965 war soured British-India relations. In these circumstances, the visit of The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Michal Stewart (1968) and, later, the visit of PM Edward Heath to India (1971) made the situation easier. Thus, while a pragmatic relationship was growing, Britain again faced an inconvenient situation with the war of 1971. In a military crackdown, the Pakistan Army killed thousands of Bengalis in East Pakistan on the night of 25 March 1971 (Bangladesh Documents 1972; Documents of Bangladesh independence war, 1982). Following this, on 26 March, the declaration of independence of Bangladesh was made, and the Bengalis continued the liberation war until they achieved independence on 16 December 1971. The mass killing of 25 March led one third of Bengalis to take shelter in neighbouring India as refugees. A direct war begun between India and Pakistan on the Bangladesh issue on 3rd December 1971. Britain adopted a policy of being non-partisan and non-interventionist at the outset of the war.

In the India-Pakistan war of 1965, Britain criticized India for its acts which made the relations between the two countries uncomfortable. As a result, this time around they were more careful not to take sides, not wanting to put their relationship with India at risk. The British government took a direct part by sending money for the Bengali refugees who took shelter in India. In fact, Britain was the second largest contributor to relief operations in India (HC Debate, 4 November 1971), with an initial amount of £1million from the British government reaching £7,199,424.03 by 30 September (FCO 37/965, 7 December 1971). This helped improve relations. In addition, the Heath government never directly criticized India's activities in helping the Bengali guerrillas; rather, they praised Indira Gandhi on the refugee issue. The British policy makers tried to evaluate as realistically as they could where Britain's future interests lay, either in India or in Pakistan. Some British officials leaned towards the Indian side, as they foresaw that British future interests lay there. In a similar tone, P.J. E Male,

the British Acting High Commissioner in Islamabad, commented that Britain had larger interests in India than in Pakistan, and his suggestion was not to equate India with Pakistan (FCO37/907, 24 August, 1971). The report of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, which greatly influenced officials, revealed that British exports in India in 1971 were £100 million, whereas in Pakistan they were £50 million (CAB148/117, 24 November 1971). This shows that the economic investment and trade of Britain was relatively larger in India than Pakistan. An FCO official, H. C. Byatt, argued in a telegram to recognize the fact that India was growing increasingly more important to Britain than Pakistan in whatever shape it emerged (FCO37/907, 8 September 1971). For that reason, contrary to the official declaration of British non-partisanship, at the end, an Indian tilt was seen in British policy from the understanding that India would prevail in the conflict due to its superiority. This humanitarian aid and the non-intervention policy of Britain made the relationship comfortable with India. While Britain's stance in the war of 1965 (Kashmir) had cooled its relations with India, the 1971 events revived it. In sum, as the USA's relations with India were worsening on that issue, Britain managed to revive its own relationship with India.

4            **Relation with Pakistan (1947–71)**

4.1            *Trade and Economic Issues*

During the colonial era, Britain had developed profound economic and political interests in Pakistan. It was thought that, with partition, these historical links would produce substantial British financial aid to Pakistan. In Pakistan between 1950 and 1967, total British aid was about \$235 million, placing Britain at the top five official donors (Breachers and Abbas 1972, 74). However, on the commercial side, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Britain was declining, similarly to what was happening with India and Britain. The following table 4 exhibits a breakdown of British trade relations with both countries over three decades.

The table shows that, with respect to exports, British trade with Pakistan in 1950 was at 1.86% but decreased to 0.61% by 1970. The import side saw a similar phenomenon, decreasing from 26.29% in 1950 to 10.41% by 1970, a drop of 15.88% over those 20 years.

In 1963–64, Britain's assistance to Pakistan had mainly been in the form of loans and grants. For that purpose, the total amount provided by Britain was 96 million dollars: 3 million as technical assistance grants and 93 million as loans (Qureshi 1964, 216). Military exports to Pakistan also continued, though

TABLE 4      Bilateral trade between Britain and its former colonies, India and Pakistan, 1950, 1960 and 1970.

Year	Bilateral exports as % of total exports			Bilateral imports as % of total imports		
	1950	1960	1970	1950	1960	1970
British trade with India	4.46	4.11	0.90	3.76	3.26	1.17
British trade with Pakistan	1.86	1.08	0.61	1.00	0.64	0.39
Indian trade with Britain	22.68	27.99	11.58	20.82	19.37	6.60
Pakistani trade with Britain	12.55	17.30	10.36	26.29	17.50	10.41

SOURCE: MICHAL LIPTON AND JOHN FIRN (1975, 307, TABLE 2.6).

not at a larger scale. As India and Pakistan had hostile relations, Britain had to be careful when exporting military products to Pakistan, asking whether it would arouse the ire of India. Pakistan had complained that the Sea King helicopters were only sold to India, which upset the military balance (FCO 37/718, 14 May 1970). Therefore, like the BAC 167 Strike Master, Sea King helicopters were supplied to Pakistan in 1970 (FCO 37/718, 1970). British officials also received information that the Pakistanis were becoming disenchanted with the French and that this influence would turn future purchasing towards Britain (FCO 37/718, 1970). On a limited scale and in the short term, Britain was supplying military products to Pakistan, but in the middle of the war of 1971, when Pakistan demanded arms, the British government supplied only small quantities of lethal equipment on being given information that Britain had no such weapons available for delivery (FCO 37/937, 28 April 1971; FCO 37/937, 20 May 1971; FCO 37/937, 24 May 1971; FCO 37/922, 27 May 1971; FCO 37/937, 9 June 1971). Britain devised the strategy not to give Pakistan a blank refusal but, rather, say weapons were out of production in order to maintain good relations with the country.

4.2      *Cold War Relations*

Unlike India, Pakistan followed a pro-Western policy. After the independence of Pakistan (1947), its Governor-General Muhammad Ali Jinnah, affirmed that the foreign policy of this new state would be to seek friendship with all nations (Hussain 1966, 89). At a time of cold war, Pakistan made a formal alliance with Britain and other Western powers by joining the SEATO (1954) and the CENTO

(1955). For their part, a militarily-weakened Pakistan realized that it would have to find a strong ally to counter its principal enemy, India. In October 1947, Pakistan went to the USA with the purpose of buying military tools (Singh 1993, 57). In 1954, the ‘Mutual Defence Agreement’ between Pakistan and the USA was signed. Pakistan looked to the USA for diplomatic leverage and military assistance and received a considerable amount of arms assistance. At the beginning of the Kashmir conflict of 1965 between India and Pakistan, all the tanks deployed by Pakistan were of American origin. The table 5 shows the types and sources of tanks available at the time of the Kashmir war in 1965, in both countries.

The table shows that in the Kashmir war of 1965, Pakistan used American tanks. In that war at least 300 tanks were destroyed or badly damaged, although the total number of the tanks occupied by India and Pakistan is unknown. Some older Sherman M4s, Chaffee M24s and more than 200 Patton M47/48s were used by Pakistan. India used Churchill tanks, some older Shermans, British Centurions and the French AMX 13. Both countries thus had modern equipment bought from the Western countries (Sutton and Kemp 1966, 24). The regional disputes led them to buy and receive sophisticated weapons in greater quantities. Thus, their demand and the race for arms to get the major arm-supplier countries involved in both India and Pakistan increased. But the USA stopped military supplies to Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. This arms-embargo increased discontent in the Pakistan government

TABLE 5      Types and sources of tanks of India and Pakistan in 1965 war.

Name of the recipient country	Name of the donor country			
	USSR	Britain	France	USA
India	PT 76	Centurion	AMX13	M4
		Churchill		
		Vickers		
		37 ton		
Pakistan	----	----	----	M47, M4 M48, M24

SOURCE: JOHN L. SUTTON AND GEOFFREY KEMP (1966, 24).

towards the USA (Mansur 2001, 345–72) and required that Pakistan seek support from elsewhere, with neighbouring China being the best choice for them. Both China and Pakistan shared a mutual dislike of India, which brought them closer and made them allies ('my enemy's enemy is my friend'). After 1962, Pakistan secured her border treaty with China, thereby moving closer to China while maintaining membership in Western alliances (Wilcox 1964, 93). It also maintained a good relationship with Britain during this period. In spite of disenchantment with the Commonwealth and Britain on many issues, Pakistan did not break its ties with Britain. Pakistan remained in the Commonwealth, was a member of the sterling area with fairly large balances in London and continued to trade with Britain (Burke 1973, 116).

### 4.3 *Tension in Relations*

Pakistan regarded Britain as pro-Indian. This feeling dated back to the partition and was strengthened later by other issues. Britain's pro-Indian mentality was strongly demonstrated to Pakistan when a 1948 Pakistani request for Commonwealth mediation in the Kashmir dispute was refused by Britain. Their anti-British attitude was also visible after independence among a small but influential section of politically conscious people who had connections with the ruling party and also played a great role in policy making in Pakistan. They had the impression that on all important issues Britain persisted in siding with India against Pakistan (*The Times*, 16 May 1949). Yet Pakistan was in favour of Britain in the Suez Crisis of 1956. Pakistan also appreciated Britain for its role in the Rann of Kutch dispute in 1965. However, in the Kashmir conflict in 1965 between India and Pakistan, British withdrawal of military assistance from both parties made relations uneasy.

The relationship faced another complication, though, on the issue of the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. As a leading member of the Commonwealth, it was expected that Britain would handle the issue by taking a mediatory role; Britain took a non-interventionist and non-partisan policy instead. Britain wanted workable relations with India as well as with Pakistan. For maintaining a balanced relation, Britain told the Pakistani authorities that it was their own internal matter and, in response to Pakistan's complaint on Indian intervention, they said that they had no confirmed evidence of any such events. When the High Commissioner of Pakistan put forward examples of the Indian government's interference citing the Indian press and the resolution passed in the Indian Parliament, the British Prime Minister replied that he understood Mrs. Gandhi was trying to keep the temperature down (PREM 15/568, 27 April 1971).



While Britain publicly declared its non-partisan policy, Pakistan criticized Britain's pro-Indian mentality. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan complained that British citizens, including members of parliaments working from British soil, were openly raising funds through the so-called 'Bangladesh Action Committee'. These, they alleged, were to be used to acquire arms and ammunition for the Bengalis rather than for aid. They also complained about the generous publicity given by Britain's news media to these activities (FCO 37/929, 3 July 1971). In June 1971, Britain, as a member of the 'Aid to Pakistani Consortium', made a collective decision not to renew funding until the crisis had ended. In sum, their chief complaint about the British aid policy was that these activities were not compatible with the British government official declaration that the situation in East Pakistan was an internal affair for Pakistan. Pakistani authorities also complained that British official and non-official statements and actions were directed against Pakistan. The Pakistan government conveyed this deep concern and protested against these developments. At the same time, however, they hoped that it would be possible for the British government to rectify the situation before further harm was done to the relationship between the two countries (FCO 37/929, 3 July 1971). British diplomats, along with the Foreign Secretary, admitted that relations had been soured with Pakistan at that time (FCO 37/890, 29 July 1971; FCO 37/907, 8 September 1971). In an effort to restore their deteriorating relations with Islamabad, the foreign secretary reiterated Britain's position saying, "there had been no recent change in HMG's policies" (FCO 37/890, 2 August 1971). But Pakistan was dissatisfied with the British stance, as evidenced by Heath's letter to Richard Nixon (the then-American President) in which he admitted, "our relationship with Pakistan is going through a difficult period" (PREM 15/569, 5 November 1971). Following the attitudes of the Pakistan government, the FCO enclosed a memorandum on East Pakistan and suggested avoiding openly associating with either party while identifying the comparative weight and force of India (FCO 37/893, 4 October 1971).

Pakistan complaining against Britain did not hamper the usual bilateral relation. As such, at the same time, Pakistan received British aid of £2 million for relief in East Pakistan (House of Commons Debate, 18 October 1971). Pakistan also wanted to keep relations alive with the thought that they might need the support of Britain in the Security Council. But Britain abstained from voting in the UN, which displeased Pakistan. Britain, then, wanted to ameliorate the situation through some laudatory statements. Heath extolled Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's (the then-President of Pakistan) sagacious decision in releasing Sheikh Mujib (a prominent Bengali leader who had declared the



independence of Bangladesh and was in prison in West Pakistan at the time), which Heath had been for a long time urging Yahya Khan to do and expressed the hope that Bhutto would be widely commended for this action (PREM 15/751, 7 January 1972).

Since Bangladesh had achieved independence by this time, the recognition issue came to the fore. Britain made a short delay in making any decision as Heath was requested by Bhutto to have some time to be recognized until his return from China. But the recognition of Bangladesh by some communist countries like Poland, Bulgaria and Mongolia was a concern for Britain (FCO 37/1019, 13 January 1972). As such, Heath wrote to Bhutto that, as the international community was giving recognition to the new state, therefore, waiting for a long time would be meaningless for Britain (PREM 15/751, 24 January 1972). To avoid resentment in Pakistan and to prevent Pakistan from leaving the Commonwealth, Britain considered a joint attempt of recognition by some Commonwealth member countries and European countries (PREM 15/751, 21 January 1972). In fact, the recognition had been following that line, and Britain recognized Bangladesh on 4 February 1972. Britain thought that proceeding in that way would act as bar in rupturing bilateral relations. However, it could not avoid a sharp reaction from Pakistan, who left the Commonwealth in 1972 in response to the British recognition of Bangladesh. Britain tried in different ways to keep Pakistan in the organization. In order to convince Bhutto, the then-Commonwealth Secretary Arnold Smith went to Pakistan (Smith 1981, 130–53), but no persuasion worked and the withdrawal of Pakistan from the Commonwealth was declared by Bhutto. It is therefore clear that Britain's stance in Indo-Pakistani disputes acted as one of the important factors in determining Pakistan's relation with Britain. This factor can also be seen behind India's relations with Britain.

## 5 Conclusion

Generally, the international importance of a country depends on its geostrategic location, with other countries also determining their relationship with a country based on this calculation. From long rule in India, Britain could easily calculate the geostrategic importance of Indian subcontinent (i.e., its proximity to the Indian Ocean and its sizeable land mass and population). It was, therefore, important to build cordial relations with the Indian subcontinent. Furthermore, even after seeing a downward trend in trade, Britain had a substantial commercial interest in those parts of the world. Along with other trading sectors in that region, the business of jute and tea was of great concern

to Britain, as demonstrated by Britain's anxiousness and official British reports on that issue at the time of the 1971 war mentioned earlier. Without a doubt, trade interests took priority in keeping relations cordial. Following this, it was national interest that led Britain to build a good relationship with India. It is also true that relations were influenced by the image of each state as perceived by foreign policy making. The 'four first order overseas objectives' (security, prosperity, honouring obligations, and world peace and justice) of Britain (Review of Overseas Representation 1977, 10) supports the idea that a good relationship is needed with other countries for its own security and prosperity.

From the above discussion, we see that Britain had political and economic interests in India and Pakistan. The Indian empire had played a major role in making Britain a strong imperial power, and Britain, naturally, wanted to keep this relationship alive. However, maintaining a formal state of relations with its former colonies was not an easy thing to achieve. After 1947, Britain had to maintain relations with two main centres of power, New Delhi and Karachi. A notable diplomatic achievement of Britain was to keep both countries within the Commonwealth. Britain witnessed ups and down in their relations following the internal conflicts between India and Pakistan. Britain's relationship and prior experience with India and Pakistan made it more cautious in developing relations. Britain understood that its post-imperial future in that region would depend on following a good relationship with both parties and, therefore, sought to maintain a balanced relationship. That is, the past associations and future expectations of Britain contributed to their ties with India and Pakistan. In conclusion, Britain developed a balanced relationship with both countries in light of the fact that it needed to protect British trade interests, minimize Communist and big power influence, and, above all, its national interest in that region.

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