

## VACATION DIPLOMACY AND BUSINESS FRACAS: GENERAL SIR DOUGLAS GRACEY'S TOURS OF VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, AND PAKISTAN, IN 1951

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**Abstract:** When General Sir Douglas Gracey retired from the British Army in 1951, he embarked upon two overseas trips to areas in which he had formerly served. The first was to Vietnam and Cambodia (French Indo-China). The second was to Pakistan. Whether or not the invitation to Indo-China was at the behest of the French Government or merely a personal invitation from the French High Commissioner was irrelevant. In the context of the Cold War and the growing communist insurrection in Vietnam the visit proved of great interest to both the British Foreign Office and the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the British War Office. A retired British General surveying the region was the perfect mode of displaying soft power vacation diplomacy – unofficial, deniable, but informative. However, in the context of South Asian decolonisation and the recent Kashmir War between India and Pakistan, the proposed trip to Pakistan proved to be much more problematic and provoked grave concern within the British Commonwealth Relations Office. A retired British General engaged in business affairs in the region fed the paranoia of both Indian and Pakistani Governmental officials for whom the consequences of the partition of India and Pakistan still reverberated throughout the region. In such circumstances retired British officers, who were engaged in private business functions, was a rather imperfect model of soft power diplomacy, which was fraught with accusations, speculation, and counteraccusations.

**Keywords:** General Sir Douglas Gracey; Vietnam; Cambodia; the First Vietnam War; the First Kashmir War; India; Kashmir; Pakistan

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