

BRITISH COLONIAL LEGACY: DIVISION OF INDIA AND DURAND LINE FALLOUT

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to highlight the influences of the Mughal and British empires, which up till date have an impact or have impacted the sub-continent post-independence. Contrary to common perception that the Mughals ruled India in its entirety, it was only the north of India controlled by this dynasty, excluding Bengal and anything south of India or better known as the Deccan was a coveted region the Mughals made efforts to annex, only to their demise. The British get undue blame for dividing India as if it was entirely at their discretion, without any role of the natives; moreover, subsequent problems of the region, are many a time reverted to the British divide and rule policy. This paper aims to highlight rifts that existed amidst the natives before the British took power or even prior to their arrival in India; after establishing this and analysing the British role leading to independence, there will be an attempt to see how such differences and influences have impacted India, Pakistan and Afghanistan post-independence. These countries still have neighbouring conflicts, often times for which the British are up to this date blamed. It being almost eight decades of British departure, it would do well to see who in fact is responsible for the woes of the region.

Key words: Durand Line, Mughals, British,

INTRODUCTION

Mughal Era

Mughal invasions of northern India remained a vivid memory, where Hindus and Muslims took Timur and via him, Babur to be leaders of Mongol hordes, a perception even shared by the Muslim religious elite. Mughal, a variation of Mongol was a hostile term. Indian Muslims had been murdered and suffered destruction by Timur and Babur, though by the latter to a lesser

degree.¹ During the initial years of Mughal rule, the newly established dynasty's real threat was the Afghans and there is no evidence of temple destruction, rather the first Mughal emperor's soldiers destroyed Islamic institutions, like hospitals of Sufis

¹ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," *Social Scientist* 29, no. 1/2 (2001): 26.

in northern India.² The second Mughal emperor, Humayun, when he retook control of Delhi in 1555 in order to exclude Afghans from positions of power, he desired a coalition with the Rajputs.³ It was also at this time that many Shias from Iran were included in Humayun's service, though prior to this there was no instance of harmony between Sunni and Shia nobility, under a Muslim ruler.⁴ Humayun had actually fled to Persia, when Sher Shah Suri had defeated him. The Afghans bred animosity for the Mughals as the Mughals had defeated the Afghans before conquering India.⁵

By the 1590's, at the time of Akbar, most of northern India was controlled by the Mughals,⁶ excluding Bengal where Afghans were established and Western India.⁷ The Deccan had been perceived by some as a separate geographical unit to that of northern India. Contrary to the common perception that Akbar had always been a uniting force, it was not so; in the early 1560s he was still influenced by orthodox theologians who were reputed for antagonism for non-Muslims and even Muslim sects like the Shias. In fact, his decision to abolish *jizya* in 1564 and other favours such as extending revenue-free land for the aid of temples and removal of pilgrimage tax were all appeasing measures, aimed at Rajput

chiefs to join the Mughal service,⁸ whom he was able to appease and had the most powerful Rajput princes of Jaipur and Jodhpur join him. In fact, for Akbar it was from his own court and the Afghans that he faced the most opposition.⁹

By the end of Shah Jahan's reign in 1658, his non-native nobles' origins were so diverse that Persia and Central Asia were not the only locations the nobility came from, it was in fact spread out to seventeen different destinations. This resulted in no ethnic affiliation between the nobles and the emperor. Further there was a state of never-ending revolts by *zamindars*, 144 such uprisings were documented against Akbar. Initially they would give less revenue to the ruling authorities and if resentment followed on account of such actions, then the *zamindars* would consent, realizing they had underestimated the state of affairs. On the other hand, if there was not such a reaction, then the *zamindar* would utilize the surplus cash to gain manpower and land, continuing in such a manner until there was an awakening by the emperor. There was a custom of Indian *zamindars* to join whoever was the most influential. In a similar manner, Shivaji who was considered head of a rival state, rather than a rebel, managed to control about 4.1 percent of the entire subcontinent and administered in such a manner that none of the other rebels, the Yusufzais, Jats, Satnamis, Sikhs, or the Afridis could remotely compete. A top Mughal general, however was successful in defeating Shivaji, whereby a treaty was signed between Jai Singh and Shivaji in 1665, Shivaji was made to concede a majority of his thirty-five forts and the revenue generated from them. The Mughal court was elated, though it was not a complete victory as there was not complete eradication of Shivaji. Jai Singh and his family were generously rewarded and it seemed an appropriate time to pursue Akbar's policy of

² Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 25.

³ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 22.

⁴ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 20-30.

⁵ "Time check: Medieval India: The reign of Humayun," *Dawn News*, January 1, 2011, <https://www.dawn.com/news/595299/time-check-medieval-india-the-reign-of-humayun>.

⁶ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 22.

⁷ G. B. Malleson, *Akbar and the Rise of the Mughal Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), 198.

⁸ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 22.

⁹ G. B. Malleson, *Akbar and the Rise of the Mughal Empire*, 198.

defeating one's enemies and then purchasing them. Potentially Shivaji could be included in the *mansabdari* setup and unified to the empire. However, in 1666 things took a turn whereby if the Mughals had been more generous in their negotiations with Shivaji, then perhaps a conflict would not have arisen but Aurangzeb refused any such offer, as he was more concerned about the reaction of the Rajputs or the courtly Persians, of a low-caste bandit being elevated above them. Regardless, Aurangzeb himself was sceptical of setting such a risky precedent, whereby successful brigands would be rewarded. Moreover, Aurangzeb was likely not prone to extend gentle treatment to Shivaji, any honour given to Shivaji at the Mughal court, was more than what Aurangzeb and other influential people around the emperor desired. By 1666 Shivaji had humiliated the Mughals three times, leading to the empire being challenged, so the Mughals were forced to move south to Shivaji's domain, hence the commencement of the decline of the Mughals can be traced to 1666.¹⁰

By 1707, Rajputs and other Hindus had secured authoritative stately positions, which led to these native Indian nobles, including Indian Muslims reaching to about 44 percent of the total quota. Such influence led native nobles desiring to establish their influence in the empire by sidelining non-natives nobles.¹¹ In fact, such was the self-interest of power that the Rathor Rebellion (1678-81) in reaction to Aurangzeb's intolerant religious policy, brought to light that the Rathors were more annoyed about Aurangzeb's interference on a succession matter of chiefship versus the destruction of newly constructed temples. Rajput chiefs up to 1739, also misperceived the Mughal Empire to be the same as it was at the time of Akbar, potentially having confidence that if they stood in defence to the

supra-religious character of the empire, they would not be offending the religious sentiments of any religious nobility.¹²

Mughal rule up to 1739 appeared to violate the spirit of Islamic sharia, instances can be quoted of the prohibition of slaughtering of cows or the banning of *jizya*. Such gestures were not merely goodwill signs towards Hindus but also carried severe reprimands for the violators of the prohibition. One such instance is a complaint of cow slaughter, lodged by Hindus, where Akbar exiled the accused man. However, a *fatwa* issued in the nineteenth century noted that Muslims were prohibited from observing their core ordinances. Shah Jahan formally revoked this ban yet in urban centres killings of cows continued to be prevented and efforts to impose sharia were not successful.¹³ Through such instances we see multiple occurrences of disunity amongst Indians, including diversity of religion, language and culture, yet accusations of the British dividing India remain a common narrative; whereas in fact it was on account of the British that Indian nationalism was awakened, otherwise before 1857 India did not pose as a nation in accordance with the modern sense of the term.¹⁴

As for Mughal decline, it must be considered in the context that they never ruled India in its entirety, it was only the north of India that they had firm control over after 1526. To the south their authority fluctuated and their most staunch rivals of the seventeenth century were the Marathas, in the Deccan; this rivalry led to a prolonged battle for Aurangzeb in the south, resulting in the empire's decline. Alongside, in

¹⁰ M. N. Pearson, "Shivaji and the Decline of the Mughal Empire," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1976): 224-231.

¹¹ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 30

¹² Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 32.

¹³ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision," 21.

¹⁴ Green, William A., and John P. Deasy, Jr. "Unifying Themes in the History of British India, 1757-1857: An Historiographical Analysis," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 17, no. 1 (1985): 16.

regard to British colonialism which is often referred to as exploitative, it would be worth pondering, how a country miles away, taking travel time of half a year to reach India, took political control of such a historical civilization, with sixteen times the populace of Britain and eighteen times its territorial expanse.¹⁵ Further, for the British to drastically change native social structures, seems unlikely. Robert Frykenberg, in his work titled, *Gunter District 1788-1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India* (1965) reveals how tax revenues went to corrupt natives, through an intricate chain of bribery, from the most insignificant Indian official to the top-level native tax officer of the district; drawing a comparison of the indigenous Indian official to white ants, who discreetly internally ate away at the British revenue set-up. Author Eric Stokes holds that the British only solidified progresses that were evolved and that they could not have destabilized traditions. They did however make positive contributions, one of which was to replace military clashes amongst private armies, over land disputes, with court rooms. There are those who question if British rule slowed down India's economic progress; nationalist authors have advocated that prior to the British, India had a progressive pre-industrial economy and if the British had not intervened, India would likely have had its own industrial revolution, claiming the British weakened the native industry, with the fallout of reduction of countrywide wealth and Indian dependency on British products. Imperial apologists have refuted such accusations, convinced that on account of the British, modernization of a regressive economy was fast-tracked and there was prevention of political rupture of the subcontinent. They insist the British provided better administration, the rule of law, stability in

property ownership and modernized western technology.¹⁶

K N Chaudhuri, rebutted Naoroji's Drain Theory, which claimed that India was made destitute on account of the British; Chaudhuri explained that the drain was not extensive and that a lot of it was payment for services used. Morris David Morris, an American scholar challenged both the imperialist and nationalist camps, doubting their economic evidence and accusing them of subjective use of references, though he offered less criticism of the imperialist stance and recurrently rejected key principles of the nationalists. He held that after 1800, India's per capita income increased along with business engagements, both domestically and internationally. British strategy did not obstruct economic growth and neither did the British arrive in a country "ripe" for industrialization. Morris also explains that good Indian fabric was exceptional due to manual craftsmanship and not on account of advanced tools and methods. Low production of agricultural economy was on account of environmental factors and extreme temperatures; moreover before British rule, India's political volatility prevented capital investment and commercial growth. Morris also probed the imperialist stance that Indian values and social set-up obstructed economic advancement. Max Weber's key point on Hindu doctrine, implied acceptance of one's condition of life, hence individual upgrading could only be obtained in subsequent incarnations and not via existing efforts. Morris however held that economic evidence did not back Weber's thesis, citing that there was professional flexibility. In fact, Morris found that Indians were more open to investment risk versus their British counterparts of the subcontinent. Britain's error in fact was not in destruction of the Indian

¹⁵ Green, William A., and John P. Deasy, Jr. "Unifying Themes in the History of British India, 1757-1857: An Historiographical Analysis," 17-18.

¹⁶ Green, William A., and John P. Deasy, Jr. "Unifying Themes in the History of British India, 1757-1857: An Historiographical Analysis," 36-39.

economy but rather failure to impose quick economic progress.¹⁷

Indeed, there was delayed acceptance of science and technology, visible especially in India and the Islamic East, in comparison to seventeenth century Europe, which does not mean that mechanical innovations were absent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the presence existed but the pace was sluggish and the scope extremely limited. Indian literature was absent of the key items of Europe's new technology, namely the clock or the telescope. The reason for this abandonment is difficult to determine, perhaps it was on account of inhibitions against science in Islamic and Hindu ideology. Artillery manufacturing was a key industry of the time in Europe but in India no such innovations were found, merely the creation of muskets and guns was maintained as a craft without any scientific impact, leading to them being mostly outdated by 1700. The Mughals maintained the use of sword cavalry, long after it was obsolete, so apparently military weakness was a result of intellectual inactivity. Keeping in mind that inactivity is a relative term, for if a comparison were not made with Europe, then India or the Islamic East during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were considerably prolific in literature and rational sciences; for instance, there may be admiration for the astronomical observations of Raja Jai Singh but still the point of relevance is that there was remotely a trace of modern science. Ripple effects were made but a breakthrough was required to alter the existing frame of mind.¹⁸

When the British established their political control, India was still a pre-modern society, very distinct from the West. Boundaries of political units were porous, with grey areas of dividing one

kingdom from another, more the likes of frontiers versus border demarcation. Though it was not the first time of mapping India, a map of Hindustan was made in 1782 by British cartographers, whereby a single political unit of India was created, which allowed pan-Indian nationalism; hence unity was created amongst the natives, which ultimately led to their rise against the colonizer.¹⁹ The key point to note is that unity did not exist but was created on account of the natives' opposition to the British, reflected in the freedom movement of the sub-continent.

India during British Rule

Jinnah up until 1916 was reputed as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, however apparently after the First World War, he was obscured by the popularity of Nehru and Gandhi; shared disaffection grew in the subsequent decades and by 1940, Jinnah had made the demand for Pakistan.²⁰ With the start of World War II, Congress feared the Japanese would attack, on account of the British, so not wanting to be forced into battle, started the Quit India Movement. The 1942 Cripps Mission had offered dominion status to the Indians, in exchange for their support during the war but the immediate threat of a full-scale war, with Japanese soldiers at the Bay of Bengal, made Gandhi insist the British depart; pleading they leave India to God and if that wasn't possible leave it to anarchy. Other Indian leaders, such as Jinnah and B. R. Ambedkar considered the Quit India Movement a power grab by Gandhi for Congress, as for them independence would leave the Dalits and Muslims without adequate protection.²¹

¹⁷ Green, William A., and John P. Deasy, Jr. "Unifying Themes in the History of British India, 1757-1857: An Historiographical Analysis," 38-44.

¹⁸ Ali, M. Athar. "The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case." *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (1975): 389-391.

¹⁹ Mishra, Sandip Kumar. "The Colonial Origins of Territorial Disputes in South Asia." *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 6-10.

²⁰ William Dalrymple, "The Great Divide," *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>.

²¹ "Quit India Movement Indian protest movement [1942-1943]," Britannica, accessed

Congress leaders ended up being imprisoned for their civil disobedience, the Quit India Movement and while they were jailed, Jinnah promoted himself as the best agent of Muslim interests against Hindu dominance. When the war was over and Congress leaders were released from prison, Hindu-Muslim street violence increased and forced or voluntary segregation started in neighbourhoods. Such opportunities were frequently exploited by political leaders, for instance H. S. Suhrawardy, the Muslim League chief minister of Bengal, made provocative speeches in Calcutta, infuriating protestors against the Hindus of his own region, citing in a newspaper that violence and chaos were not necessarily evil, if used for noble purposes. It so happened that the first set of widescale religious carnages took place in Calcutta in 1946, partially on account of Suhrawardy's provocation.²² Muslim League insisted without compromise on the creation of Pakistan but Congress equally insisted on a united India, however in the subsequent session of the Cabinet Mission, both sides agreed to negotiate in Shimla, yet the differences ended up being even more than before. Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the Cabinet Mission clarified that the British did not have a defined plan for the fate of India, as was the blame. He also revealed a British statement with eleven paragraphs expressing the impracticality of a completely independent Pakistan. However, Jinnah stated that with differences of nationalities, reconciliation should not be anticipated. Indeed, differences between Muslims and Hindus had existed for centuries and sporadic communal violence would bring such differences to the surface. Muslim dynasties had ruled India for centuries and then it was the British who ruled, so when the time came for self-rule, it was a cause of concern for Muslims to be

ruled by Hindus, the majority.²³ The call for a separate country by Muslim League was also on account of their apprehension after the 1935 Act, when Nehru stated they would create a nationalist India and bring in socialism, thereby ending the *Zamindari* system; hence Jinnah opted for Muslim separatism and Muslim nationalism, Jinnah himself stated that he would start an anti-Hindu campaign.²⁴ Moreover, Muslim League did not permit competing Muslim outlooks, like that of Maulana Azad and held that they represented Indian Muslims in their entirety, which in actuality was a political elite that came into power by a large Muslim electorate and led to the creation of a separate nation.²⁵ Congress had maintained a stance of opposing the division of India but as rioting increased, its members realized that it was the only possible way to get rid of Jinnah and Muslim League. Lord Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India, also realized that Jinnah was impermeable to compromise so he needed to act soon otherwise it could well be that the British would end up mediating a civil war.²⁶

History of Durand Line

The Durand Line of 1893, was a result of *The Great Game*, where Russian influence and expansion into Central Asia in the nineteenth century put the British on edge, while Russia too was apprehensive of British attacks. As the British were not successful in gaining control of Afghanistan in the two Anglo-Afghan wars of 1839-1842 and 1878-1880, they rested the matter

February 24, 2025,
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Quit-India-Movement>.

²² William Dalrymple, "The Great Divide."

²³ Aish Sinha, "Did we divide ourselves and blame the British?" *Medium*, July 30, 2017, <https://medium.com/@aishsinha/india/did-we-divide-ourselves-and-blame-the-british-542918093e75>.

²⁴ Ishtiaq Ahmed, "The Demand for Pakistan: From Idea to Statehood," November 20, 2021, YouTube, 1:34:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_A-ryg_Eec.

²⁵ Aish Sinha, "Did we divide ourselves and blame the British?"

²⁶ William Dalrymple, "The Great Divide."

by making Afghanistan a buffer state. In turn they provided them with military apparatus so that they could handle the feared Russian threat. However, since there was no assurance of security, the British decided it was essential to define Afghanistan's southern foreign border. Amidst negotiations, the Afghan ruler, Abdur Rahman rejected the proposed Afghan-India border, which would result in forgoing his official authority over the Pathan tribes beyond the Afghan side. The British till date, are blamed for the drawing of this borderline, which Afghans maintain is a line of control and not a valid border claiming that Abdur Rahman was forced to sign it, threatened by an economic embargo. The Afghan ruler was indeed dependent on British subsidies, arms and ammunition to maintain his central government's control.²⁷ Another point that the Afghans raise, which is accurate to the extent that the Durand Line pact was originally valid up to the lifetime of the Afghan ruler who sanctioned it. After the demise of King Abdur Rahman, the Daud-Habibullah accord was signed in 1905 between the British and the late king's successor and son, King Habibullah, whereby the British restarted aid, including payment that had been withheld until the renewal of the agreement and hence allowed the transit of military equipment to Afghanistan via India. This treaty remained valid until the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919; after this war²⁸ the 1919 Treaty of Rawalpindi was undertaken,²⁹

through which Afghanistan was accepted by the British an independent state and the Durand Line was protected through Article 5 of the treaty, which specified the Afghan government's acceptance of the Indo-Afghan border, endorsed by the late Emir Habibullah Khan. Hence, the Durand Line was recognized as an international boundary between Afghanistan and British India. It was to be determined if Afghanistan would act in good faith, then Britain would renegotiate a permanent treaty; so subsequently the Kabul Agreement of 1921 superseded the Rawalpindi agreement and it too recognized the Durand Line as an international border. However, Article 14 of the 1921 pact, allowed for unilateral rejection by either side at the end of three years from the time of sanctioning the treaty. King Amanullah's government did not announce any cancellation and King Nadir Khan's government exchanged a diplomatic instrument with the British in 1930, wherein Paragraph II stated that there was complete validity and implementation of both the agreements of 1919 and 1923. Of potential relevance is that a letter from the British government to the Afghan foreign minister is annexed to the original 1921 agreement which suggests that Afghan interest in the tribal state of affairs across the Durand Line is normal, to which some scholars have reacted that the letter served as an excuse for King Amanullah to interfere in matters across the border. According to some sources, Abdur Rahman was forced into agreeing to the Durand Line but foreign historians disagree and claim that the king willingly agreed, since he was aware of the British approaching Kabul and Qandahar, via the building of highways and railways, hence borders prevented such advances. Moreover, Abdur Rahman's consent was verified by his acceptance of increment of British Afghan aid from 1.2 million to 1.8 million Indian rupees, detailed in Article 7 of the agreement. Scholars further refer to Abdur Rahman's diaries where he assessed the Durand Line agreement with pride and publicly declared it to be one of his chief accomplishments. Importantly, the Durand Line agreement of 1893 should not be the single reference point in regard to this matter, rather

²⁷ The Durand Line - A Razor's Edge between Afghanistan & Pakistan, European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS), January 2018, <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/the-durand-line-a-razors-edge-between-afghanistan-and-pakistan/#:~:text=As%20a%20result%2C%20the%20Durand,the%20two%20South%20Asian%20countries.>

²⁸ Qassem, Ahmad Shaye, and H. M. Durand. "Pak-Afghan Relations: The Durand Line Issue." *Policy Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (2008): 90-91.

²⁹ The Durand Line - A Razor's Edge between Afghanistan & Pakistan.

the four other bilateral agreements of 1905, 1919, 1921 and 1930 indicate that it was unlikely that all four agreements were imposed on Afghanistan. Having provided this evidence, it is not to say that force had not been used for the creation of borders, history is full of such instances. If one perceives such borders to be unlawful and delegates unilateral authority to reject borders then chaos is inevitable. Notably, the Durand Line is recognized internationally, including by the United Nations.³⁰ Pakistan maintains the norms of International Law and cites that under the international convention of *uti possidetis juris*, by default it secures the border and does not need a renewed agreement with Afghanistan. The practice of *uti possidetis juris* has been upheld by the Vienna Convention and other countries, claiming that newly created independent states should maintain the borders prior to their independence, thus binding bilateral agreements, inherited by successor states.³¹

Post-partition, tensions have continued to simmer; Pathan nationalists called for Pashtunistan, where they took the matter in 1949 to a loya jirga; the council held that since Pakistan was a newly created state, it was not a historic extension of British India and hence all agreements signed before independence were invalidated.³² Lastly, claims are made that the Durand Line has divided people who were racially, linguistically and culturally the same but to rebut this, it is claimed that these very people have also been rivals of each other, where those from western Afghanistan were politically tilted

towards Iran and those from eastern Afghanistan were inclined towards India.³³

Current Implications of Decisions Made during British Rule in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan

The widespread narrative of blaming the British for the existing problems of the region, especially citing the divide and rule policy of splitting India, or the drawing of the Durand Line seem far-fetched. Decisions executed by the British were not dictatorial judgements, one can review this by the free willed native leaders' involvement in the political affairs of their respective countries, making demands that the British sooner or later had to bend to, especially in regard to India but since issues persist in the region, the British have been and remain a convenient scapegoat, alarmingly even after almost eight decades of their departure.

Within Afghanistan we have seen warlords and ethnic leaders who have domestically struggled for power; in the current scenario exiled leaders are threatening civil war unless the Taliban permit them to return and repossess control. The warlords and their units have been a continuous force that has destroyed Afghanistan for decades. The Taliban's first stint at power was due to the warlords aiming to crush each other, after the US supported mujahideen, conquered the Soviets in 1989.³⁴ At the turn of the current century, the domestic unrest in Afghanistan was perceived as an ethnic one and the Taliban being financed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was translated as a Pathan takeover of the land, though in the 1980s, Pakistan's military had backed the transnational Islamic groups. After the 9/11 attacks, when Hamid Karzai took power, he initially desired cordial ties with Pakistan but later shifted towards India, which revitalized the Durand Line matter. Karzai accused Pakistan of a double gam,

³⁰ Qassem, Ahmad Shayeque, and H. M. Durand. "Pak-Afghan Relations: The Durand Line Issue." 91-93.

³¹ The Durand Line - A Razor's Edge between Afghanistan & Pakistan.

³² Nicholas Howenstein and Sumit Ganguly, "India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs* (2010): <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/india-pakistan-rivalry-afghanistan>.

³³ Qassem, Ahmad Shayeque, and H. M. Durand. "Pak-Afghan Relations: The Durand Line Issue." 95.

³⁴ Lynne O'Donnell, "Afghanistan's Warlords Prepare Their Comeback," June 14, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/14/afghanistan-warlords-taliban-authority-comeback/>.

on account of its support for the Taliban. Pakistan too blamed Afghanistan for supporting the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) which carried out terrorism in Pakistan from Afghan administered locations. When Ashraf Ghani came into power, he appeared to have cordial ties with Islamabad but later detracted just like his predecessor, Hamid Karzai.³⁵ The strain between the two neighbours has also been on account of the TTP, the highs and lows also impact the Durand Line stance, however if Pakistan senses that Afghanistan will actually back a revanchist movement versus side with its conventional stance on the Durand Line then chances are the relationship may be over.³⁶ Tensions continue between both neighbours, as recent as December 2024, there were attacks between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan claimed that it was attacking Afghan bases of the TTP, which Pakistan holds has the backing of the Afghan Taliban. India, too has shifted its stance on the Taliban which it initially viewed as a proxy of Pakistan and blamed them for attacks on Indian diplomatic missions in Afghanistan but now there is a different equation. If formal high-level meetings, recently held between New Delhi and the Taliban translate into increased Indian influence in Afghanistan, then there is likelihood of strained ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan, considering Afghanistan is dependent on the borders of Pakistan, leaving the Afghans to bear the brunt of this tug-of-war.³⁷

³⁵ Hashimy, Sayed Qudrat, "Pakistan and Afghanistan Tussle Over Durand Line." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 27, no. 2 (2023): 101-108.

³⁶ Asfandiyar Mir, Richard Olson and Andrew Watkins "Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Dispute Heats Up," *United States Institute of Peace*, January 12, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/01/afghanistan-pakistan-border-dispute-heats-up>.

³⁷ Abid Hussain, "Pakistan watches with caution as old ally Taliban gets closer to India," *Al Jazeera*, January 13, 2025, [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/13/pa](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/13/pakistan-watches-with-caution-as-old-ally-taliban-gets-closer-to-india)

It is also claimed that India has exploited the Pak-Afghan animosity through acts of supporting separatist movements in Baluchistan but some experienced opinions from Pakistan, such as Asif Durrani, a special representative to Afghanistan, holds that ties between Islamabad and Kabul are stronger than New Delhi and Kabul and that forging of ties between independent countries should not be objectionable to Pakistan. Former ambassador, Maleeha Lodhi is of a similar opinion, explaining that landlocked Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan for trade and geography will not change just because India looks for improved relations with Afghanistan.³⁸

As for the claim that the British divided India, it would be worthy citing what the British thought about the partition. The Secretary of State for India and Burma, The Earl of Listowel delivered a speech on the Indian Independence Bill in July 1947, in which he regretted that India was being divided into two. He explained that failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan for an Indian Union provided no other option but a split by mutual agreement, otherwise the British would have had to stay in India until Muslims and Hindus agreed to co-exist, or otherwise let a civil war ensue. The British hoped that ultimately both countries would realize that separation was not to their benefit and would reunite, reaching heights that they were capable of with their land and resources.³⁹

In regard to the consequences of the division of India, according to modern scholars, a distinct Muslim identity has been harmful for India and Muslims. Pakistan has not successfully kept its founding principle of religion intact, with the creation of Bangladesh and separatist movements and conflicts within the country, such as Baluchistan. Potentially countries that share common ethnicity or linguistics have a better

kistan-watches-with-caution-as-old-ally-taliban-gets-closer-to-india.

³⁸ Abid Hussain, "Pakistan watches with caution as old ally Taliban gets closer to India."

³⁹ Aish Sinha, "Did we divide ourselves and blame the British?"

chance of unity; if religion were the glue for nationhood, then the oil rich countries of West Asia would be one versus several.⁴⁰

Jinnah's famous August 11th, 1947 speech to the Constituent Assembly, whereby he announced freedom to all religions of Pakistan to practice as they wished, was of little value as intense damage had been done.⁴¹ Muslim League had presumed that Pakistan would have a considerable non-Muslim demography that would safeguard the Muslims of India but statistics of 1951 showed that West Pakistan's non-Muslims were only 1.6% of the population; these subgroups are ever more susceptible since the Islamization of the 1980s. Then, considering that Pakistan was a state for the Muslims, not all Muslims endorsed its creation, further not all migrated there, hence remaining the largest minority in India. Indian Muslims are also often blamed for being loyal towards Pakistan. The harsh reality is that the two neighbours remain in the shadows of partition, even after almost eight decades. The arms' race continues and the Kashmir dispute remains unresolved.⁴² Visa hurdles and bureaucratic red-tape keep families on both sides separated. Both countries face religious nationalism and consequences for religious minorities are dire, needless to say much goes on under state patronage.⁴³ Some claim that India is better than expected as it remained secular, not

forgetting that it is not without issues.⁴⁴ However, to reference Bombay-based writer Saadat Hasan Manto who viewed the tragedy of the division of India, not that there were two countries instead of one but the consciousness that humans on both sides of the border were slaves to hatred, slaves to religious desires, slaves of animal instincts and cruelty.⁴⁵

Conclusion

A well-known principle for progress is firstly acceptance of one's oversights; only then can any betterment be pursued. Pakistan and India must move beyond blaming the British for the division of India and its fallouts, still a common narrative. Even if one were to grant that the British were responsible for ills done to this region, almost eight decades is a life-time to move on and to make amends, especially considering India was the jewel of the crown; so the natural resources the British came miles for, did not return with the colonial rulers, implying if the British became an empire on which the sun never set then what is holding the natives of the sub-continent from prosperity? Though India has set foot on the right path to commendable economic growth, Pakistan's economy still struggles with a long history of loans and debt. Moreover, self-inflicted hatred and mistrust and its ensuing arms' race has taken its toll on a lack of development on key sectors such as education and health but even more crucial is the growing conflict over water, where water scarcity threatens this densely population region. So much is at risk but key decision makers are engaged elsewhere, blame games are a convenient option, whether it is the British, the Americans or political opponents. Suggestions, recommendations, studies for improvement have been done but largely remain on paper. Whether it is Pak-Afghan or Pak-India ties, the natives can choose to dwell on what has divided them or what unites them; they can learn from the mistakes of the past, like the Europeans

⁴⁰ [Aish Sinha](#), "Did we divide ourselves and blame the British?"

⁴¹ William Dalrymple, *The Great Divide*.

⁴² "How the Partition of India happened - and why its effects are still felt today," *The Conversation*, August 10, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-partition-of-india-happened-and-why-its-effects-are-still-felt-today-81766>.

⁴³ Anam Zakaria, "The Ongoing Legacies of the Partition of British India," *Asia Society*, December 9, 2022, <https://asiasociety.org/magazine/article/ongoing-legacies-partition-british-india>.

⁴⁴ [Aish Sinha](#), "Did we divide ourselves and blame the British?"

⁴⁵ William Dalrymple, *The Great Divide*.

who ultimately decided that conciliation was the path for peace and progress or they can choose not to learn from history, only to their own loss.

