

British Policy Deployment: Military Assistance in South Asia during the Cold War

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This paper aims at surveying the deployment of the British policy of military assistance in South Asia from the post-war period to the end of the 1960s.

In the process of decolonisation, the British government kept groping for whether her presence in South Asia could be maintainable in the post-war period. When India and Pakistan separately achieved independence in 1947, Britain had them decide to remain as a member of the Commonwealth succeeding after independence. The intention was for both the maintenance in the sterling area based on dealings of sterling balances and the Commonwealth's defense against the expansion of communism.

When maintaining the Commonwealth's relationship with South Asian countries, Britain set forth the parity (equal principle) in arms supply, but the arms supplied to India and Pakistan were mainly not the latest, but the used ones. Britain's influential power, which could secure India as her monopoly market, disappeared in the early 1960s. On the other hand, refraining from the military intervention to South Asia at the end of World War II, the United States sought to strengthen military aid to Pakistan gradually during the military convention. This cooperation also reinforced Anglo-American ties dependent on the formation of the Baghdad Pact in the face of the strained states of the Middle East.

When the vulnerability of India's defense system appeared in the course of Indo-China border conflicts, India's urgent request for arms also became a touchstone of Britain and the United States from both sides of international orders in South Asia and their financial burdens. They could not fully respond to strengthen India's defense system at the Nassau Conference in December 1962, and then encouraged India to purchase the MIG-21 fighter from the then-Soviet Union. As India's non-alignment policy urged in the 1950s disappeared, in turn, the logic of the Cold War was strengthened. Finally, when Britain and the United States ceased their military aid at the second Indo-Pakistan War in 1965, it symbolised the breakdown of the British military aid policy in South Asia, the aims of which were to solve Kashmir's issues by treating India and Pakistan with parity.