**[Unbreakable bond](https://www.dawn.com/news/1433446/unbreakable-bond)**

[Sajid Javid](https://www.dawn.com/authors/8080/sajid-javid)September 17, 2018

PAKISTAN has a very special place in my heart. My parents spent the early part of their lives here, meeting as teenagers in Punjab before getting married.

After the Second World War, they decided to make a new life for themselves in the UK. Despite having just £1 to their name, they were welcomed with open arms and given the opportunity to make a success of their lives.

They built a loving and happy home for me and my four brothers — instilling in us the strong values they had been taught from their elders in Punjab.

Many of my relatives still live in this vibrant country and every time I return it feels incredibly welcoming.

The story of my parents demonstrates the special relationship I personally have with Pakistan — but also the strong historical links the country and its people have with Britain.

Around 1.5 million British people can trace their origins to Pakistan — more than any other country in the world and more than the rest of Europe combined.

And British people of Pakistani descent play a huge role in British public life.

*The close links between the UK and Pakistan are unique.*

I am immensely proud to sit as a member of parliament alongside 11 men and women of Pakistani heritage.

This week’s visit is my first to Pakistan in my role as home secretary — a great privilege considering my family’s humble origins.

What is clear is that our two countries have an unbreakable bond — and Britain is committed to Pakistan’s long-term stability and prosperity.

The UK is the biggest development aid donor in Pakistan — more than any other country or organisation — and we give more than double that of the rest of the European Union member states put together.

Our investment has put millions of boys and girls into school and has supported the development of hundreds of teachers and university academics.

Our aid has also given millions of people clean water and has improved nutrition for many more.

The UK is also one of Pakistan’s biggest trading partners and has just overtaken China to become the country’s second largest export market.

We are the third largest source of foreign direct investment — and with Pakistan selling more to the UK than it buys, our trading relationship is of significant benefit to your economy.

Our special relationship has seen the UK and Pakistan stand shoulder to shoulder over the last 71 years and we will continue to be by your side while the country continues to grow and develop.

With that future cooperation in my mind, I will be discussing during my visit how the UK leaving the EU will change our relationship.

Leaving the EU gives us the opportunity to strengthen our relations with historical partners — especially old friends and members of the Commonwealth like Pakistan.

And going forward, you will see even more cooperation on trade, on legal cooperation and diplomatic coordination.

The UK has always been Pakistan’s biggest champion in Europe and that will continue after Brexit.

We have promised to maintain the same levels of preferential access to UK markets that Pakistan receives under the EU’s GSP-Plus scheme. The UK has also doubled to £400m its export credit to UK companies to do business in Pakistan.

As home secretary, I am, of course, responsible for security — and it is vital our two nations continue to work together to tackle the shared threats we face.

Discussing how we can cooperate to crack down on organised crime, terrorism, corruption and illegal migration will be high on the agenda this week.

We are also wor­king together to crack down on flows of illicit finance — which is as much of a priority to the UK as it is for Pakistan.

Let me be clear — this great country I know so well has immeasurable potential and is brimming with creativity and energy.

With sensible economic policies, universal education and investment in infrastructure Pak­istan can claim its role as a great Asian power.

To give Pakistan’s people the best chance will require opening the country up to more investment, continuing to improve the security situation and making Pakistan an easier place to do business.

Longer-term investment in education, health and the environment is essential to ensure the potential of this youthful population is not wasted.

The close links between the UK and Pakistan are unique.

No other country has so many people of Pakistani heritage, invests so much in Pakistan, has such significant financial links and such a wide range of bilateral cooperation.

We will continue to build on that relationship with the new government to deliver greater prosperity, security and opportunity to both our two countries.

The writer is the British home secretary.

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