CHAPTER-II
POLITICAL RELATIONS
Britain has had long standing political interests in the Indian sub-continent. In this spectrum, the relationship between India and Britain is of a special nature - one that is based on mutuality and partnership of two leading medium powers. Unlike between many other important countries, the ties between India and Britain are quite widespread and deep-rooted. As they are built upon centuries old interactions between the two countries, they encompass every conceivable facet of relationship with a foreign country - Political, economic, social and cultural.¹

Britain was the first major power in the West to appreciate the importance of the policy of non-alignment (NAM) adopted by India. It should, however, be mentioned that Britain did not agree with other major powers like the Soviet Union and the United States when they viewed non-alignment with deep suspicion. Whitehall perceived that in a world which is divided on the basis of ideologies and systems, the presence of an intermediary group of countries could function as a moral force and play the role of bridge-builders to promote conciliation and understanding.²

2. Ibid.
Indo-British relations since independence have been characterised by a curious love-hate syndrome. However, the frequent disappointments in India's relations with Britain can be reasoned out by a certain degree of divergence in their world views as well as in their perspectives on issues of international peace and security. India, on her part, has always been opposed to the system of military alliances and has time and again criticised the extension of the western system of alliances to South-east Asia and the Middle East through the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the now defunct Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) or Baghdad Pact.3

The psychological divide created by two centuries of British imperial rule in India was, and to some extent remains, a reality. The gap widened under the pressure of international events on which both the countries differed as over the Suez crisis or the Congo problem. On South Africa's apartheid and on the question of Southern

3. Arun Kumar Banerjee, India and Britain: 1947-68 (Calcutta, 1977), pp.273-87. Indo-British Relations suffered, as for example, in 1954 when the British Foreign Office adopted a partisan attitude in the Indo-Portuguese dispute over Goa. During the Suez Crisis also, India protested against the Anglo-French military action in Suez canal in 1956 by President Gamal Abdel Nasser. There was a feeling of hurt in Britain that India, with the tacit support of the USA and the USSR fought an open diplomatic battle on behalf of Egypt against Britain.
Rhodesia's Independence, India and Britain clashed even more sharply in the Commonwealth and in the United Nations. Naturally, such disagreements have now and then embittered relations, but the awareness of a shared past and cordiality of the Commonwealth links, which was itself a product of history, have over the years, helped ease the strain and restore cooperation and friendship. Many a times it has happened that while bilateral differences persisted, cooperation on multilateral issues was manifested between the two countries.4

This divergent outlook became particularly manifest with the emergence in British politics of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Her propensity to see things in black and white has tended to project her as a kind of a 'neo-cold warrior', an image that has been reaffirmed by her continuous support for rearmament of Pakistan, especially in the wake of the Afghanistan crisis.5

Britain and India belong to different international categories; they have different approaches to the management of international conflicts and they follow


different paths to economic development. Britain is an important member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and also, along with the United States and others, belong to the 'Group of Seven'. India, on the other hand, is a founder member of the non-aligned movement. It is an important member of the 'Group of 77' and has played and continues to play an important role in the North South dialogue. Therefore, the equation between India and Britain are asymmetric and their perspective on various international issues vary. Some of the major issues that have caused certain amount of strain in Indo-British relations in the eighties were their disagreements over the question of apartheid in South Africa, the immigration problem in Britain, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the activities of the Sikh and Kashmiri militants operating from the British soil against the unity and integrity of India.6

MAJOR DISAGREEMENTS ON WORLD ISSUES

SOVIET INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN

During her visit to India in 1981, Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, in her address to the Indian

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Parliament, spoke at length on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. She said, "restraint must never be mistaken for a weakening of our resolve to protect our liberty and interests and to support our friends. The invasion of Afghanistan shocked many people into realising that moderation has not been met with moderation." While stating that the West had no desire "to return to the so called 'cold war' of the early 1950s," she called for a political solution to the problem, involving the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the neighbours of Afghanistan. 7

Britain condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an unprovoked act of aggression against an independent country, which represented a serious threat to world peace and an unprecedented development in the history of post-war Soviet expansionism. The British government's response to the Soviet aggression was set out in the House of Commons, on 14 January 1980, by the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Douglas Hurd. 8 Hurd said that Britain had fully endorsed the action taken by the UN Security Council. Besides, he announced the recall of the

British ambassador in Kabul, the ending of British aid to Afghanistan and the closure of the British Council Office in Kabul.9

The difference of opinion between Britain and India began with evaluations of the Superpower role in the Afghan crisis. Mrs. Thatcher made it clear that she was highly distrustful of the Soviet Union. She underlined the need to deter further Soviet expansionist interest. Afghanistan, she, said was a warning. It was not a very distant country that could be ignored because there was no local crisis in Europe. She also pointed out that the Soviet action was not only an affront to the West but also to the non-aligned movement.10

In a statement on Afghanistan, Mrs. Thatcher said in the Commons: "We feel deeply the terrible suffering inflicted on the people of Afghanistan as a result of the Soviet military intervention. We have given full support to the successive U.N. resolutions on Afghanistan, which call for immediate withdrawal of foreign troops, the restoration of Afghanistan's independence and non-aligned status, self-determination of the Afghan people and the return of the

9. Ibid.
refugees in safety and honour. Since January 1980, UK. has given or pledged more than £10 million of cash and food aid to Afghan refugees in Pakistan.11

Britain and India agreed that Soviet troops should quit Afghanistan but they disagreed on how this was to be brought about. In January 1980, British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, said: "Both India and Britain would like to see the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan but neither of us have a prescription to achieve this."12

On the other hand, the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi expressed her apprehensions on United States' policies. Thatcher attempted to downplay them, by insisting that President Reagan's policies were still being drafted. The British Prime Minister soft-pedalled the issue of a proposed American rapid deployment force (RDF) to protect the gulf, which India had viewed with suspicion. She declared that the force, to which she had offered a British contribution - had not been conceived in the context of the West-Asian situation generally and the Iran-Iraq war in

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On Afghanistan, both India and Britain agreed on the problem's critical nature and the need for a political solution to it. Mrs. Gandhi commented: "While we would like the Soviet troops to leave Afghanistan, we also note that it was the Afghanistan Revolutionary Council who invited the Soviets in," an assertion which was severely contested. There was also no change in the Indian position that the Soviets were not the only guilty party in Afghanistan.14

India's response to the soviet intervention in Afghanistan assumes special attention. Its initial reaction was quite positive and in tune with its policy of "genuine non-alignment". Prime Minister Charan Singh criticised the Soviet intervention and demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Afghan soil, as their

13. Salamat Ali, "The Iron Ladies Clash," Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), April 24-30, 1981, pp.34-35. Ever since the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, the USA has been eager to maintain its position in the Persian gulf region, as the region is vital to its economy, used as major share of the world's oil passes through it. The idea of a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) came about during Jimmy Carter's Presidency. For further details on this issue, see Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith : Memoirs of a President, (New York, 1982), pp.540-43.

continued presence would have adverse consequences for the entire region. However, after Mrs. Indira Gandhi assumed premiership in 1980, there was a departure from the official line initially adopted. The Indian representative at the United Nations, Brijesh Chandra Misra, told the U.N. General Assembly on 11 January 1980 that India had no reason to doubt the Soviet assertion that it had been asked by the Afghan Government for military assistance.\textsuperscript{15} He said: "We are against the presence of foreign troops and bases in any country.... India hopes that the Soviet Union will not violate the independence of Afghanistan and that Soviet forces will not remain there a day longer than necessary."\textsuperscript{16} Significantly, the Indian representative did not call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. However, the tenor of this speech appeared to be to accord tacit approval to the Soviet action and to imply that the current presence of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan was necessary.\textsuperscript{17} India abstained when a resolution calling for the "immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops in Afghanistan" was put

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} See B. Vivekanandan, "Afghanistan's Invasion Viewed from India", \textit{Asia Pacific Community} (Tokyo), Summer 1980, No.9, pp.63-82.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{The Hindu} (Madras), 13 January 1980.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Acharya Kripalani, "India's Response to Afghan event," \textit{The Hindu}, 1 February 1980.
\end{itemize}
to vote in the General Assembly. On 30 January 1980, Mrs. Gandhi told the Lok Sabha (the lower House of the Indian Parliament) that what had happened in Afghanistan was an internal affair of that country,\textsuperscript{18} and a little later she told the Paris daily \textit{Le Matin} that in Afghanistan, the Soviets "were forced to intervene"\textsuperscript{19} That was how she judged the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan on its 'merits' — a basic tenet of the policy of non-alignment.\textsuperscript{20}

The most persistent source of disharmony has been the continued British support to Pakistan's rearmament. When asked about this, Lord Carrington, British Foreign Secretary, said: "Pakistan feels that there was a danger to its Western frontier by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. They have reasons for feeling insecure and a right to augment their forces."\textsuperscript{21} But, India perceived it as an action primarily arming a hostile neighbour.

Mrs. Thatcher bluntly remarked at a press conference in New Delhi in 1981 that any country had the right and duty to defend itself, and Pakistan faced with a Soviet presence in its border (in Afghanistan) had the same right

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Hindu}, 31 January 1980.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Quoted in the \textit{The Hindu}, 4 March 1980.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Vivekanandan, n.15, p.73.
\item \textsuperscript{21} See \textit{The Guardian}, n.12.
\end{itemize}

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and obligation. Going a step ahead, she said that India had enormously increased its military potential by encouraging indigenous arms production. "You cannot deny that right to another sovereign nation," she added.22

Later, in October 1982, Francis Pym, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, said that although the UN General Assembly had three times called for the right to self-determination of the Afghan people to be respected, these requests had been ignored by the Soviet Union.23 In 1984-85, Timothy Renton, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of state, said that Britain had no substantive dealings with the Karmal Regime in Afghanistan which depended on an occupying army of over 115,000 troops. He said in the House of Commons: "We and our Community partners have repeatedly condemned that occupation, which has brought untold suffering. Since 1980, we have given over £25 million in humanitarian aid for the 4 million Afghan refugees who have fled abroad. We take every opportunity to make clear our grave concern over the gross violations of human rights in Afghanistan, a situation clearly documented by the United Nations Special

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APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

There was hardly any country or national or international organisation that extended official support to the apartheid regime in South Africa. But, it was widely believed that this regime could survive so long, until its recent dismantling, because of the covert support it received from many Western powers, specially from the United States and Britain, for economic and strategic reasons. India has been a persistent opponent of the apartheid regime in Pretoria since the inception of apartheid in 1948. As a result, this issue remained an irritant in the relations between Britain and India; which persisted in the 1980s too, particularly on the questions of imposition of economic sanctions against South Africa to force it to give up apartheid policy.

The question of imposing economic sanctions against South Africa came to a flashpoint in September 1986 when the non-aligned summit at Harare, under the chairmanship of Robert Mugabe, Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, adopted a


25. For details see Chapter I. Also see A.K. Banerji, India and Britain: 1947-68 (Calcutta, 1977), pp.155-60.
thirteen-point programme of economic sanctions against South Africa, to be applied forthwith on adoption by the U.N. Security Council of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions under the U.N. Charter. Following this at the Commonwealth Summit Conference, held at Vancouver from 13 to 16 October 1987, India's Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi warned that the only way to destroy apartheid without bloodshed was to impose comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa." The basic position of the new Conservative government, headed by Mrs Thatcher, on apartheid in South Africa was explicit in what she stated on 25 July 1979 in the Commons. She said: "The policy of apartheid, with its emphasis on separating people's nature than bringing them together, and all the harshness required to impose it on the South African population is wholly unacceptable". But, she had serious reservations in imposing economic sanctions against South Africa.

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Howe, Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, stated in the House of Commons, on 26 June 1987: "There is, however, a growing realisation


of the complexity of the problem. The difficulties of the region, both in South Africa and in neighbouring states, are hard enough; mandatory sanctions would only make matters worse. Practical measures, not empty gestures are needed. We shall go on pressing the case against violence and for dialogue, for fundamental change and for an end to apartheid." Thus, Britain, reaffirmed its commitment to the search for a peaceful solution to the problem of apartheid in South Africa and joined its partners in the European Community in calling for the total abolition of apartheid and urging a meaningful dialogue between the South African government and the leaders of the black movement. At the same time, Britain remained opposed to the imposition of economic sanctions against the Union, which it believed, would not help in the achievement of this objective. But, India held a different perception.

The issue went out of the way following the release of Nelson Mandela from imprisonment, in 1994, followed by the dismantling of the apartheid system in South Africa.

FALKLANDS

In April 1982, there arose a serious dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina over the Falklands

Islands, when Argentina forcibly occupied the islands on 2 April. Britain condemned the Argentinean action in strongest terms. As the Falkland Islands was administered by a British Governor, aided by an Executive Council, there was an imminent danger of an Anglo-Argentine confrontation over this issue. And both the countries sought the support of India (both moral and political). Basically, there was little sympathy in New Delhi for Argentina's military junta, but it was one of the few Latin-American countries, actively looking forward to a close relationship with India. Besides, due to the colonial dimension of the question, the non-aligned movement was also inclined towards Argentina.30

According to the British Government, the invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentine Armed Forces on 2 April 1982, followed by the military occupation of South Georgia, was an act of unprovoked aggression — a clear violation of international law and of the fundamental principles of settlement of disputes by peaceful means and of self determination of people, both of which are enshrined in the UN Charter. On 3 April, the UN Security Council adopted the mandatory resolution (No. 502) calling for the immediate withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Islands.

30. Malik and Robb, n.4, p.95.
British sovereignty over the Falkland islands and dependencies rested on a secure historical and legal foundation. In 1690, the British Captain Strong made the first recorded landing on the Falkland islands, which had no indigenous population before the arrival of Settlers in the second half of the eighteenth century, whereas the first Argentine claim to South Georgia dated only from 1927.  

Prior to the invasion of the Falkland islands by Argentina on 2 April 1982, successive British governments had been engaged in an effort to find a negotiated settlement to the long standing differences between Britain and Argentina over the status of the Falkland islands and their people.  

The acting British High Commissioner in Delhi at that time, Richard Samuel, sought to garner India's understanding and support for the steps that were taken by Britain to meet the situation. The government of India, in a brief statement, did not go into the merits of the dispute while voicing its expressed regret over the unfortunate incident and hoped that the dispute would be


settled peacefully. Pertinently, the 1,800 odd inhabitants of the Falkland Islands were of British stock who wanted to retain their links with the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{33}

An underlying root cause of this controversy was the expectation of vast oil deposits in the Falklands Basin. An additional factor was the growing strategic importance of these islands which are the southernmost inhabited area close to Antarctica.\textsuperscript{34}

India was critical of Argentina's use of force in occupying Falklands. At the same time, as a non-aligned country, India stood fully committed to the Columbia summit resolution of 1976, which stated: "The conference, in the special and particular case of the Malvinas Islands (Falklands), supported firmly the joint vindication of the Argentine republic and exhorted the U.K. to continue actively the negotiations recommended by the U.N. with the object of restoring the said territory to the sovereignty of Argentina and thus put an end to the illegal situation."\textsuperscript{35} Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated: "We are deeply distressed that such a thing should have taken place. We hope that even now the two countries will come

\textsuperscript{33} The Hindu, 4 April 1982.

\textsuperscript{34} The Hindu, 14 April 1982.

\textsuperscript{35} The Hindu, 7 May 1982.
down to the negotiating table. We believe that all the differences can be and should be settled through discussions and negotiations." She reiterated the need for a mutually acceptable peaceful solution through the United Nations.36

Britain welcomed India's forthright criticism of Argentina's use of force, though its abstention in the UN vote on the issue later did not give UK much satisfaction. However, the understanding New Delhi had shown later of Britain's subsequent use of force to free the island from Argentine occupation was appreciated in London. The position adopted by India later helped to mute criticism of Britain and demanded for self-determination in the Falklands in the meetings of the United Nations and the non-aligned movement.37

Francis Pym, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in an address to the Commonwealth and Overseas Council on 13 July 1982, while paying tribute to the British forces' successful military operation, said: "The aim of what had been not... to impose colonial rule on a distant outpost, but to allow to the people of Falkland

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36. Ibid.

islands the same rights as those which have been enjoyed and exercised by the many peoples which make up today's Commonwealth". 

Differing perceptions of the military situation in the Indian Ocean region

It is to be recognized that despite the decolonisation of the British empire in Asia and Africa, the Indian ocean region's importance to the British economy remains primary. The Ocean constitutes a major supply line which provided Britain with about 40 per cent of its oil, 50 percent of food imports and a very large portion of its raw materials, petroleum and minerals. 

In a strategic sense, the Indian Ocean region assumed exceptional importance in the 1970s. The oil crisis of 1973 and its ramifications affected many countries of the world. The industrial nations of the West saw how, in an economic war, the oil in the Middle East and the Gulf would be used as a weapon against all the oil dependent countries, whether in the East or in the West.

38. Ibid.


Partly due to these important interests in the region, when a long standing rival like the Soviet Union increased its naval activities in the Indian Ocean from 1968 onwards. Britain took certain counter measures. The expansion of Deigo Garcia, located a thousand miles away from the Indian shores, jointly by the United Kingdom and the United States into a major naval communication centre in the 1970s was criticised by India. Subsequently, New Delhi launched a vehement campaign against the subsequent upgrading of Deigo Garcia into a naval base in particular, and the enhanced Anglo-American presence in the Indian Ocean in general.  

But, the same vehemence was conspicuous by its absence in its reference to the Soviet naval activities, or to the base facilities it enjoyed, in the Indian Ocean. This led to certain criticism in Britain that the Indian attitude was biased in favour of the Soviet Union.  

India has called for the declaration of the Indian Ocean region as a "Zone of Peace" by the world community; but Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, during her visit to India in April 1981, rejected the demand, and said:

Every one wants a peace zone. The fact is each and every nation has to defend itself and I do not see the circumstances under which it can be a

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
peace zone at the moment. At a time, when you have got the forces of the Soviet Union within such a short distance of the straits of Hormuz through which a major portion of the world's oil supply comes, we must, I think, have the right to defend ships of our countries in getting goods which are absolutely vital. 43

The 1960s had left another legacy for future discord between India and Britain - the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The treaty was the Great Powers' response — in which Britain had played a leading role — to India's search for protection against the nuclear threat from China which had tested a nuclear weapon in 1964. The big powers proposed perpetual nuclear ban on the non-nuclear powers. When India conducted the peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974, in written answers to questions in the House of Commons on 24 May, 1974, David Ennals, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth office, said that the explosion had "introduced a new factor with world and regional implications". He went on to say that "it reinforces the need to assure wider acceptance of a non-proliferation treaty to which her Majesty's government continue to attach the greatest importance." 44

43. Chopra, n.s, pp.179-81. For a full report on the interview of Mrs. Thatcher, see Times of India (Bombay), 8 April 1981.

With their different geographic circumstances and cultural backgrounds and varying, though not always conflicting, security and other interests, Britain and India are bound to have different perspectives on many international issues. They have had divergent perceptions over the Kashmir issue, where India held a perception that Britain was biased towards Pakistan and had many a times allowed USA's anti-Soviet Strategic alignment with Pakistan to operate in ways which were inimical to India's security interests. 45

British policy on the Kashmir question was set out on in a statement made on 27 February 1991 by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the FCO, Mark Lennox-Boyd. He said: "Our policy has not changed. Our position remains that the dispute over the status of Kashmir should be settled peacefully between the governments of India and Pakistan, by whatever means are mutually agreed between them. We have offered to help in this if both sides would like us to do so."46

Another point of discord between the two countries was

the human rights question. Some misplaced doubts have been raised in Britain about India's record on human rights.

In his inaugural address to the conference on Indo-British Relations, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, the Indian Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, said that in an effort to combat terrorism, the role of human rights organisations was very important. The brutal denial of even the right to existence to innocent human beings by terrorist groups deserved to be condemned by all and sundry. India had faced criticism in the recent past from human rights organisations and some sections of the international media, on alleged violations by the Indian security forces in Kashmir. He also mentioned that it was quite inexplicable that these same agencies did not bring to public notice the atrocities unleashed on the populations in Punjab and Kashmir by the extremist groups. India's constitutional and legal system enshrined a strong commitment to human rights. He contended that India has an open society, with a free press and an independent judiciary with extensive powers of judicial review and that India was pained by the exaggerated and unverified accusations of human rights violations from certain organisations whose methodology is seriously flawed and who look upon India simply as a target for their campaigns which bring them publicity. These very organisations have shown a marked reluctance to condemn the
human rights violations perpetrated by the terrorists.\textsuperscript{47}

He further stated that India is involved in a political process in Kashmir which would ensure a democratic and secular solution to the problems in that state. This has been complicated by the arming and training of terrorist groups in that state from across India's national borders. He said that India was determined that terrorists would not have a final say in Kashmir, and equally determined that a peaceful and democratic solution should be reached in the state within the framework of the Indian Constitution.\textsuperscript{48}

The most persistent source of friction has been Britain's relations with Pakistan and its perceptions on the human rights situation in Kashmir. India has repeatedly expressed its concern over the arming of Pakistan saying that it seriously upset the regional strategic balance;\textsuperscript{49} while Britain says that it is necessary in global east-west terms. One of the human rights organisations, Amnesty International based in London, had some unpalatable comments and observations in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{47} S.B. Chavan, Inaugural address to the conference on Indo-British Relations, SOAS, London, 21-23 September 1992. In Malik and Robb, n.4, pp. xiv-xvi.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Barber, n.14, pp.134-38.
\end{itemize}

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its annual report on human rights violations in troubled Kashmir, which definitely pained the Indians. 50

Notwithstanding the divergent approaches of the two countries on several international issues, there are some grey areas where the policies of these two countries found convergence. For nearly several years now, Sri Lanka has been witnessing ethnic strife with grave effects in the adjoining areas in India. After several mediatory attempts made by India, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India and President Jayawardane of Sri Lanka concluded an accord in July 1987, after consultations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to diffuse the crisis and restore peace. The British government extended its support to the accord and provided assistance to the tune of £20 million in support of a three year programme of reconstruction in Sri Lanka. This was in addition to the relief assistance agreed to in September 1987. 51

Quite apart from these divergences, as just noted, Indo-British relations in the eighties have also been plagued by concerns which are legacies of the empire as well as ramifications of the delicate problems of nation

51. Chopra, n.5, pp.181-82.
building in the sub-continent. In other words, they have a distinctive bilateral stamp about them.

ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN IN THE 80S

The issues pertaining to the treatment of Indian immigrants in Britain and the problem of Sikh and Kashmiri militants conducting anti-India campaigns from British soil had overshadowed and to some extent enbittered the otherwise stable course of Indo-British relations during the period between 1979 and 91.

PROBLEMS OF IMMIGRANTS

Problems of about one million people of Indian origin in Britain have been an important issue in Indo-British relations. Most of these problems arose from certain instances of harassments of Indian immigrants by the immigration officials at Britain's entry points like the Heathrow airport in London. The virginity test marked the high point of this harassment. Added to this was the recurring harassment of the Indian immigrants by small right wing extremist groups in Britain. India, both at the official and unofficial levels, was very much concerned about these happenings. At the same time one cannot gloss

over certain social problems which arose out of the concentration of Indian immigrants in certain areas like Southall, for example, in Britain. This has also caused certain amount of uneasiness and tension between the local population and the immigrants, which had also arrested the integration process of the migrant Indian population with the British society. These are in addition to other socio-economic problems like housing and reduction of employment opportunities in Britain. 53

However, the issue of immigration and nationality was sought to be given a comprehensive character by the Thatcher government in its Nationality Bill of 1981, some points of which were of great concern to India. A typical example of it was the provision relating to the entitlement of children born in the UK to acquire British citizenship by birth. 54 As per the Nationality Bill, this was to depend on the immigrant status of parents i.e., parents should be legally settled in the UK. Secondly, as per this law, citizenship by descent to children born overseas will apply to only those children whose parents were British citizens born in the UK. Thirdly, there was the possibility of a large number of British passport holders in India and other

countries becoming British overseas citizens under this law and not having right of abode in England.55

During her visit to India, in April 1981, Mrs. Thatcher said that the British Nationality Bill was introduced because immigrants "were growing and their numbers had to be limited." She tried to allay the anxieties associated with the Bill, and frequently reiterated the stand that as a small country, Britain could not afford to go on taking people and also pointed out the social and law and order problems associated with it in the United Kingdom.56

Various harassments meted out to Indian immigrants in the terms of virginity tests, bone x-rays to determine children's ages, etc., were widely known to have occurred in Heathrow airport. But this dimension of race relations has now found yet another manifestation. The Sunday Observer of London carried the sensational disclosure of how some British medical clinics have sterilised immigrant women patients without their knowledge. While such abuses deserved condemnation in the strongest terms, an issue of greater concern to India was the "racist aspects" of the

56. The Times (London), 18 April 1981.
British Nationality Bill.\textsuperscript{57} Another sore feature of the Nationality Bill of 1981 from the Indian point of view, was the extensive and unlimited powers granted to the immigration officials at entry points to Britain. A person could appeal against the immigration officer, only after he has left the country by the first available flight or has been deported. Besides, the appeal procedures were expensive, arduous and complicated.\textsuperscript{58}

However, the British government assured India that the right of British passport holders living in India and waiting for special vouchers for settlement in the UK would not be affected with the enactment of the Bill. In her address to the members of the Indian Parliament on 16 April 1981, Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher said:

The British government, like its predecessors, is committed to creating a racially just and harmonious society. We are committed to ensuring that there are equal opportunities for all our people, regardless of their race, background or national origin. Whatever the difficulties — and the last few days have shown that they are very real — we shall stick to that commitment. It is reflected in our new law on nationality. On this, first let me make clear that like every other country, Britain must reserve to herself the right to decide on the rules governing this right to citizenship. There is nothing in the proposed law


\textsuperscript{58} The \textit{Times of India}, 29 December 1987.
which discriminates against any racial or national group. It will not affect adversely the position under immigration law of anyone who is settled in the United Kingdom. Those Indian citizens settled in Britain who have not yet exercised their entitlement to register as British citizens will still have several years to exercise that entitlement if they wish. Even after this transition period they will be able to acquire British citizenship by naturalisation. Alternatively, they will be entirely free to retain their Indian citizenship, with their right to live in Britain unchanged. The existing rights of British passport holders to enter the United Kingdom will also not be adversely affected. 59

In an answer to how many people are awaiting entry certificates at each British High Commission in the Indian sub-continent, the answer was - 60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>India</th>
<th>No. of persons waiting decision on application on 31st March '81</th>
<th>Months waited by a person interviewed at the end of first quarter '81</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>1,590</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>1,610</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the last hundred years, Britain has most often been an exporter of population. Since 1964, migration figures are available from the International Passenger


Survey (IPS) which is a sample survey conducted by the office of population censuses and surveys, covering all the principal air and sea routes between the United Kingdom and overseas. The statistics below provides an idea about the immigration to the United Kingdom.61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration in 1978 to UK (in 1,000) from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka</th>
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<td>Into-UK</td>
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<th>Migration in 1982 (in 1,000) from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka</th>
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<td>Into-UK</td>
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<th>Migration in 1983 (in 1,000) from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Into-UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration in 1984 (in 1,000) from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Into-UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Into-UK (in 1,000)</th>
<th>Out of UK (in 1,000)</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>+.9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+16.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A look into the following statistics of Indian citizens deported and persons in India refused entry clearances from 1979 to 1984 will give an idea of the position. 62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indian citizens deported</th>
<th>Persons in India refused entry clearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A new element in the situation was introduced when, on 1 September 1986, the British government made entry visas for visitors from India, Bangladesh Nigeria, Ghana and Pakistan, obligatory, which had the potentiality to adversely affect Indo-British relations."63 The British Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, maintained that modifications in the immigration rules had been necessitated by congestion at the principal points of entry into the U.K.64 Furthermore, there has been a new official pronouncement that immigrants may be required to declare their ethnic origin in the national census of 1991.65

65. Ibid.
In an interview to the Times of India, on 5 December 1988, Margaret Thatcher, responding to a question that the immigration laws under her rule had given the impression that New Commonwealth citizens were being discriminated against, even if they had legitimate rights to enter or live in Britain, replied: "We have only one set of immigration rules and these are applied equally to all nationalities worldwide. Like many other countries we take the view that it is wrong for someone here to marry simply in order to get another person into the country. Marriage is a sacred institution not a loophole in our immigration laws." 66

The issue of immigration and the treatment of Indian immigrants in Britain was a major irritant in the relationship between India and Britain. Time and again, Britain's stringent immigration rules and measures have come under severe and strong criticism from the Indian Government in particular and the other South Asian countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan in general.

The extension of visa requirements and the immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987, underlined the governments' determination to maintain an orderly immigration system, equitably administered and operated in a humane and compassionate way. 67

ACTIVITIES OF THE SIKH AND KASHMIRI MILITANTS IN BRITAIN

SIKH MILITANCY

A serious problem that had plagued Indo-British relations in the 1980s and early 1990s concerned the activities of the Sikh militants directed against India from British soil. Since the early 1980s, the Sikh problem in India had acquired international dimensions, particularly involving Britain, Canada and the United States. In Britain, there are about 3,00,000 Sikhs, who are divided into two groups — the moderates and the extremists. While the former favour peaceful solution to the Sikh demands through negotiations within the framework of the Indian Constitution, the extremists support the idea of an independent 'Khalistan'.

In the mid 1980s, there was a sudden growth in support for Sikh nationalism and the concept of Khalistan among the Sikhs living in Britain. This was a direct result of the 'Operation Bluestar' in Punjab in 1984, to flush out terrorists from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination later in 1984. The problem thus got transcended into countries like UK, USA and Canada.

68. Chopra, n.5, pp. 176-77.
where a large number of Sikhs were settled. It assumed serious dimensions in those areas of Britain where these settlers were concentrated - Southall and Midlands. A handful of vocal extremist Sikhs in these areas indulged in violence against moderate Sikhs and other Indians.  

The serious rift between the two groups had resulted in a number of killings, particularly of the moderates, and thereby creating a law and order problem in the United Kingdom. The militancy had also been serious enough to have endangered the lives of the top and medium ranking Indian diplomats serving in Britain and also of the Indian dignitaries visiting Britain. The killing of the Indian diplomat, Ravindra Mhatre, in Birmingham in 1984 and the murder of the British deputy High Commissioner in Bombay, Percy Norris, on his way to office in November 1984 was condemned in the strongest possible terms in the House of Commons.  

Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the self-styled President of Khalistan operating from the United Kingdom, co-ordinated his activities with those like minded Sikhs in the United States and Canada. Khalistani 'passports' and even

69. Malik and Robb, n.4, pp. 45-47.
'currencies' were issued. The extremists, interviewed on British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), often used threatening language against the Indian leaders. With the result, India had to approach the British government to take appropriate steps to cut the activities of the Sikh militants. During the visit, in April 1986, of the British foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe, to India, India's Foreign Minister, B.R. Bhagat, told Howe: "It is difficult for our people to understand how a small group of such elements in the United Kingdom can operate openly in the country." He also added that despite cooperation in some fields, a cloud hung over Indo-British relations. 71

There is a wide gap in the perceptions of Delhi and London over the questions of the treatment of Sikh extremists in UK. The Indian perception was that the Britain had not shown adequate understanding of the seriousness of the Punjab crisis and lacked the political will to control the Sikh extremists in Britain. The British government, on the other hand, claimed that it did appreciate the gravity of the situation, but that the Indian Government failed to appreciate the steps which were taken, the limits within which the British Government operated and that India exaggerated the role played by external forces in

71. Ibid.
the Punjab crisis. 72

Michael Foot, Labour leader, in a letter to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, made an attempt to bridge the diplomatic rift between India and Britain on this question. However, there remained a lot of misgivings at the inaction against the Sikh terrorists operating from the British soil. Meanwhile, a £100 million contract for the British Aerospace to supply eight Harrier jets to the Indian Navy and a £85 million contract for Westland Helicopters had been held up. 73 In the circumstances, a proposed visit of Michael Heseltine, Secretary of Defence to New Delhi got postponed indefinitely. The official reason given for the postponement was that the Indian Minister of Defence would be too busy in the elections, though the real reason was the displeasure at Britain's apparent refusal to curb the activities of the Sikh militants in Britain. 74

The Indian Government was especially angry over the British Governments' inaction over the question of expelling Jagjit Singh Chouhan, the militant Sikh leader, or put pressure on him to curb his activities. As he was a British citizen, he could not be deported. A direct fallout was

72. Ibid.


the Indian Government's cancellation of two defence sales exhibitions and a visit to India by Norman Lamont, the British Minister of Industry.\textsuperscript{75}

From an Indian perspective, it is easy to understand the concern about Sikh extremists. They have conducted a terrorist campaign of appalling ferocity claiming many lives within Punjab, and driving thousands of Hindus from their homes, assassinating Indira Gandhi and then blowing up a Jumbo jet with the loss of those aboard. Terrorism continued as the Indian Governments' efforts to find a solution to the problem had been foiled. Three Sikhs were also arrested for plotting to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister, during his visit to Britain in October 1985. Simultaneously, a fierce power struggle took place in Britain between the moderates and the extremists for the control of the Sikh temples in Britain which provided access to spiritual and financial power.\textsuperscript{76}

During her visit to India, in April 1985, Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher faced an icy atmosphere, with the Indian Government still deeply irritated with Britain over its lackadaisical attitude towards curbing Sikh terrorism and containing the activities of the Sikh militants

\textsuperscript{75} Financial Times (London), 24 December 1984.
\textsuperscript{76} U.K., Commons, Debates, n.59.
operating from the British soil. However, Mrs. Thatcher and her government had repeatedly maintained that under British laws, Jagjit Singh Chouhan and his accomplices had not broken the law and, therefore, there was no basis in law for legal proceedings against them. 77 The British Government had been referring to the Immigration Act of 1971 to show that under its provisions, it had no authority to deport the extremist leader, as he had been a resident of Britain since January 1973 and was a British citizen, and had not really broken the British law. 78

The estranged relations between India and Britain, especially in the mid-eighties, was the result of what was seen by India as Britain's inability, for whatever reasons, to give a positive evidence of its desire to curb the activities of the so-called Khalistanis in UK. The Indian Government's repeated protests at the unhindered anti-Indian activities of Jagjit Singh Chouhan and his handful of accomplices, who as per Britain's own admission are a 'tiny minority', appeared to have elicited no worthwhile reaction from Mrs. Thatcher's Government. The British Governments' failure to act on the ground that its hands were tied under

the existing British law was viewed in New Delhi as total insensitivity to a serious Indian problem. 79

However, in September 1986, proposals were mooted for a bilateral extradition treaty between the two countries. An extradition treaty was something that the Indian Government was pressing for long, ever since New Delhi realised that the British Government was not doing enough to combat terrorist activities in Britain. 80

In an exclusive interview to a leading Indian newspaper, Times of India, Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher stated that those who were indulging in terrorist activity in Britain, or even raising funds to assist terrorist causes in India, were abusing Britain's hospitality and that her government was determined to exercise and tighten control over funds apparently sent out to terrorist activities. She said that the British Government would introduce legislation outlining stronger measures against terrorism funding. 81 She reiterated that since the BBC was an independent broadcasting corporation, she or her government had no control over it and that merely banning an organisation was

79. Ibid.
81. See BIS-B240, n.66. - for full text of the interview.
not enough, it made the problem worse.\textsuperscript{82}

President R. Venkataraman's visit to Britain, in April 1990, took place in the middle of an upswing in Indo-British relations, after several years of coolness over the activity of the Sikh separatists in the wake of the Operation Bluestar.\textsuperscript{83} In early 1991, attempts were in progress, and in February 1992, drafts were finalised and the Indian Home Minister S.B. Chavan went to London in September 1992 to sign the Extradition Treaty on 22 September 1992. On 15 November 1993, the British foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and his counterpart in India, Dinesh Singh, exchanged instruments of ratification of the bilateral extradition treaty and signed the agreement on terrorist funds.\textsuperscript{84}

**KASHMIRI MILITANTS:**

Kashmir was an important issue in Indo-British relations during the years following 1947 and allegations were raised from Indian quarters, that there was a distinct pro-Pakistani bias in the British governments' policies and pronouncements over Kashmir, which frequently disturbed

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\textsuperscript{82. Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{83. The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 14 April 1990.}

\textsuperscript{84. Cmd 2095 (London, 1992), pp. 2-5.}
Indo-British relations. 85

The Kashmir issue became an irritant in Indo-British relations again in 1984, when a group, claiming to be members of the so-called "Kashmir Liberation Army" kidnapped and killed the Birmingham based Indian diplomat, Ravindra Mhatre, on 5 February 1984. The terrorists demanded a ransom of £1 million and the release of the "Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front" (JKLF) leader, Mohammed Maqbool Butt, and some of his accomplices. 86 The militants, members of the JKLF, allegedly wanted to publicise their fight for independence for Jammu and Kashmir and to bring pressure on the Indian Government to free Maqbool Butt who has since been executed. 87

As an extension of disputes between the Sikhs and others in India, there have been twelve serious crimes in England, including arson attacks on Hindu temples, attacks on moderate Sikhs including one member and a plot to assassinate the Indian prime minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, during his trip to London in October 1985, which led to a number of lengthy prison sentences. The murder of the assistant High Commissioner in Birmingham, Mr. Ravindra

85. Banerji, n.3, For Details, see esp. pp.86-130.
86. Times of India (Bombay), 7 February 1984.
Mhatre by Kashmiri militants had introduced a new sphere of tension and crime.\textsuperscript{88}

According to the British police, the Pakistan Government expressed its inability to locate the murderers, who had escaped to Pakistan. The Indian side thereafter argued that if the British government had seriously put pressure on the Pakistan Government, headed by Zia-ul-Huq, whose military regime was, by and large, surviving on the "goodwill" and 'help' from the West, the accused could have been found and sent back to Britain to face charges.\textsuperscript{89} This episode of the killing of the Indian diplomat by pro-Pakistani terrorists on the British soil had obviously caused strain on Indo-British relations.

However, one positive development from the British side was the extradition of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader, Amanullah Khan, who escaped thereafter to Pakistan and has since been carrying on subversive activities, detrimental to the unity and integrity of India, from the Pakistani soil and, in the process, has turned the Kashmir Valley into a 'veritable tinderbox' with the tacit support of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{88} Cm 264 (London, 1987), pp.2-6.
\textsuperscript{89} Indian Express (New Delhi), 9 January 1985.
\textsuperscript{90} The Times of India (New Delhi), 23 December 1986.
India felt that the general lack of action by British government against both the Sikh and Kashmiri militants was deliberate. It cited the unhindered entry of extremist Sikhs and Kashmiris to Britain. However, both India and Britain realised the importance of better bilateral relations. Indeed, with a population of over a million people of Indian origin in Britain, good relations with Britain will go a long way to attract British business and industry which is a valuable source of transfer of technology and investment, to India.91

Relations with Britain hit rock bottom when Indian Foreign Minister, P. Shivshankar, visited London in 1986 and protested over the presence in Sri Lanka of the British trained mercenaries, hired by the Sri Lankan Government to train security forces in operations against Tamil militants. The men were employees of a Channel Islands based company, Keeny Meeny Services (KMS) and their presence in Sri Lanka was no secret. But this was the first time that their activities were discussed at the level of Foreign Ministers.92 However, the British Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe's argument that the KMS was a private company, 

91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
over which the government had little control, was not well received by the Indian Government. Shivshankar replied that KMS trained bodyguards are used to protect British embassies at Amman and Beirut and this implied a much closer relationship between KMS and Whitehall than British officials cared to admit.93

CONCLUSION: In an interview, with an Indian newspaper, Mrs. Thatcher, when asked to comment on the unusual 'love-hate' relationship between India and Britain, said: "Antagonism is a strong word and I am certainly not aware of any on our side - on the contrary, there is deep affection for India. Of course, we sometimes differ in our views. But as two well established democracies, each used to accommodating a wide range of different opinions, such differences should be perfectly manageable without disturbing our overall relations." On overall Indo-British relations, during the period of her tenure as the Prime Minister of Britain, she said: "We are on the right track. Relations between the two countries are now active and cordial. Let's hope they will be even better in the future".94

The recent proposal to abolish visas for British passport holders wishing to travel to India will go a long way.

93. Ibid.
94. See BIS-B240, n.66, for full text of the interview.
way in cementing ties between the two countries, which for the last decade has been plagued by issues such as immigration, Sikh and Kashmiri extremism etc. 95

President R. Venkataraman's visit to Britain in April 1990 had strengthened the relations between the two countries. The following excerpt from a speech he made during this visit conveys the deep appreciation and goodwill shared by the Indian people for Britain and the British people: "Westminster is not just a place but is a synonym for a type of parliamentary democracy. With it goes a belief in the rule of law and respect for human beings," he said. "From Britain, these human values have spread to many parts of the world, including India, and have established firm roots. This is the most significant of the many links between our two countries." 96

Ties between India and Britain reached a very high level in 1992 when the two countries shed past suspicions to display an increasing convergence of views on a range of crucial issues. The upturn and upswing in relations - was the signing of the Extradition Treaty on the extradition of terrorists and criminals and the confiscation of the assets of the drug traffickers between India and Britain, on 22

95. Indian Express (New Delhi), 18 April 1990.
96. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 14 April 1990.
September 1992, and an agreement to confiscate terrorist and drug related funds — twin measures that were expected to strike at the heart of anti — Indian activity in Britain. 97

A brief extract from a speech by Sir David Goodall, GCMG, British High Commissioner in India on Indo-U.K. relations and emerging prospects in the context of 1992, amply provides evidence of Indo-British relationship in the decade 1980-90. He said: "The relationship between our two countries is, I think, now deeper and broader than at any time since 1947. Nearly, a million Indians have made their home in Britain and are making a major contribution to our national life. The relationship has moved into new areas such as the fight against terrorism, in which we now have closer and effective cooperation. It has moved into the fight against drugs. As the problems we face have been internationalised, our response to them has required international cooperation, helping each other. Increasingly, we are discovering that India and Britain are proving to be helpful and effective partners." 98

97. *Cmnd 2095* and *Cmnd 2131* (London, 1992), pp.2-6 and pp.1-7 respectively.