



Mapping the End of Empire: American and British Strategic Visions in the Postwar World

By Aiyaz Husain

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By the end of World War II, strategists in Washington and London looked ahead to a new era in which the United States shouldered global responsibilities and Britain concentrated its regional interests more narrowly. The two powers also viewed the Muslim world through very different lenses. *Mapping the End of Empire* reveals how Anglo-American perceptions of geography shaped postcolonial futures from the Middle East to South Asia.

Aiyaz Husain shows that American and British postwar strategy drew on popular notions of geography as well as academic and military knowledge. Once codified in maps and memoranda, these perspectives became foundations of foreign policy. In South Asia, American officials envisioned an independent Pakistan blocking Soviet influence, an objective that outweighed other considerations in the contested Kashmir region. Shoring up Pakistan meshed perfectly with British hopes for a quiescent Indian subcontinent once partition became inevitable. But serious differences with Britain arose over America's support for the new state of Israel. Viewing the Mediterranean as a European lake of sorts, U.S. officials--even in parts of the State Department--linked Palestine with Europe, deeming it a perfectly logical destination for Jewish refugees. But British strategists feared that the installation of a Jewish state in Palestine could incite Muslim ire from one corner of the Islamic world to the other.

As Husain makes clear, these perspectives also influenced the Dumbarton Oaks Conference and blueprints for the UN Security Council and shaped French and Dutch colonial fortunes in the Levant and the East Indies.

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Editorial Review

Review

Rarely, yet certainly occasionally, an author's first book rises above a learned but specialized monograph. Aiyaz Husain's *Mapping the End of Empire* marks an original point in the literature on British and American territorial aims during and after the Second World War... Though his book does not significantly alter conclusions by earlier historians, it sheds fresh light, especially on American cartography of the era, virtually fusing the disciplines of history and geography. (William Roger Louis, *Journal of British Studies* 2015-06-05)

[**Husain**] presents a convincing case in arguing that Britain, exhausted and virtually bankrupted by World War II, was more than happy to try to exchange its actual empire for an 'informal empire' based on the British Commonwealth?if only it could persuade the richer, fresher, more ambitious United States to take up new global responsibilities... Having spent a quarter of its national wealth fighting fascism, an exhausted Great Britain handed on the baton to the United States in democracy's great relay race, and America caught it deftly despite communist threats in Turkey, Greece, Italy and even France. By the 1990s, it had destroyed European communism. Today, America may be exhausted, but there's no other nation capable of picking up the baton in the struggles with state-capitalist China and expansionist Russia... *Mapping the End of Empire* shows us how anarchy was?with some horrific exceptions, such as in the Punjab and Northwest Frontier of India in 1947-48?generally avoided the last time around. (Andrew Roberts *Wall Street Journal* 2014-04-18)

Mapping the End of Empire is a valuable contribution to the literature on international history of the post-war period?one that brings out the strategic impact of perceptions of geography and their value for comparative historical analysis. (Suparna Banerjee *The Hindu* 2014-07-01)

This is an original and provocative book... **Husain** has given us a subtle and persuasive examination of how geographical knowledge and geographically based perceptions of interests fostered different and conflicting world views in Washington and London as the East-West conflict deepened and the process of European imperial retreat began in earnest... Husain's study provides a sophisticated template for those seeking to explore further the signal roles of geography and mental maps in shaping modern international history. (W. Taylor Fain *American Historical Review* 2015-04-01)

A significant and original history that illuminates the divergences between British and American foreign policy in the early years after the Second World War, when these two powers' 'competitive cooperation' was a crucial influence on the emerging world order. **Husain** makes a powerful and convincing case for integrating the crisis over Kashmir in 1948 and 1949 into our larger examination of Anglo-American policy in the Middle East. (John Darwin, author of *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain*)

Husain intervenes powerfully in the literature on the European empires' end with a careful and attentive reconstruction of the different American and British mental maps that shaped U.S. and British policies toward the 'Muslim world.' Deeply conceived and beautifully composed, this book is a vital contribution to our understanding of the roots of the modern-day atlas, and of the ways that many of the lines drawn on it after World War II created more vexing and intractable problems than they solved. (Jason C. Parker, author of *Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962*)

About the Author

Aiyaz Husain is a historian specializing in British imperial history and global history. He holds a bachelor's degree in History from Yale University and a PhD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Mapping the End of Empire: American and British Strategic Visions in the Postwar World (Harvard University Press, 2014) is his first book. His articles and reviews have appeared in the *American Journal of International Law*, the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Cold War History*, and *The Boston Globe*. He lives in Washington, DC and is a devout supporter of F.C. Inter Milan.

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