

WINSTON 'HANGING HAIRY FROM A BRANCH':  
THE CREATION, DISSIMINATION AND VALIDITY OF A DUAL PORTRAIT OF WINSTON  
CHURCHILL AS BOTH RATIONAL AND PRESCIENT CONCERNING WORLD WAR TWO AND AN  
IRRATIONAL REACTIONARY TO INDIAN NATIONALISM

by

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## **DEDICATION**

For my parents.

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## ABSTRACT

A dual portrait of Winston Churchill exists in contemporaneous and historical commentary. Churchill is viewed as irrational and fossilized in his attitudes toward India during the interwar and wartime periods yet as a great and prescient war leader. Current interpretations of Churchill's India policies do not provide an accurate picture of Churchill's strategic worldview. Churchill's goals and tactics concerning imperial control over India were more in line with an earlier exploitative Victorian era view of Empire. Yet Churchill's public defense of Britain's Empire emphasized the virtuous justification of Empire. Churchill's disingenuous rhetoric combined with negative aspects of Churchill's personality to create an inaccurate contemporary negative portrait of Churchill that has been insufficiently challenged in historical scholarship. The dual portraits concerning Indian independence and the 'Gathering Storm' of World War Two are vitally linked to Churchill's historical pessimism, strategic realism, and British-centric worldview, and are not so divergent.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CHAR	Winston Churchill papers, Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge
TNA	The National Archives of the UK, Kew, London
<i>WSC</i>	<i>Winston S. Churchill 1874-1965</i> , editor, Martin Gilbert

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Winston Churchill's attitude toward Empire in general, and India in particular, has often been the subject of derisive criticism from both his contemporaries and historians. A man so highly esteemed for his far-sighted prediction of, and tenacious defence against, Nazi aggression was often condemned for his supposedly irrational, outmoded and childish contemporaneous positions and policies toward Indian independence. It is not immediately evident why the portrait of an irrational and fossilized Churchill in his dealings with India during the interwar and wartime periods is at such great variance with the portrait of the great and prescient leader during the same period. Often the reasons given to explain the negative interpretation of Churchill's India policy do not provide a fully accurate picture of Churchill's personality and motivations. In a 1943 draft of a never delivered speech to parliament, Churchill wrote, "For the ten years before the war, I have warned our British people against Hitler and Gandhi."<sup>1</sup> While it is shocking to the modern eye to see Adolf Hitler and Mahatma Gandhi linked together in infamy as threats to Britain and its Empire, it is strongly indicative of where to look for a more accurate picture of the reasoning behind Churchill's position on India. The two divergent portraits of Winston Churchill concerning Indian independence and the 'Gathering Storm' of World War II are, like Churchill's conflation of Hitler and Gandhi, both vitally linked to Churchill's historical pessimism, his strategic realism, and his overwhelming British-centric worldview, and are thus not so divergent after all.

Throughout the 1930s, Churchill demonstrated deep and sincere interest in the future of India as the cornerstone of the British Empire. In 1933, he wrote to Lord Linlithgow, then chairman of the joint select committee on Indian constitutional reform and later viceroy of India, "I do not think I should remain in politics,

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<sup>1</sup> Winston Churchill papers, Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge, CHAR 9/191 A

certainly I should take no active part in them, if it were not for India.”<sup>2</sup> Despite this stated importance to Churchill of India remaining an imperial possession, his colleagues came to perceive Churchill as an increasingly unrealistic and reactionary voice in the wilderness where India was concerned. During the 1930s, Churchill’s adherence to his unpopular position on India helped to keep him on the backbenches.

Upon becoming Prime Minister in 1940, Churchill blocked negotiations and progress toward Indian constitutional reform. Though he sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India on a mission to gain India's full cooperation in the war effort in exchange for an offer of Dominion status to India after the war, it was "a mission which Churchill hoped would fail”.<sup>3</sup> He ordered non-violent Indian nationalist leaders jailed and even wished them dead.<sup>4</sup> He would consider the use of force to hold complete authority in wartime India, and strip it of cash, men and goods. In a move severely criticized by his own Viceroy and military commanders, he did not hesitate to strip India of food supplies, even during the Bengali famine. Churchill’s dealings with President Roosevelt over what imperial concessions the Atlantic Charter actually included were also made contentious by Churchill’s concerns over its impact on Britain’s ability to hold India.

Once Prime Minister, Churchill’s strategic and policy decisions in regard to India were to be dictated by his prior underlying perceptions and beliefs about India and Empire. However, those perceptions and beliefs also continued to be interpreted by his colleagues through the prism of the derisive assumptions that had begun to be made during the interwar period. His choices once in power have concretely demonstrated Churchill’s true views on India and Empire regardless of what his public rhetoric may have indicated. The same perceived irrational positions Churchill took during the inter-war period were those he proceeded to implement. Furthermore, the degree to which his implementation of those positions helped achieved his ultimate strategic

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<sup>2</sup> CHAR 2/193

<sup>3</sup> Ian Wood, *Churchill* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 167.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC News*, “Churchill took hardline on Gandhi” Sunday, 1 January 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/4573152.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4573152.stm) Retrieved 27 July 2014.



and military goals, at least during World War II period, demonstrates the value of throwing greater light on the strategic validity and rationality of these policies and the interpretations of Churchill's underlying motivations.

Many of the persisting academic beliefs concerning Churchill's reasons for Britain retaining total control of India have strong roots in the events and accounts of the 1930s, when Churchill was out of office and was seen by his contemporaries as an increasingly less rational voice in the wilderness. How his contemporary observers, in light of their practical, political and moral differences of opinion concerning self-determination for India, then reacted to and interpreted Churchill's subsequent governmental actions as Prime Minister are also key to understanding how a 'dual portrait' could emerge.

There is evidence that Churchill's position on Indian independence was not wholly derived, as many believe, from the Victorian notions of Empire prevalent during his upbringing and youth. It may be more accurate to view his policies towards India as rooted instead in his present and future concerns. If he was operating from a modern, pragmatic and informed strategic perspective that India equals the jewel of the Empire; which equals substantial economic, military, and psychological benefits for Great Britain; which ultimately equals security for Great Britain amid rapidly fluctuating global threats; Churchill's views on Empire and India were not rooted in past glories but founded in future fears, fears which became fully realized by 1940. Churchill's position on India after World War One, far from being reactionary and unrealistic, begins to appear rational if the loss of India might render Britain unable to defend herself in a new world war. Churchill was not necessarily as concerned with stability, civility and justice for the Indian people as he would claim. On an ethnocentrically realistic level, he may be proven in his policies towards India to have made the safest, most conservative, if most ruthless, argument for the long-term protection and welfare of Great Britain.

His was an extremely pessimistic policy position, in which the worst case strategic scenario was the one for which he was planning when he argued against any concessions to Indian independence in the interwar period; a pessimistic position which he pursued in his actions as Prime Minister during World War II. His clear-

eyed recognition of the potential threats posed by Germany, Italy and Japan do not look like a man operating in accordance with Victorian romanticism or irrational in his ability to assess the problems faced by Britain in the present and near future. Churchill's pessimistic visions do not give the appearance of a man adhering to the progressive view of history and manifest destiny the Victorian era exemplified. This despite the fact that Churchill continued to pay lip service to the mid-Victorian view of a progressive and civilizing empire in India through the inter-war period and World War Two. Churchill's opposition to releasing India from the Empire indicates that he realized that the war to end all wars had in no way ensured a progressive pacifist future. It indicates that he has realized the course of history was dangerously unpredictable and could turn against a small island nation with a rapidity it would not be able to defend itself against alone. Churchill was driven by a strategic need to hedge all bets against sudden shifts of fate which may lead to the downfall of Great Britain; a nation and people he truly viewed as possessing a superior destiny far out-sizing the relatively small geographic confines of its borders.

A re-assessment of Churchill's position on India also addresses why this rational and strategically realistic, if ethnocentric and exploitative, reasoning became lost or downplayed, both in Churchill's time and in later scholarship of his interwar activities and wartime policies. Churchill's rhetoric on India was often, when in public, extreme, emotional and inflammatory. He rarely linked his arguments for India's retention as an imperial possession directly to the disarmament and appeasement issues and his fear of the 'Gathering Storm', as on these issues he was equally without influence and perceived as out of step and often derided. Perhaps if he had made a link between these two issues more often and in a public way, his opposition to Indian Independence would, in the hindsight views of historians at least, have been considered more rational and prescient as well.

Furthermore, Churchill's implacable opposition to a Gandhi is hardly as defensible as his implacable opposition to a Hitler, then or now. Derision and dismissal of his most extreme anti-Gandhi anti-independence

rhetoric seems a forgone conclusion. For Churchill to call Mahatma Gandhi a “malignant subversive fanatic”<sup>5</sup> is a moral and factual shock. For Churchill to view Gandhi and Hitler together as the two primary threats to Britain since 1929<sup>6</sup> seems irrational on its face. However for Churchill to perceive these two figures as equal in their menace proves how clear the link was between the threats the two men posed to Britain in Churchill’s strategic view. Still, it is not as clear-cut an issue of morality or wisdom to refuse self-determination for a nation as to refuse to give in to the Nazi threat.

He believed the release of India could not be risked. Maximum control over India and its resources would be crucial for Great Britain to maintain its position economically and militarily in a world situation he viewed as dangerous. His contemporary opponents believed it could not be held practically and should not be held morally and so viewed the risky choice to be leaving the status quo intact. Criticism of Churchill’s behavior toward Indian independence highlights this contentious debate.

In the interwar period, before the dangers of World War Two became evident, Churchill’s claims of the great danger losing India engender was viewed as insincere alarmism, drummed up to gain political advantage. While he certainly wished to gain political advantage, He also had a strategically realistic reason that can better seen in hindsight. He did not explicitly link his two primary interwar fears, disarmament and India, but it is not necessary for him to do so for a modern analysis to see that both issues arise from the same fear and thus the same need, the security and ascendancy of Great Britain in a volatile future. It can be seen hindsight that it was possible to re-arm if it becomes necessary, however, handing over control of India to its own people would not be a reversible act should the need to exploit her become necessary as well. It was not as easy to see this strategically realistic link in the interwar period.

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<sup>5</sup> Speech of 23 February 1931, *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, ed. Robert Rhodes James, 8 vols, (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), VI:4986.

<sup>6</sup> CHAR 9/191 A

Many in academia have cast Winston Churchill's character, judgment and reputation when it came to India in a negative light due in large part to the impressions his colleagues formed of Churchill's behaviour, words and actions throughout the long bitter fight he waged against Indian nationalism. That record found its way into modern scholarship without significant questioning of its overall validity. Since Churchill made his public case on India using the language and justifications of a bygone age and his strategic reasons were not manifestly obvious or valid to them, Churchill's contemporaries put forward varying interpretations of the reasons for Churchill's implacable and out of step positions on India. There were repeated contemporary claims Churchill was unable to move beyond a mid-Victorian view of Empire and thus could not understand the current issues surrounding India and take a realistic modern policy position. Churchill asserted that he cared more about opposition to greater constitutional freedom for India than any other issue in politics, and yet his colleagues viewed him, and reported him to be, prejudiced, irrational, ignorant and out of date on virtually all issues surrounding India.

Often Churchill's contemporaries reflected a belief that emotional instability and personality flaws were in part responsible for Churchill's impassioned opposition to even the discussion of constitutional reform for India. While what constituted a realistic and modern policy position in the inter war period is subject to debate, that Churchill often fought for his policy positions in an excessive and negative way is undeniable. He himself, in a letter to his son, Randolph Churchill, in January 1931, said, "I am going to fight this India business á outrance [a World War I military term that means attack to excess]." <sup>7</sup> His emotional and rhetorical excess created a validly negative record of Churchill that often obscured the rational underpinnings of his stance on India.

His contemporaries frequently and derisively record Churchill's emotive displays over India. Several key players in both Conservative politics and wartime policy over the India issue shared similar views. When

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<sup>7</sup> Winston S. Churchill to Randolph Churchill, 8 January 1931, *Winston S. Churchill* (cited hereafter as *WSC*), ed. Martin Gilbert (London: Heinemann, 1981) V, companion 1, 243.

Gandhi was released from prison on humanitarian grounds during World War Two after the death of his wife, Lord Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command, reported to Lord Archibald Wavell, Viceroy of India from 1943-1947, that Churchill was 'quite furious' about this, and 'quite impossible about India'.<sup>8</sup> Wavell frequently recorded his frustration with Churchill's emotionalism and inexplicable pessimism toward India. He recorded a conversation with Churchill in his journal, "he accused me of creating a Frankenstein by putting modern weapons in the hands of sepoys, spoke of 1857 [the year of the Indian mutiny] and was really childish about it."<sup>9</sup> Wavell observed of Churchill, "He has a curious complex about India and is always loath to hear good of it and appears to believe the worst."<sup>10</sup> Leo Amery, Churchill's Secretary of State for India, frequently and devastatingly recorded in his diaries evidence of Churchill's emotional excesses and apparently inexplicable pessimism toward India. "Winston has a curious hatred of India", Amery wrote, "and is convinced that the Indian Army is only waiting to shoot us in the back."<sup>11</sup> The curiosity of Churchill's colleagues was reflecting their puzzlement at the vehemence and the pessimism of Churchill's attitude toward India in very similar language, puzzlement so great at times that Amery questioned Churchill's sanity. "India", wrote Amery, "or any form of self-government for coloured peoples, raises in him a wholly uncontrollable complex."<sup>12</sup> Churchill's outbursts were sometimes so intemperate that Amery concluded in his diary, "he is really not quite normal on the subject of India"<sup>13</sup>

One of the most persistent and widespread criticisms of Churchill during his lifetime was the claim that Churchill was politically, emotionally and intellectually mired in his mid-Victorian upbringing and experiences and thus was unable to learn about, and adapt to, changing political realities in India. Wavell writes of

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<sup>8</sup> Pendrel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 89.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945* (London: Hutchison, 1988), 895.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 988.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 750.

Churchill, “he has still at heart the Cavalry subaltern’s [Churchill’s late nineteenth century military position in India] idea of India.”<sup>14</sup> Amery writes, “I have always said the key to Winston is to realize that he is Mid Victorian, steeped in the politics of his father’s period, and unable ever to get the modern point of view.”<sup>15</sup>

It was not just Churchill’s British colleagues whose perceptions of him were negatively influenced by what they perceived to be Churchill’s outdated views on India and empire. A similar conclusion from outside Britain was politically and historically significant. “FDR expressed concern about Churchill’s antiquated, ‘Victorian’, views.”<sup>16</sup> Roosevelt said, “he found it easier to talk to Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek than Churchill about the future of the British Empire.”<sup>17</sup> That Stalin would be preferred over Churchill by the American president to discuss the future of the British Empire is evidence that foreign leaders were just as dismissive of Churchill as a hopelessly reactionary imperialist as many of Churchill’s fellow British politicians. This contributed an historical view of Churchill as a nineteenth century imperialist whose prejudices blinded him regarding India and her leaders and rendered him tone-deaf in his interactions with colleagues, the British public and foreign leaders on matters concerning India.

Stanley Baldwin, Churchill’s political rival over India and the Conservative party leadership for much of the 1920s and 1930s, had in 1929, pledged his party to support a plan to transition India to an independent dominion and triggered Churchill’s long battle against any such concession to Indian nationalist aspirations. Harold Macmillan, a Tory backbencher prior to World War Two and later Prime Minister, described how colleagues of Baldwin and Churchill viewed their conflicting positions on Indian Independence:

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<sup>14</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 49. Also in Madhusree Mukerjee, *Churchill’s Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 13 and Ferdinand Mount, “Churchill Capsized”, *The Spectator*, 14 April 1990; 264.

<sup>16</sup> Warren Kimball, “Wheel Within a Wheel: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the Special Relationship” In *Churchill: A Major New Assessment of His Life in Peace and War*, eds., Robert Blake and William Roger Louis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 297-8.

<sup>17</sup> William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 8-9.

In the House of Commons a majority of the party regarded (Churchill's) attitude as reactionary and unrealistic. We remembered that, for more than a hundred years, British policy towards India had been directed to the evolution of a system of self-government, which must logically lead to her ultimately obtaining the same status as the independent dominions ... Baldwin's declarations seemed to most of us to be both imaginative and sound.<sup>18</sup>

This observation by Macmillan highlights a key difference between Baldwin and Churchill; Baldwin was putting forth a logical solution to a known problem, while Churchill offered no counter solution, only advocating the continuity of the British Raj. If Macmillan, a strong critic of Baldwin and later a protégé of Churchill, saw Baldwin on India as evolutionary, imaginative and sound and Churchill on India as reactionary, unrealistic, and illogical, then the language of derision and discredit of Churchill by his contemporaries was truly widespread.

This is the same Churchill, who at the same time in history, accurately and farsightedly warned his nation about the impending risk of Nazi aggression, led his country during a dark time, and was contemporaneously admired as a great war leader. Wavell, in his struggle with Churchill over constitutional progress for India during World War Two, wrote of his genuine yet qualified that admiration of Churchill. Wavell wrote, "He is a great war leader, but otherwise thinks in terms of politics not statesmanship. Here is the main problem, to try to do my best for a future settlement of India without embarrassing our war leader in the present."<sup>19</sup> Amery, scathing and oft-quoted critic of Churchill's positions on India, also admitted to admiration of Churchill as a war leader. However, like Wavell, it was not done without drawing a clear distinction between Churchill's performance as a war leader and Churchill's behavior concerning India. Amery wrote,

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<sup>18</sup> Keith Middlemas, and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 700.

<sup>19</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, 24.

I am by no means sure whether on this subject of India he is really quite sane – there is no relation between his manner, physical and intellectual, on this theme and the equability and dominant good sense he displays on issues directly affecting the conduct of the war.<sup>20</sup>

Amery's dual portrait of the Churchill the great war leader and Churchill the irrational imperialist, is the most marked and clear demonstration of this widespread and seemingly irreconcilable view of the same man, at the same time, concerning the same issues.

Much current scholarship on Churchill draws the same distinctions as Leo Amery did: not sane on India but a great war leader. Such an extreme dichotomy on the two most central aspects of Churchill's political legacy, Imperialism and World War II, seems so unlikely that it is not surprising that far less light shines between these dual portraits than either Churchill's contemporaries or subsequent academic scholarship acknowledges. A brief survey of the positions of many Churchill scholars, and the degree to which they are influenced by the perceptions of Churchill's contemporaries, is necessary to demonstrate which aspects of the highly critical portrait of Churchill on India may be valid and which may merit re-interpretation.

Amery recorded Churchill exclaiming, "I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion."<sup>21</sup> Not surprisingly, Ronald Hyam writes, "There have been some extraordinary academic judgments upon Churchill's attitude to empire, as crude as they are emotive: for example, it is alleged that he was 'a profound and reactionary imperialist' and a 'malignant racist'."<sup>22</sup> There appears to be a strong tendency amongst many academic positions on Winston Churchill to view his position of Indian nationalism as being the

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<sup>20</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 993.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 832.

<sup>22</sup> Ronald Hyam, "Churchill and the British Empire", in *Churchill*, ed. Blake and Louis, 183.



product of, as Sarvepalli Gopal puts it, “fossilized prejudices”.<sup>23</sup> Fossilized, in that Churchill’s worldview was rooted in outmoded concepts of the civilizing Empire of his Victorian upbringing and early military service. Prejudices, in that he believed that the people of India were incapable of independent government and in need of the just and civilizing rule of the morally and militarily superior British race for their own welfare. Ian Wood views Churchill’s racism as a major contributor to his negative portrayal. Wood writes, “his concept of the empire was always an emotional one, often expressed in racially blinkered and condescending terms, and immensely damaging to him politically when he campaigned against the national governments Indian policy in the 1930s.”<sup>24</sup>

Historians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have judged Churchill’s position on India in the twentieth century as irrationally mired within the political attitudes of the nineteenth century. Gopal cites Churchill’s superficial knowledge of, and experience in, India as the determinate of Churchill’s later political positions.

During the 10 months he [Churchill] spent in India as a young army officer he saw little of the country except military barracks, polo grounds, and government houses; but the views he formed of India and remained the basis of his policies throughout his political career.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Rhodes James, in his book, *Churchill: a Study in Failure 1900-1939*, concurs with Gopal,

His recollections of India were based upon his impressions as a young officer in the 1890s and his attitudes had not changed greatly from those of the young author who had described the

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<sup>23</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, “Churchill and India”, in *Churchill*, ed. Blake and Louis, 462.

<sup>24</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 157.

<sup>25</sup> Gopal, “Churchill and India”, 457.

function of Sir Bindon Blood's troops on the Indian frontier as that of holding "the dikes of social progress against a rising delusion of barbarism..."<sup>26</sup>

Rhodes James repeats this view a few pages later; "His view of India had not changed greatly - indeed it had hardly changed at all - since that time when he had been a young subaltern in the 1890s."<sup>27</sup>

Ferdinand Mount repeats Leo Amery's defining quote:

"The key to Winston", Leo Amery remarked in 1929, "is to realize he is mid-Victorian and unable ever to get a modern point of view." That defect became a grand virtue in 1940, when a certain lack of accommodation to modernity was what was wanted.<sup>28</sup>

Mount is going so far as to attribute the dual and conflicting portraits of Churchill, Imperial Reactionary and Great War Leader, to the very same trait. Churchill's supposed inability to get the modern point of view is a defect when it came to India, yet a virtue when it came to World War II.

The opinions of Churchill's contemporaries have been combined with the excessive emotionalism and reactionary Imperialism of his rhetoric in his passionate defense of Empire to create a portrait of Churchill regarding India that is in conflict with the equally conventionally held laudatory portrait of Churchill. Many historians view Churchill as a strategic realist who saw the dangers of disarmament and the rise of German and Japanese aggression, and as a great strategist and war leader during World War II, while simultaneously viewing Churchill as simply a racist, unrealistic reactionary when it came to the possible loss of the Indian Empire.

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: a Study in Failure 1900-1939*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970), 197.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>28</sup> Mount, "Churchill Capsized", 10

While there can be no doubt of Churchill's racism regarding non-whites, no doubt of his moral failure to acknowledge the universal right to self-determination, and no doubt of his fallacious idea that Britain could practically hold on to India much beyond World War II, especially after the flames of independence had already been lit, those stipulations still do not explain the clear disconnect amongst both contemporary and later opinion between Churchill's performance as a politician and war leader and his attitudes and behavior concerning India and Empire. There need not be a disconnect. Both can flow from the same strategic and Anglo-centric concerns, from the same realism that guided his drive against disarmament and appeasement.

To reassess this dual portrait requires an examination of the formation of Churchill's worldview, both personal and ideological. Given that so much criticism of Churchill focuses on his being hopelessly and emotionally mired in a mid-Victorian romantic vision of empire, chapter two addresses Churchill's ideology and views on empire formed in his youth and shaped by individuals influential in his life. His writings and political career relating to the British Empire and assessments of his personality and psychological makeup can help illuminate specific political and strategic positions he held: how were they formed, how did he express them, and which did he modify, and how did he modify them.

Chapter three addresses events during Churchill's 1929-1939 opposition to constitutional reform for India. This is a period often referred to as "the wilderness years", as Churchill's political positions and behavior, particularly concerning India, led to his being ostracized by his own colleagues and imposed considerable limits on his political influence. As this is also the period that gave rise to the dual portrait there is a reexamination of how Churchill chose to express his political positions, how those expressions were perceived by his colleagues and why his colleagues' perceptions helped give rise to a dual portrait of Churchill as simultaneously rational and irrational.

Chapter four looks at Churchill's return to political power, first in cabinet and then as Prime Minister, from 1939-1945. His actions regarding India during his time in power can be examined as a form of verification

of the validity of the assessments of chapters one and two. Despite his rhetoric, Churchill's true intentions and attitudes toward India and his strategic and ethnocentric concerns can be seen. The continuation of his often extreme or emotional methods of expressing them can also be seen to continue to lead his contemporaries to view him as childish and irrational when it comes to India and contribute further to a divergent view of Churchill.

## CHAPTER 2    FORMATION OF CHURCHILL'S WORLDVIEW

Many critics of Winston Churchill's opposition to independence for India cite his inability to progress beyond the mid-Victorian worldview developed in his youth as a significant cause of what they asserted was his erroneous position. They have identified Churchill's inability to recognize the changing demands of the modern post World War One world and his lack of knowledge of the changing political situation within India itself. Churchill himself contributed to this perception by often continuing to use the language of the paternalistic mid-Victorian concept of Empire when making his case against further political concessions to Indian independence. He combined the warning of the perils of the loss of British prestige, British power, and British wealth with the patronizing racism of a man who believed the Indian people of being unable to rule themselves and unable to act with the justice and civility Churchill believed British rule imposed.

This idea, first put forward by many of his colleagues, that Churchill's political and strategic beliefs about India were being dictated by romantic nostalgia, by concepts of Anglo-Saxon superiority, by ideas entirely rooted in the nineteenth century continues to be the way many historians view Churchill. It is one of the key paradoxes of the dual portrait of Churchill as prescient on the interwar issues of disarmament and appeasement yet irrational within the same time frame over the strategic importance of India to Great Britain's future. These assertions require that we view these two issues as completely separate both in Churchill's mind and in historical reality and further require us to believe this same single man can be simultaneously possessed of fossilized and uninformed strategic thought and capable of clear-eyed strategic foresight. Refutation of this criticism that Churchill's strategic thinking is irrevocably rooted in the Victorian era exposes the inconsistency in the current majority views of Churchill's inter-war political activity.

Historians have frequently used Amery's diary entry, as noted above, "I have always said the key to Winston is to realize that he is Mid Victorian, steeped in the politics of his father's period, and unable ever to get the modern point of view".<sup>29</sup> A number of historians come to a very similar conclusion. Ian Wood, for example, writes, "Churchill's life ... spanned a period in which the British Empire reached the apex of its power, and yet also went into terminal decline. He was the child of a high Imperial age and that shaped many of his attitudes for much of his political career."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Arthur Herman suggests, "Winston Churchill spent his life trying to re-create the imperial grandeur that had been the touchstone of his father's generation ... Churchill's identity as a Briton was founded on that dream, just as he cherished the empire that went with it."<sup>31</sup>

The consensus appears to be Churchill was simply unable to move beyond the mid-Victorian period, beyond his father's political ideology, beyond his outdated personal experience of India and beyond the strategic and romantic goals of 1890s Great Britain. Churchill's ideology and views on empire formed in his youth, gained through early personal experiences, and shaped by individuals influential in his life *are* important. His early writings and early political career relating to the British Empire and assessments of his personality and psychological makeup can help illuminate specific political and strategic positions he held: how were they formed, how did he express them, which principles did he adhere to, and which did he modify. The most common theme within these past and present criticisms is ultimately Churchill's inability to adapt to the demands of present political reality, to modify his positions on India in light of the rapid changes within the modern world. It is certain that some of his beliefs surrounding India were clearly the unaltered products of his early life and personal influences. What is not so certain is the contention that Churchill's opposition to constitutional reform for India in the inter-war period was purely the irrational product of a romantic unable to alter his other political and strategic motivations.

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<sup>29</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 157.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*, (New York: Bantam Books, 2008), 413-14.

A distinction between the early Victorian view of empire and the mid-Victorian view of empire is helpful, as both Churchill's contemporaries such as Amery and Roosevelt, and subsequent historians often characterize Churchill specifically as mid-Victorian in his attitudes toward India. The early Victorian era saw the continuation of empire driven to conquest by private enterprise; such as the British East India Company for protected trade commercial exploitation and material gain with little consideration given to the welfare of those conquered. By the mid-Victorian period Empire and its expansion was the concern of the central British government that promoted as patriotic duty and higher destiny its progressive civilization of inferior races. Schonfeld gives both a concise picture of the ideals of mid-Victorian Empire and exemplifies the tendency to place a sweeping mid-Victorian label upon Churchill when he writes,

By 1896, the British justification for holding India had come to rest upon what Britain could do for the welfare of the Indian people, not what material gains might flow to the British from this imperial possession. Lord Salisbury, the prime minister, held this view, and Winston Churchill was to hold it throughout his life.<sup>32</sup>

Churchill publicly utilized the language of mid-Victorian empire and this mid-Victorian justification for the maintenance of British rule in India throughout his fight against Indian independence in the 1930s and continued to utilize the same language as Prime Minister in the 1940s. Examples of Churchill's public justification for retention of India are plentiful. Churchill spoke to the Indian Empire Society 11 December 1930 in regards to the India roundtable conference. As he claimed the British must remain in India to protect the Indian people from themselves, Churchill quoted his father,

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<sup>32</sup> Maxwell Schonfeld, *Sir Winston Churchill: His Life and Times* (Hinsdale: The Dryden Press, 1973), 11-12.

“Our rule in India [said Lord Randolph Churchill] is as it were a sheet of oil spread out over and keeping free from storms a vast and profound ocean of humanity.” The withdrawal or suspension of British control means either a Hindi despotism supported by an army of European mercenaries or a renewal of those ferocious internal wars which tortured the Indian masses for thousands of years before the British flag was hoisted in Calcutta. Left to herself, India would rapidly degenerate to the condition of China at the cost of measureless suffering among 350 million people.<sup>33</sup>

In a speech to the House of Commons 26 January 1931 Churchill highlighted the service and sacrifice through which Britain has earned her Empire as further justification. He declared,

There are British rights and interests in India. Two centuries of effort and achievement, lives given on a hundred fields, far more lives given and consumed in faithful and devoted service to the Indian people themselves! All this has earned us rights of our own in India.<sup>34</sup>

In a speech on January 30, 1931 to the Indian Empire Society Churchill’s remarks emphasized the word duty repeatedly,

We have... a supreme moral duty to discharge to the Indian people. We have no right whatever to hand them over to a comparatively small and utterly unrepresentative political faction, to be the prey of misgovernment, of deterioration in every public service, of religious bigotry ... and finally a Civil War. While we have strength we must discharge our duty.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4935–36.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4956.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4969.



Proof of the continuity of Churchill's mid-Victorian public justifications for Indian imperialism can be found in notes for an undelivered speech to parliament composed in March 1943. Then Prime Minister, Churchill identified clearly a moral justification for retention of India within the Empire built purely on proud service to the Indian people. Churchill wrote,

Now if you go back to centuries, you see quite a different kind of world. We see the exploitation of weaker races by the white man ... But the broad, shining, liberating and liberalizing tides of the Victorian era float across this scene. The exploitation of weaker and less well armed peoples became odious ... For the last 80 years [1863-1943]... the British have had no idea what ever of exploitation in India, but only service ... We should be proud of our work in India. We should look upon it as one of the noblest works that any European nation or white race has ever accomplished. We may leave India but to India it may well be the age of the Antonines.<sup>36</sup>

Churchill seems to have truly believed in a selection of these ideals. However after World War One his evocation of the 'White Man's Burden' appears to become both more deliberate and more cynical. His actions, words and underlying motivations from 1929 through to 1945 indicate that Churchill's truer concerns are far earlier Victorian in their nature than the mid-Victorian platitudes he continued to profess through this time frame. The evidence contains an other-side-of-the-coin argument, made at the same time as the justifications of Empire through protection, service and duty. Churchill's flip side argument for retaining India was that not only would independence be a catastrophe for India, it would be a catastrophe for Britain as well.

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In the speech on 30 January 1931, to the Indian Empire Society that stressed Britain's duty in India, Churchill simultaneously warned,

The loss of India... would be final and fatal to us. It could not fail to be part of the process which would reduce us to the scale of a minor power. Holland, once our equal, was outmatched in the world ... We have 45 millions on this island, a very large proportion of whom are in existence because of our world position, economic, political, Imperial.<sup>37</sup>

In a speech delivered 5 November 1930 Churchill warned of the grave danger Britain herself faced without India;

India and Great Britain have immense mutual services to render to each other ... Britain by that association has also gained trade facilities and great influence and prestige which her connection with India implies. Sever that partnership, destroy that union ... You will see in this island another million unemployed a bona fide million unemployed. We have felt it our mission to sustain India, to help her population in their march forward, and there would be an economic loss of life to this country if we separate our connection with India that could hardly be computed.<sup>38</sup>

In seeking explanations for Churchill's positions beyond the justifications he gave in public, commentators who ascribe to the idea that Churchill's extraordinary resistance to the relinquishing of India was due to his inability to move beyond the politics and policies of nineteenth century imperialism often cite the influence of figures such as Churchill's Father, Lord Randolph Churchill, who was Secretary of State for India from 1885-1886 and of Churchill's friend, F.E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead, who was Secretary of State for India

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<sup>37</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4971.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4926.

from 1924-1928. In the case of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill certainly contributed to Churchill's fixation on India as vital to the security of Britain and the British Empire. It is possible, but less certain, the influence of Birkenhead may have contributed to some of Churchill's more extreme racist beliefs and statements and his own refusal to accept that the Indian people had the capacity for self-government.

Robert Blake and William Roger Louis conclude, "in the 1930s Churchill saw himself as the savior of Britain's Indian empire. He made certain assumptions about India ... that can only be described as racist."<sup>39</sup> Rhodes James points to Birkenhead as a strong influence on Churchill's attitudes toward India and its political leadership, characterizing Birkenhead as, "Churchill's close and influential friend."<sup>40</sup> Rhodes James asserts, "Churchill closely followed Birkenhead's attitudes of contempt and aversion for the Congress leaders, employing language about them that still has the capacity to startle."<sup>41</sup> Ian Wood also appears to explain Churchill's positions on India as due in part to the influence of Birkenhead. Wood writes,

[Churchill] was ready to repudiate his party leadership and risk his own political isolation over his opposition to National Government policy [on India]. Clearly he was influenced by his great friend F. E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead, who as Secretary of State for India Between 1924 and 1928 opposed almost all reform there and had a deep contempt for Indian nationalism.<sup>42</sup>

Despite Wood's assertion, the problem of attributing Churchill's positions to the influence of others is that the ability of these figures to influence his attitudes and beliefs about India are not sufficient to explain the reasons for Churchill's opposition to Indian Independence in the 1930s and 1940s. That Churchill reflects their attitudes and beliefs is not proof that Churchill was incapable of independent thought. Nor does it indicate that

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Blake and William Roger Louis, Introduction to *Churchill*, eds. Blake and Louis, 7-8.

<sup>40</sup> Rhodes James. *Churchill: a Study in Failure 1900-1939*, 194.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>42</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 163.

Churchill was incapable of moving beyond the political goals of the previous generation, or that Churchill's opposition to constitutional reform for India was irrational or without legitimate and modern strategic underpinnings. In no way does agreeing with the attitudes toward India and the Indian people of his father and his mentor make it impossible that the reasons for Churchill's actions in the 1930s and 1940s reflect a significant modification of the worldview he held as a younger man. These influences are not mutually exclusive to Churchill possessing a modern and modified worldview. Indeed such racially negative influence may well make it easier to modify the optimistic paternalistic attitude toward India of his youth toward those more ruthless self-interested strategic motivations of post-World War One.

These historical assertions are stating that others influenced Churchill in certain assumptions and attitudes about India. That can certainly be argued successfully. However, these assertions also claim this influence of others is a significant factor leading to Churchill's ultimate decision to oppose Indian Nationalism in the inter-war period and throughout World War Two. It is here that the idea of influential people in Churchill's life being that powerful force in his decision-making process is less convincing. To believe Churchill's real concern was that India would fall into chaos without British rule or that the British Empire, already in decline, would be further diminished fails to explain why he would fight a decades-long political battle against independence at the cost of his own career and reputation.

Another avenue historians have explored in seeking to explain Churchill's positions beyond the justifications he gave in public has been Churchill's early life experience as a young officer in the Queen's army. Churchill arrived in India in 1896, and remaining for 10 months. A year later, in speech to the Primrose League in July 1897, the young Churchill asserted,

The "mission" of the empire, was ... that "of bearing peace, civilized nation and good government to the outermost ends of the earth ..." although unquestioned military superiority is

required to maintain the prestige and authority of the empire, “intrinsic merit is the only title of the dominant race to its possessions,” for only the rule of those of superior merit can have a civilizing effect on the ruled.<sup>43</sup>

These words are possibly a true reflection of the beliefs of the Churchill of 1896-1897, and are a textbook reflection of Britain’s optimistic and progressive mid-Victorian attitudes toward empire. The important factor here being that these are the writings of the Churchill of 1896-1897. Yet historians seem eager to attribute the beliefs of this very young Churchill to the Churchill of 1929-1945. Here the case fails to be made convincingly. According to Ian Wood,

a vision of India's future and a respect for its new leaders’ aspirations... were beyond the reach of Churchill, whose responses to events there were preserved in the aspic of impressions and judgments formed very early in his life.<sup>44</sup>

This statement requires the reader to believe that Churchill is a man completely incapable of learning, developing, altering perspective or being influence even more strongly by events that engulf him in much later years such as, significantly, World War One. One would have to believe that playing on the polo fields of India for 10 months made a greater impact on a man than the experiences of 1914-1918.

The words, writings and speeches of the Winston Churchill of the 1890s are what are preserved in aspic. They not unsurprisingly show a young Victorian-era man thinking and reacting like a young Victorian-era man reflecting Victorian attitudes and values. To examine these early writings and experiences seeking to explain

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<sup>43</sup> Kirk Emmert, “Winston S. Churchill on Civilizing Empire”, In *Statesmanship: Essays in honor of Sir Winston Spencer Churchill*, ed. Harry V. Jaffa, (Durham N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1981), 76-7.

<sup>44</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 169.

Churchill's post-World War One global strategic outlook appears to be placing the foundation of your argument in entirely the wrong time and place.

If we were to ask the young Churchill of 1896 if the history of Britain is not progressive, if Britain should consider relinquishing India, if the sun will soon set on the British Empire, it would be to elicit uninformed and unsurprising and unhelpful answers in the search for his later motives and thought processes. The Churchill of 1896 could not imagine the post-World War One world he would later face. The beliefs of the young Churchill do not demonstrate that Churchill will be unable to come to terms with the post-World War One strategic landscape.

An examination of the world view of Churchill in 1896, far from proving Churchill's intellectual faculties froze in the nineteenth century, if anything demonstrates the great gap between the Victorian era and the post World War Two era that Churchill's worldview successfully traversed. A subsequent quote from Ian Wood, despite Wood being sure Churchill's vision of India remained preserved in aspic, only serves to further illustrate that it was only the vision of India of the young cavalry subaltern that remained preserved in aspic. The older Churchill was fully capable of changing attitudes.

As he grew older, however, he showed signs of introspection about British attitudes to India and its people. "When you learn to think of a race as inferior beings it is difficult to get rid of that way of thinking", he told Lord Moran in January 1952, adding "when I was a subaltern the Indian did not seem to me to equal the white man" ... "If we had made friends with them and taken them into our lives, instead of restricting our intercourse to the political, things might have been very different".<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 170.

Critics often cite Churchill's lifelong failure to acquire further knowledge of India and her problems as one of the causes for his becoming bogged down in the beliefs of his brief experience of India in 1896 and for waging a supposedly Victorian fight against Indian Independence. Wood writes,

The paradox of what became such an obsession for Churchill lies in just how little interest he had taken in the subcontinent since his army service there. Prior to the crisis over the 1935 Government of India Bill, he had not revisited the country, and he never did.<sup>46</sup>

It is in the spirit of this criticism that Hyam writes,

[Churchill] never set foot again in India after leaving it in 1897, or in South Africa after 1900.

Although he made many trips across the Atlantic and several to North Africa and the Middle East, he never visited Nigeria and the Gold Coast, let alone Australia and New Zealand or Malaya and Hong Kong. His last sight of a British African colony was in 1907-08.<sup>47</sup>

Comments by Churchill's colleagues deriding Churchill's lack of knowledge of India and the situation there certainly help contribute to this particular argument. During a cabinet meeting on 27 July 1943, as the new Viceroy to India, Wavell, experienced one of Churchill's Indian tirades, Amery passed a note across the cabinet table to Wavell that said the Prime Minister "knows as much of the Indian problem as George III did of the American colonies."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 163.

<sup>47</sup> Hyam, "Churchill and the British Empire", 167.

<sup>48</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, 12.

Regardless of whether Amery's opinion is accurate or not, Churchill's position on constitutional reform had been formed by a strategic understanding of the necessity of Empire (with India as its core) in a post-World War one world and not necessarily a deep understanding of India itself. What Churchill did understand was that Britain had in many ways become, though he would be loath to characterize it in this fashion, far more dependent on India than India was on Britain. As the Jewel in the Crown of Empire, India was the most important of Britain's dependencies. Thus it is not hyperbole when Churchill said, "the loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire. That great organism would pass at a stroke out of life into history. From such a catastrophe there could be no recovery."<sup>49</sup> As Churchill warned many times Britain would sink into irrelevance like Belgium, Holland or Portugal who once had empires and lost them. Churchill claimed the loss of India "could not fail to be part of a process which would reduce us to the scale of a minor power. Holland, once are equal, was outmatched in the world..."<sup>50</sup>

Churchill knew what India meant to the economy, social fabric and strategic security of Britain. The underpinnings of his position in opposition to greater freedom for India were entirely to do with the position Great Britain would find itself in if it did not retain India. Churchill spoke of, "the coastwise trade, the great enterprises and business institutions which we have found in India, are all in succession to be swept away."<sup>51</sup> Not only would the British in India suffer, the British at home had become highly dependent on India directly and indirectly to maintain their standard of living. In advocating the retention of India, Churchill pointed out, "There are perhaps 15 million more people here [in Britain] than could exist without our enormous external connections, without our export trade... without our shipping... without the income from our foreign investments."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4938.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4971.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, V:5012.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, V:5526.



Apart from economic and social considerations, India's role in the strategic security of Britain was of great importance to Churchill. In the speech on 21 March 1935, to the India Defense League demonstration at Albert Hall Churchill warned,

The storm-clouds are gathering over Europe. Our defenses have been shamefully neglected. So cowed are our leaders that they actually post that they have neglected defenses in the hope of placating the clatter of the socialist opposition. There is danger gathering. Others are waiting to fill our place in the world. Is this a time to plunge our vast Oriental dependency into the melting-pot and to divide and dishearten all those forces on which the strength and destiny of Britain depends?<sup>53</sup>

Clearly Churchill viewed India as vital to "all those forces" on which Britain depends. India was vital as a source of army recruitment. India was vital as a source of raw materials and manufacturing the meet wartime needs. India was vital as a land and sea base for military operations. All of that Churchill understood without ever setting foot in India after 1896. Knowledge of why Great Britain held the place in the world it did was sufficient to know why India was important to Churchill's strategic worldview.

It cannot be argued that a lack of in-depth knowledge of India is a sufficient explanation of why Churchill took up a position in such stark contrast to most of his own political party, especially party leader Stanley Baldwin. Keith Middlemas and John Barnes in, *Baldwin. A Biography*, point out "His [Baldwin's] knowledge of India, for all the expertise of his briefings and the insights of Davidson and Hoare, was essentially the same as Churchill's - a romantic vision..."<sup>54</sup> They continue:

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<sup>53</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:5558.

<sup>54</sup> Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 700.

Whether he [Baldwin] actually understood India itself, as opposed to the imperial problem, may be questioned. He never visited India and he was conscious of the need to have men around him who had and who do at least some of the details of the subcontinent.<sup>55</sup>

This can therefore call into question those who would attribute Churchill's positions to ignorance or romanticism. Baldwin, his opponent in Indian policy, had no real knowledge of India and his concepts of it too were coloured by romantic ideas. Yet, despite Baldwin's ignorance or romanticism he believed in the need to move toward dominion status for India.

On 24 September 1930, Churchill wrote to Baldwin to warn him that “very strong currents of feeling and even passion are moving under the stagnant surface of our affairs, and I must confess myself to care more about this [India] business than anything else in public life.”<sup>56</sup> Baldwin was equally certain as Churchill of the importance of India to Britain. In an speech in the House of Commons 12 March 1931, Baldwin said, “this question of the constitutional government of India is by far the most important imperial question, by far the greatest, by far the most difficult, not only that we have to face today, but that we have ever had to face...”<sup>57</sup> In his criticism of his opponent's support for India reform, Churchill wrote, “So far as I could see, Mr. Baldwin felt that the times were too far gone for any robust assertion of British imperial greatness”<sup>58</sup> In contrast again to Churchill;

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<sup>55</sup> Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 698.

<sup>56</sup> Winston S. Churchill to Stanley Baldwin, 24 September 1940, *Winston S. Churchill* (cited hereafter as *WSC*), ed. Martin Gilbert (London: Heinemann, 1981) V, Companion 2, 186.

<sup>57</sup> Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 595.

<sup>58</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, vol. 1, The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 30-1.

Baldwin was sure of himself and his cause ... Churchill, and even his own cousin Rudyard Kipling, were living in the past. To try, as they wished, to prolong an outdated paternalism seemed to Baldwin a dream that it was now impossible to pursue, much less realize.<sup>59</sup>

Middlemas and Barnes conclude of these conflicting positions of Baldwin and Churchill over reform for India, “Only, posterity must say, Churchill was wrong and Baldwin was right.”<sup>60</sup> Baldwin, conventionally judged as right by posterity (posterity being another word for future historical analysis), is indeed correct that the domination and paternalism of Empire in India was outdated, immoral and practicably impossible to maintain in the long-term. Baldwin, with his knowledge gleaned from briefings about, not the issue of Imperialism in a broader sense, but about the realities of the current political problems within India would have seen that it was morally just and practically reasonable to begin a slow process of promises and gradual relinquishment of power in India in the hope of maximizing the length of British rule and making it more likely that after full independence India would remain within the British sphere of influence. It was a method of dealing with colonial unrest typical of pre-WWI Imperial policy. According to Baldwin, “I do not believe that you are going to get any permanent solution of this question of Indian government until you get complete cooperation and understanding and good will between India and ourselves...”<sup>61</sup>

Cooperation, understanding and goodwill were what Baldwin would have extended to India on the eve of World War Two in exchange for her support during the war. This was not the position of supplication, the position of risk, Churchill wished Britain to be in when its security would be threatened. Nor did a desire for, or perceived need for, cooperation, understanding and goodwill reflect the actions Churchill eventually undertook toward India as Prime Minister during World War Two.

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<sup>59</sup> Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 585.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 715.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 584-5.

This is yet another reason to question those who would attribute Churchill's positions to this same ignorance or romanticism. Churchill's overriding concern when it came to empire was what was best for Britain. In 1906 Churchill became parliamentary undersecretary for the colonies and dealt with the question of Irish demands for independence. Wood writes,

Churchill's position was that a home rule parliament could be acceptable to British interests, or English interests, as Mary Bromage prefers to put it in her study of Churchill and Ireland: 'The principle from which he never wavered in his approach to the Irish question was simply what was good for England.'<sup>62</sup>

Churchill's early career at the colonial office produced documents which have been characterized by Rhodes James as having, "been rightly described by Mr. Hiram as 'a classic statement of the primary principle of political conduct of the Victorian and Edwardian ruling elite, the principle of timely concession to retain an ultimate control.'<sup>63</sup> The majority of Churchill's colleagues were, in the interwar years, still adhering to this pre-World War One Victorian/Edwardian principle as they attempted to offer future promises to India in exchange for present possession.

Churchill's colleagues expressed surprise that Churchill could not see or apply the merits of this Irish approach when it came to India. Stanley Baldwin, when forming a new cabinet, considered appointing Churchill to the Colonial office for this earlier reputation of "timely concession". Baldwin did not select Churchill in the end due to Churchill's failure to remain mired in his pre-World War One worldview. Churchill's colleagues considered his new worldview when applied to India as reactionary and unrealistic because they believed the rising tide of nationalism in India would make the colony impossible to hold in the

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<sup>62</sup> Wood, *Churchill*, 141.

<sup>63</sup> Rhodes James, *Churchill: a Study in Failure*, 199.

long-term. However, holding on to India was what Churchill both in public and in private advocating doing in the long-term.

On 23 February 1931, Churchill addressed the intention of the Government to give full Dominion status to India, “I do not think it is wise to hold out any hopes of any such position being reached for many generations to come. At any rate, I hold it of the utmost importance that we should make it clear that there is no chance of such a goal being reached in our lifetime.”<sup>64</sup> Churchill’s stated intention in 1931, to hold India as a dependency indefinitely is echoed in the World War II diaries of Amery and Wavell. Amery’s diary entry on 5 November 1943 reads, “as for the general subject of India he just refused to discuss the issue and simply repeated that as long as he lived he would resist anything in the nature of Indian self government.”<sup>65</sup> Wavell, on 31 August 1945, records in his diary one of his last conversations with Churchill during his Prime Ministership. “His final remark as I closed the door of the lift was: ‘keep a bit of India’”.<sup>66</sup>

Amery’s views on Indian independence were like Macmillan’s many decades before. Macmillan saw Baldwin’s solutions as evolutionary, imaginative and sound, while Amery thought Baldwin’s declaration in favor of Indian constitutional reform was, “based on profound and imaginative insight into the whole historical problem of our connection with India past and future.”<sup>67</sup> It was Amery’s belief that it was “far wiser to meet the demands for self government halfway than suppressed nationalism.”<sup>68</sup> Richard Toye’s analysis sums up his views of Churchill’s the inter-war period along essentially the same lines as Macmillan and Amery. Toye points out that Churchill’s opposition to self-government “was not accompanied by any constructive vision.”<sup>69</sup> Toye

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<sup>64</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4983.

<sup>65</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 950.

<sup>66</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 168.

<sup>67</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Toye, *Churchill’s Empire: The World that Made Him and the World He Made* (New York: Henry Holt, 2010), 164.

ultimately concludes, “It was this absence of a positive agenda, rather than his continued belief in Empire as such, that increasingly marked him out as a reactionary during the remainder of the inter-war years.”<sup>70</sup>

It is accurate to say that Churchill did not have a positive or progressive plan for the future of India. Far from progressive, his was a retrograde agenda. Baldwin believed Churchill’s intentions were in fact to turn back the clock in India. Baldwin wrote in 1930, Churchill wanted, “the Tory party to go back to pre-war and govern with a strong hand. He has become once more the subaltern of hussars of ‘96.”<sup>71</sup> Churchill himself confirms that far from having a plan of how to move forward with India he wished to go back. In a speech to the House of Commons on the Government of India Bill, 11 February 1935, Churchill said,

We are told that something must be done. My father Lord Randolph Churchill was often credited with saying that when he heard people going about saying that something must be done, he had noticed that something very foolish was done. We are told that you cannot put the clock back. What nonsense. We put the clocks back every year with highly beneficial results.<sup>72</sup>

Churchill publically asserted retrograde action was a legitimate choice;

Our right and our power to restrict Indian constitutional liberties are unchallengeable. Our obligation to persevere in associating with the peoples of India with their own government is undoubted. We are free to call a halt. We are free, for the time being, to retrace our steps, to retire in order to

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<sup>70</sup> Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, 164.

<sup>71</sup> Baldwin to J. C. C. Davidson, 13 November 1930, *WSC*, V/2:222.

<sup>72</sup> *Complete Speeches*, VI:5484.

advance again. So long as the continuous purpose is sincerely and unswervingly pursued, Parliament has entire discretion.<sup>73</sup>

That statement is useful as it illustrates Churchill's aversion to negotiating from anything but a position of strength. The bottom line for Churchill in India was control. The only way to guarantee Churchill what he wanted, and believed he needed, for the security of Britain was for Parliament to maintain the absolute control over India that he asserted was 'unchallengeable', and maintain it indefinitely. While that is very straightforward, it is somewhat less than a constructive plan. However, Churchill presented it as a constructive solution to the same Indian problem his colleagues felt could only be solved with concessions. In a speech to the Indian Empire Society 30 January 1931, he said;

What is warranted at this moment in India is not more repression or more concession. It is a fundamental change in the intellectual and moral attitude of Great Britain and of the government of India, which is a reflection of Great Britain...we ought to begin now by making it perfectly clear that we intend to remain the effective rulers of India in every essential for a very long and indefinite period, and that though we welcome cooperation in every branch of government from loyal and faithful Indians, we will have no truck with lawlessness or treason, and will, if necessary, suspend even the most moderate constitutional changes while there is a bad spirit abroad.<sup>74</sup>

It is difficult to see how this solution, which Churchill claimed was not repression, could have been maintained for generations to come without significant violence on both sides. Yet, Churchill

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<sup>73</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4938.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4968-4969.

claimed, within the same speech to the Indian Empire Society on 30 January 1931, that this course of action would not result in violence;

I shall be asked, "have we the strength to carry out our task? Will not great numbers of soldiers be required and terrible events take place?" I reply it is not a case for warlike force. Do not allow yourself to be frightened from your duty by language of that kind ... Confidence in ourselves and in our mission, and firm support of our faithful agents and officials, patience and perseverance, have only to be displayed – and displayed upon the theme that Britain intends to govern in India for many years to come – to save reinforcements of troops or serious bloodshed. In fact, this will be the only way by which such evils can be averted.<sup>75</sup>

In a later speech to the House of Commons, Churchill, attempting to illustrate his point, said, "The Indian problem does not require force. May I take as an example two teams of coach horses?"<sup>76</sup> An Hon. Member called out, "Men are not horses!"<sup>77</sup>

Whether the Hon. Member meant to or not, his comment pointed to exactly the problem with Churchill's view of India; he thought some men were like horses. His example of harnessed horses really serves to illustrate that Churchill viewed India in exactly the same way: as a nation and people that you could place a yoke on and direct for your benefit. But as the Hon. Member said, men are not horses. They will demand freedom. And they will not be so simple to deal with. Wavell recorded in his diary "[Churchill] hates India and everything to do with it"<sup>78</sup> Churchill's long struggle against any concession to Indian nationalism is filled with the frustration, anger, bitterness and contempt of a man who never

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<sup>75</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4969-4970.

<sup>76</sup> Speech of 12 March 1931, *Ibid.*, V:5000.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, V:5000.

<sup>78</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, 19.



accepted the people of India as equals. And because he never developed a fully human compassion for Indians he could never develop a full and constructive solution to their mutual problem. He couldn't even perceive the need to.

Why did Churchill take such a negative, yet strategically accurate, position that a majority of his own party viewed as reactionary and unrealistic? In considering the formation of the person's worldview, of a person's fundamental filters through which they see, interpret and decide, it is of value to look at their social and educational background, the influences of their family and mentors, the impact of their earlier life experiences, and the overall outlook that dominated society at the time they lived. It can be helpful to attempt to consider the psychological history, personality and personal problems that the individual may struggle with over the course of their lifetime and which can radically alter the way in which they view the world, the manner in which they may behave toward others and the choices they end up making which change the course of events over which they have influence.

Psychological history has often been challenged due to the often speculative nature of the conclusions which can be reached concerning the mental makeup of a person no longer available to be psychiatrically assessed. An early attempt at a historical psychological assessment of Winston Churchill by Anthony Storr postulated that Churchill's love of Empire in part could derive from being in a state of "infantile omnipotence"<sup>79</sup> in which an imperious baby develops into an imperial ruler without questioning the justification for that imperious elevation over others.

The conviction of being "special" is, in psychoanalytical jargon, a reflection of what is called "infantile omnipotence". Psychoanalysis postulates, with good reason, that the infant has little appreciation of his realistic stature in the world into which he is born. ... For the demands of a

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<sup>79</sup> Anthony Storr, "Churchill: The Man", *Churchill: Four Faces and the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), 28.

baby are imperious. ... These demands are met by a number of willing slaves, who hastened to fulfill them. As the child matures, he will gradually learn that his desires are not always paramount, and that the needs of others must sometimes take precedence. ... Only children may fail to outgrow this early stage of emotional development; and, although Winston Churchill was not an only child, his brother Jack ... was sufficiently younger for Winston to have retained his solitary position during five crucial years.<sup>80</sup>

As further proof of this type of speculative assessment Storr offers a glimpse of Churchill's desire for domestic comforts.

His [Churchill's] wife told Lord Moran: "Winston is a Pasha. If he cannot clap his hands for servant he calls for Walter as he enters the house. If it were left to him, he'd have the nurses for the rest of his life ... He is never so happy, Charles, as he is when one of the nurses is doing something for him, while Walter puts on his socks".<sup>81</sup>

If we are accepting that a person carries his or her fundamental personality traits into their political ideologies then one can see why Storr decided Churchill would be a great supporter of the British rule over those seen better suited for service than leadership. Winston, the Pasha, liked the idea of imperial subjects, Indians, serving their masters, Britons. For Storr it seems the explanation of Churchill's desire to retain dominion over India is essentially Freudian racism. However, as an explanation of Churchill's imperialism, it is lacking in empiricism.

A more recent psychiatric assessment of Churchill by Nassir Ghaemi in *A First-Rate Madness* avoids the pitfalls of earlier attempts at psychological history such as Storr's by restricting the analysis to four strict clinical diagnostic techniques; symptoms, genetics, the course of illness, and treatment. By ascertaining strictly factual

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<sup>80</sup> Storr, "Churchill: The Man", 28.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

knowledge in these four categories and using modern psychiatric studies he attempts to prove through factual and clinical techniques that it is often flaws and illnesses in the mental functioning of great leaders that make them suited to the needs of their time. Ghaemi criticizes Storrs, stating “I think Storr misses a deeper wisdom in Churchill’s mental illness: not the supposed grandiosity of his manic temperament, but rather the realism of his depressive suffering.”<sup>82</sup> In Ghaemi’s theory, a mentally normal and healthy individual may make a good status quo leader during times of relative national stability. However in times when crises loom over or are upon a nation, a great leader, a successful leader, is enabled to be so because they are not mentally normal and healthy individuals. The unique nature of their psychological flaws and diseases may give them unique characteristics or insights that are not present in the normal, healthy contemporaries surrounding them.

While Ghaemi addresses many different types of psychological flaws and illnesses, the one that he asserts is key to understanding Winston Churchill is Churchill’s depression. It is widely reported and accepted that Churchill suffered from serious and frequent depressive episodes of which Churchill himself often spoke and wrote. Ghaemi asserts that there is a significant difference in the way a mentally healthy person will assess a situation versus that of a person suffering from depressive episodes. Ghaemi cites studies showing that the mentally healthy have something termed “positive illusions” which lead them to believe they have greater control over their lives and the course of events.<sup>83</sup> Those struggling with depression have what has been termed “depressive realism”, in which the depressed person recognizes the degree to which they do or do not have control over their lives and the course of events and can more accurately assess a situation and plan more effectively for eventualities than the healthy person who fails to prepare for what they cannot see through their rose-colored glasses.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Nassir Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness: Uncovering the Links Between Leadership and Mental Illness*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011), 63.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-54.

Ghaemi traces recurrent episodes of serious depression and suicidal ideations throughout Churchill's life, concluding "...he was quite ill..."<sup>85</sup> with "...severe recurrent depressive episodes".<sup>86</sup> Churchill recounted to his doctor Lord Moran that when he was thirty-five, "For two or three years the light faded from the picture. I did my work. I sat in the House of Commons, but black depression settled on me".<sup>87</sup> Churchill also reported incidents of suicidal ideations to Moran such as "I don't like to stand by the side of a ship and look down into the water. A second's action would end everything. A few drops of desperation."<sup>88</sup> Ghaemi traces depression through the case histories of other family members, such as Churchill's father Randolph and daughter Diana, concluding based on their case histories that there was "a familial predisposition to severe depression among Churchill's relatives".<sup>89</sup> This was the opinion of Lord Moran as well, who told Churchill, "Your trouble – I mean the Black Dog business [Churchill's term for his prolonged periods of depression] – you got it from your forebears."<sup>90</sup> Over the issue of disarmament and appeasement, Ghaemi asks, "What made Churchill see truth where Chamberlain saw only illusion? A key difference was that Chamberlain was mentally healthy ... while Churchill was clearly not."<sup>91</sup> Ghaemi concludes, "I believe that Churchill's severe recurrent depressive episodes heightened his ability to realistically assess the threat that German posed."<sup>92</sup>

The misguided optimism of Churchill's colleagues throughout 1929 to 1939, their desire for disarmament and an end to world war, led to the misjudgment of Hitler and Germany's intentions and the failure to not only prepare for the possibility of a future major conflict. This optimism contributed to the attempts to divest Great Britain of the assets, resources and armaments upon which it would have had to rely should another

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<sup>85</sup> Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness*, 57.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>87</sup> Lord Moran, *Churchill Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran: The Struggle for Survival 1940-1965*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966). 179.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness*, 58-9.

<sup>90</sup> Moran, *Churchill Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran*, 180

<sup>91</sup> Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness*, 66.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

catastrophic war engulf it. As Ghaemi asserts, “Until Munich, Churchill’s colleagues saw Churchill as unstable, and Chamberlain as eminently sane ... Sanity prevented realistic assessment and rational design making; one had to be somewhat depressed, a bit out of the mainstream, a contrarian rebel - as Churchill was - to see what was coming.”<sup>93</sup> Neville Chamberlain, having flown to Germany to negotiate the Munich Agreement with Hitler returned 30 September 1938. “I believe,” he declared on his return to the UK, “it is peace for our time.”<sup>94</sup> On the very same day Churchill fumed at the optimistic attempts at appeasement just as he had expressed his fury at what he viewed as the reckless loosening of Britain’s grip on its most valuable and most strategically important imperial asset, India. Churchill viewed the celebrations following Chamberlain’s announcement with a friend, who reported, “I was acutely conscious of the brooding figure beside me... As we turned away, [Churchill] muttered, ‘Those poor people! They little know what they will have to face.’”<sup>95</sup>

We can link Churchill’s fears over disarmament and the intentions of Germany and his opposition to Indian constitutional reform through private letters and public statements as early as 1933. The common link is strategic realism born of Churchill’s belief in a looming struggle for national self-preservation. In a 1933 radio speech concerning the Government of India Bill, Churchill made a very rare public link between the two issues of disarmament and India to strategic realism in the face of the ‘gathering storm’ that would become World War Two. The 30 January 1933 edition of the *Glasgow Herald* quoted Churchill’s address;

The storm clouds are gathering over the European scene. Our defences have been neglected.

Danger is in the air. The mighty, discontented nations are reaching out with strong hands to regain

what they have lost-nay, to gain a predominance which they never had. Is this then the time to

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<sup>93</sup> Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness*, 217.

<sup>94</sup> “Neville Chamberlain”. UK Government Web Archive

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130109092234/http://number10.gov.uk/history-and-tour/neville-chamberlain-2/> retrieved 1 December 2014

<sup>95</sup> Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 413-14.

plunge our vast Dependency of India into the melting-pot? Would any other country behave as we are doing about our possessions overseas? Would Germany? She is preparing to reclaim by force the colonies of which she has been deprived.<sup>96</sup>

Churchill's radio address was not the only instance from 1933 in which Churchill linked his new 'gathering storm' worldview that the growing strategic threat posed by other nations such as Germany and risk posed by disarmament, made it vital to retain control of India and her vast reservoir of resources. In a private exchange in April 1933, Churchill links the two strategic concerns again,

'We are in for a long hard fight,' Churchill admitted to Captain Diggle of the India Defense League in April 1933. Victor Cazalet dined with him and found him shrouded in gloom. 'He was passionate on India, though I think his arguments are weak,' ... "He foretold a 'very nationalistic world – a world of armaments and self-contained nations.' The Empire would be more necessary than ever, yet it was slipping away."<sup>97</sup>

In an exchange of private correspondence with Lord Linlithgow in May 1933, Linlithgow chides Churchill's opposition to government policy on India. We can read in this exchange a more fleshed out strategic, and ultimately correct, assessment of the new realities Britain faces and the new post-Victorian-Edwardian worldview of Winston Churchill. The letter exchange is worth quoting and analyzing at length.

Linlithgow wrote first, on 1 May 1933:

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<sup>96</sup> *The Glasgow Herald* 30 January 1935. "Built by the Pygmies", <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2507&dat=19350130&id=9adAAAAAIBAJ&sjid=haUMAAAAAIBAJ&pg=4933,4293329> Retrieved 1 December 2014.

<sup>97</sup> Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 394-5.

I am not happy about your public attitude toward the Indian affair ... I think that something like the white paper scheme [pledging constitutional reform for India] is pretty sure to go through ... – it seems to me that, in pursuing your present course, you are greatly prejudicing your own position now and for the future.<sup>98</sup>

Linlithgow was reflecting the majority opinion on India and was accurate in advising Churchill that dropping his India position would be a politically and personally pragmatic course of action. However, when Churchill responded to Linlithgow 2 May 1933, it is clear that this ambitious life-long politician was not the slightest bit concerned with the personal cost of his position.

I do not think I should remain in politics, certainly I should take no active part in them, if it were not for India. I am therefore quite indifferent to any effect which my opposition to the white paper may produce upon my personal situation.<sup>99</sup>

Linlithgow wrote back on 4 May 1933 with a sharp criticism of Churchill's position on India which he clearly viewed as both unrealistic, and in line with other critics of Churchill then and now, a product of old-fashioned thinking hopelessly out of touch with modern realities;

If you and those who are with you are able to re-create the India of 1900, and – what is a great deal more difficult, fit it with even reasonable success into the world of 1934, I shall be the first to admit my error of judgment, and to rejoice in your strength and wisdom.

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<sup>98</sup> CHAR 2/193

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

This letter elicited from Churchill an early expression of his new realistic/pessimistic, and quite modern, post-World War One worldview. It is a clear refutation of the Victorian belief in the optimistic progressive nature of history. He also makes a clear linkage of his position on the loss of India with the loss of strategic security should Britain's very existence be threatened again by the current rise of national dictatorships and rival empires and accurately predicts some of the causes of World War Two. On 7 May 1993, Churchill wrote:

I think we differ principally in this, that you assume the future is a mere extension of the past whereas I find history full of unexpected turns and retrogressions. The mild and vague Liberalism of the early years of the 20th century, the surge of fantastic hopes and illusions that followed the armistice of the Great War have already been superseded by a violent reaction against Parliamentary and electioneering procedure and by the establishment of dictatorships real or failed in almost every country. Moreover the loss of our external connections, the shrinkage in foreign trade and shipping brings the surplus population of Britain within measurable distance of utter ruin. We are entering a period when the struggle for self-preservation is going to present itself with great intenseness to thickly populated industrial countries. It is unsound reasoning therefore to suppose that England alone among the nations will be willing to part with her control over a great dependency like India. The Dutch will not do it; the French will not do it; the Italians will not do it. As for the Japanese, they are conquering a new empire. All the time you and your friends go on mouthing the bland platitudes of an easy safe triumphant age which has passed away, whereas the tide has turned and you will be engulfed by it. In my view England is now beginning a new period of struggle and fighting for its life, and the crux of it will be not only the retention of India but a much stronger assertion of commercial rights. As long as we are sure that we press no claim on India which is not in their real interest we are justified in using our



undoubted power for their welfare and for our own. Your schemes are 20 years behind the times.<sup>100</sup>

With his final repost, “Your schemes are 20 years behind the times”, Churchill was saying he has moved not only beyond his mid-Victorian youth but also beyond the Edwardian policies that followed it. It was a clear statement that the idea of gradually ceding of power to India in order to garner future goodwill was what constituted old-fashioned thinking. Churchill did not wish to return to the comfortable ordered world of the mid-Victorian imperialist. The new and highly unpredictable world of the modern era was one in which nations could not afford to be romantic or sentimental. The loss of India was strategically, in Churchill’s ruthlessly modern 1933 worldview, a risk Britain could not afford.

However inaccurate the depiction of Churchill as a mid-Victorian Imperialist whose views were not adaptable, a man whose views were based on ignorance and romanticism, the Imperialist label does accurately reflect the fact that Churchill never wavered in his belief in the British Empire. The strategic underpinning of Churchill's India arguments was that India, as the Jewel in the Crown of that empire, would hold the same vital importance for Britain in the 1930s as it did in the 1890s. But there were key changes in the worldview of that young cavalry subaltern and the post-World War I Winston Churchill viewed it. There were more rational and forward-looking motivations for Churchill’s positions in the 1930s.

That young cavalry subaltern would have believed India to be the cornerstone of the British Empire, and the means by which the British people achieved their true destiny. The Churchill of post-World War I is a man who still believed in the manifest destiny of the British people to be a great people, to rule over others, to enjoy the benefits of empire – but this is no longer what he considers the primary purpose of Empire. The young cavalry subaltern may have viewed the history of the world as progressive; to have never imagined England

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<sup>100</sup> CHAR 2/193

could fall, literally or figuratively, to never have imagined Empire would not endure always. The post-World War I Churchill realized just how precarious and vulnerable his island nation would be without its empire, and that empire is not as durable as it once seemed. For this modern Churchill Empire is now not primarily for the elevation of the British people but the preservation of the British people. Empire, and India specifically, is now the key to survival in a world that could easily could, and for Churchill was already, falling backward toward the chaos of dictatorships and competing empires.

The mistake Churchill's critics, then and now, have made is to not realize Churchill's worldview had become chillingly modern. It is the clear-eyed post-world war view of a man who sees just how fragile his beloved country and people are. He may still consciously use the rhetoric of mid-Victorian views and values. He still may use romantic conjurings of the greatness of England when making his case for the retention of India. He uses this older mid-Victorian language because the truth of Britain's diminished strategic safety was not palatable to his wider audience. The people of England and his fellow politicians do not perceive the danger they are in quite as Churchill now does and cannily he does not focus his public rhetoric there. However, the radical and modern shift in his priorities, and his belief that his colleagues are the ones stuck in the past, is clear in his letter to Linlithgow.

If anything that exchange demonstrates clearly Churchill having totally abandoned the comfortable assumptions of his Victorian worldview. No more jolly little wars, no more foreign adventures to civilize the uncivilized and draw benefit from it for one's own self. Now faced with the horrors of modern war, with the fact that there will be no civilized engagements anymore, that there will only be a struggle for survival in which Britain must muster all its possible resources it was simply too great a risk not to hold India as firmly and as long as possible. This is the rationale of the modern Churchill, the strategically ruthless Churchill who puts England at the center of all his political policies and actions. From a strategic standpoint disarmament is a policy to be opposed but when the time comes to rearm it is possible to do so even though it would come at great cost

and effort. However the dismemberment of the British Empire and the release of India, when danger was to come upon England, were not reversible. It is understandable therefore, that India would overwhelmingly concern him, as it was the action which would be impossible to recover from.

Churchill's colleagues were as dismissive and derisive over Churchill's opposition to disarmament and appeasement as they were to his opposition to Gandhi and Indian nationalism. Why is it that one of these two primary causes he championed during his wilderness years is still viewed as irrational and reactionary yet the other is now viewed as great and prescient? Why have the boos and hisses which accompanied Churchill's advocating rearmament been rightfully dismissed yet the negative portrait of Churchill on India persist to this day? How can the clear strategic link between these two primary causes championed by Churchill during his wilderness years be so obscured by the perpetuation of one negative portrait while the other is dismissed?

As we assess the Churchill of 1929-1945 we find racism toward Indians and disparagement of the Indian peoples' ability to self-govern. He morally fails to recognize the universal right to self-determination. The extreme language and behaviour of his rage and racism often create the impression of irrationality and the lack of a factual basis for his anti-reform positions. There is conflict between Churchill's lip service to the paternalistic mid-Victorian duty to care for the Indian people and his disdain and hatred of Hindus and ruthless exploitation of India during World War II. The first is a palatable, consciously assumed, facade to justify his true beliefs – a ruthless ethnocentrism with Britons as a race whose great destiny took precedent over other nations and races. When contemporaries accused Churchill of being a 19th-century mid-Victorian fossil they failed to perceive his new short and long-term strategic goals. Rather than blame Churchill's opposition on differences that are legitimate and rational it was often easier and more effective to accuse your opponent of irrationality and emotionalism while rose-coloured glasses and a belief in historical progression blinded Churchill's opponent to looming danger.

Churchill's imperialism was a combination of romanticism and national self-interest. For Churchill, as Amery wrote, "England is still the starting point and the ultimate object of policy."<sup>101</sup> In his view the empire was a possession that gave to Britain a world position and prestige that she would not otherwise have enjoyed, and whose absolute retention was essential. Just as Amery's other quotes, with their colorful images of Churchill as ignorant, old-fashioned, mid-Victorian and insane may divert the reader from the intellectual underpinnings of Churchill's Indian arguments, this quote serves as a good starting point to illuminate some of the more rational and forward-looking motivations for his positions.

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<sup>101</sup> Rhodes James, *Churchill: a Study in Failure*, 199.

### CHAPTER 3 RISE OF THE DUAL PORTRAIT

The dual portrait of Winston Churchill as both a prescient strategist in foreseeing the coming of World War II and an irrational fossil unable to grasp the political realities of post World War I Britain was formed primarily in the so called “wilderness years” 1929-1939. Churchill waged an unyielding and, to his colleagues and voters a pointless crusade, to prevent any concession to India nationalism. Churchill repeatedly asserted during this time that no other issue was as important to him as opposition to Indian constitutional reform.

Churchill persisted in opposition to constitutional reform for India even once it became clear he did not have the support of his own party. This ambitious man risked his political career. He expended his political capital. He damaged his personal reputation opposing reform in India to the point that he was not taken seriously later when he warned of the importance of rearmament to counter the growing fascist threat in Europe. His tooth and nail fight against any concession earned him his reputation as an imperialist reactionary. His position on India triggered his exclusion from power and helped to destroy any political influence he may have had a chance for in this period. Ultimately it earned him a level of derision at that time that continues to influence modern historical commentary and contribute most heavily to the negative side of the dual portrait of Churchill today.

Sir Samuel Hoare reported to the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, that when Stanley Baldwin the Conservative party leader, pledged in Parliament on 7 November 1929 to support the government’s 31 October 1929 promise of eventual Dominion status for India, “Throughout the debate Winston was almost demented

with fury and since the debate has hardly spoken to anyone.”<sup>102</sup> In 1929, the furious Churchill was not so out of step with his party colleagues. Initially many conservatives were upset with Baldwin and did not support Dominion Status for India. As Conservative politician George Lane-Fox wrote to the Indian Viceroy, Lord Irwin, “there is a good deal of discontent among Conservatives who are certainly finding SB’s [Stanley Baldwin] leadership rather uninspiring.”<sup>103</sup> Thus, in 1929, Churchill could be justified in his belief the campaign against Indian constitutional reform was not a losing cause. However, within a few short years the majority of Churchill’s colleagues came to believe the concessions were reasonable and necessary. Yet Churchill continued on a ten-year fight to retain control of India. The result was Churchill’s isolation from the Conservative party and marginalization nationally.

Churchill declared often throughout the 1930’s that the retention of India was, for him, the single most important political issue. However he was not the only politician who at the same time had decided to make India the major cause of his political career. By 1930, Baldwin had committed himself the path of self-government for India. He was risking his political position and was prepared if necessary to go out of politics altogether over India. Thus by 1931 it was Churchill’s fight over India, and the inevitable clash with Baldwin, that had so harmed him politically that it destroyed the possibility of holding Conservative Party positions or subsequent governmental appointments. That Churchill’s vehemence and focus on the India issue during the 1930s was the primary cause of his break with his own party and leader was confirmed by Churchill himself who wrote,

It was on India that our definite breach occurred. The Prime Minister ... pressed forward with his planned Indian self-government ... On the release of Mr. Gandhi in order that he might become the envoy of nationalist India to the London conference, I reached the breaking point in my relations

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<sup>102</sup> *WSC*, V/2:111.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, V/2:181

with Mr. Baldwin. He seemed quite content with these developments, was in general accord with the Prime Minister and the Viceroy, and led the Conservative opposition decidedly along this path. I felt sure we should lose India in the final result and that measureless disasters would come upon the Indian peoples. I therefore after a while resigned from the shadow cabinet upon this issue. On January 27, 1931, I wrote to Mr. Baldwin: “now that our convergence of view upon Indian policy has become public, I feel I ought not any longer to attend the meetings of your ‘Business Committee’ ...”<sup>104</sup>

It is not surprising then when it came time to fill the key positions of the 1931 National Government, where self-government for India would be a key issue, the imperialist Churchill was excluded from Cabinet. A clear indication of the gap between Churchill and the political wisdom of the time was that his views were not even shared by his own party. Churchill’s language in opposition to the Government of India Bill was also isolating. In 1931 he made alarmist statements such as “This is a frightful prospect to have opened up so wantonly, so recklessly, so incontinently.”<sup>105</sup> During an address in 23 February 1931, less than a month after resigning from the shadow cabinet, Churchill predicted utter catastrophe for Britain if India attained Dominion Status;

You here in this hall today will live long enough to lose not only your inheritance, but your livelihood. The continuance of our present confusion and disintegration will reduce us within a generation, and perhaps sooner, to the degree of states like Holland and Portugal, which nursed valiant races and held great possessions, but were stripped of them in the crush and competition of the world ... If Great Britain loses her Empire and India and her share in world trade and her sea

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<sup>104</sup> Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 30-1.

<sup>105</sup> Speech of 26 January 1931, *Complete Speeches*, V:4956.

power, she would be like a vast whale stranded in one of your Scottish bays, which swam in upon the tide and that was left to choke and rot upon the sands.<sup>106</sup>

By 1933, four years into Churchill's long fight over India, his determination, vehemence and isolation from mainstream politics had not diminished. As a result he progressively deepened the damage he was doing to his public and personal reputation. In a 1933 radio speech he denounced The Government of India Bill as "a monstrous monument of shame built by the pygmies."<sup>107</sup> By 1935, the extremity of Churchill's rhetoric had escalated. In a speech to the India Defense League in March 1935, Churchill spoke again of the Government of India Bill. He declared,

The Bill is dead. It is as dead as mutton. But nevertheless the Government assures us it must be placed on the statute book. The corpse must be carried forward as a trophy. A docile majority who have closed their minds to reason and facts pay no attention to the change in or the collapse of the Government case. If they think they are marching with the cortège of the India bill they may find they are attending their own funeral as well.<sup>108</sup>

Having declared them pygmies and dead men, Churchill's words and actions so compromised his political colleagues' view of him that many ceased to take him seriously at all. Martin Gilbert writes,

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<sup>106</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4990.

<sup>107</sup> *The Glasgow Herald* 30 January 1935. "Built by the Pygmies", <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2507&dat=19350130&id=9adAAAAAIBAJ&sjid=haUMAAAAAIBAJ&pg=4933,4293329> Retrieved 1 December 2014. Also in Speech of 30 January 1935, *Complete Speeches*, V:5467.

<sup>108</sup> Speech of 21 March 1935, *Complete Speeches*, V:5558.



Although Churchill's India campaign had not ended, it had faltered amid the uncompromising belittling of his motives by Party leaders and stalwarts who were determined not to let him influence either the Party or the future of India. The government's disregard of Churchill's concerns about India, and its refusal to abandon disarmament despite the German threat, marked a low point in Church's hopes of influencing events.<sup>109</sup>

The above quote suggests a further compromising factor for Churchill's and his campaign to hold India; his motives. It was the belief of many of Churchill's political colleagues that Churchill only opposed the Conservative leader's pledge to support Dominion Status for India in order to undermine Baldwin's party leadership. British press magnate, Lord Rothemere wrote to Winston Churchill 31 January 1931, "My dear Winston you have really got your foot this time on the ladder that quite soon leads to the premiership... This country is sick to death of the duds that surround their dud conservative leader."<sup>110</sup> Anglo-Canadian press magnate Lord Beaverbrook wrote to former Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden on 2 January 1931, "Winston Churchill is trying to make a corner for himself in Indian affairs. He is now taking up the stand of the veritable diehard. But he does not carry conviction ... His voice lacks that note of sincerity for which the country looks."<sup>111</sup> These were two differing opinions on the degree of Churchill's success but the same opinion as to what Churchill's real endgame was. Amery was of the opinion there was not only personal ambition but also an irrationally outdated political belief underlying Churchill's motives. This opinion is one of the cornerstones of the negative half of the dual portrait of Churchill that persists through today. According to Paul Addison, Amery believed

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<sup>109</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1991), 520-521.

<sup>110</sup> *WSC*, V/2:254.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, V/2:241-242.

His [Churchill's] India campaign bore all the hallmarks of a last bid for the deterring prize. But calculation was interwoven with conviction. Amery himself was convinced that Churchill was a politician of incorrigibly old-fashioned outlook. Churchill's belief in the 'White Man's Burden' made it impossible for him to accept the notion that India might one day be governed by Indians.<sup>112</sup>

The contemporary commentary this belief generated was scathing and personally damaging to Churchill. Not only was the validity of his arguments against constitutional reform for India dismissed on this basis, but the negative impression Churchill's actions during this period left on his colleagues continues to influence historical opinion of him long after his stance on India has proven to be one he adhered to long after all hope of political ambition and influence had ended for him.

Churchill anticipated that Baldwin's 1929 endorsement of the Labour government's commitment to eventual Dominion status for India would result in a severe crisis within the party and that greater public concern would result from these proposed reforms. Lord Linlithgow was proved correct in his assessment when he wrote to Churchill that, "I think you are in process of working yourself into a very poor tactical position. The Indian problem does not interest the mass of voters in this country."<sup>113</sup> Yet Churchill's correspondence, speeches in and out of parliament, and his published articles during this period all demonstrate an unwillingness to abandon the cause despite the pledge of Dominion Status for India being considered a wise and timely concession by Churchill's political contemporaries and despite Churchill's crusade not eliciting the public support he had anticipated. In a House of Commons debate on 26 January 1931, Churchill predicted the Government's India policy would proceed,

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<sup>112</sup> Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front 1900-1955*, (London: Pimlico, 1992), 302.

<sup>113</sup> CHAR 2/193

towards the goal of complete severance between Great Britain and India ... How will the British public feel about all this? ... I do not believe our people will consent to be edged, pushed, talked and cozened out of India ... When the nation finds that our whole position is in jeopardy... a reaction of the most vehement character will sweep this country...<sup>114</sup>

By 1933 Churchill had misjudged not only the political support he had for his opposition to Baldwin's stance on India but misjudged the public support for his opposition. In his exchange of correspondence in 1933 with Linlithgow, Churchill clearly believed the public would be concerned when he wrote on 2 May,

You are greatly mistaken in supposing that India does not interest the mass of voters. It interests profoundly all those loyal, strong faithful forces upon which the might of Britain depends.<sup>115</sup>

Later in the same letter Churchill clearly indicated he believed there was greater support for his position on India within the party, sufficient to result in disaster for the party leadership.

Are you not a little premature in assuming that the White Paper scheme will go through the House of Commons and House of Lords? If so the process of passing it will create a split in the conservative party of the most grievous kind, the responsibility for which will rest with the promoters of this disaster is measure and those who have connived at it.<sup>116</sup>

With Churchill's crusade against the Joint Select Committee on India's progress toward the government's eventual White Paper on India in 1933 he continued to do himself personal and political damage.

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<sup>114</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:4956.

<sup>115</sup> CHAR 2/193

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India 1931-1935, became an even bitterer opponent to Churchill and his anti-reform activities during this period. Not only was Hoare's job defending the proposed White Paper on India made harder by Churchill's public opposition to constitutional reform, in Churchill's zealous opposition to the government's position, Hoare along with Lord Derby became Churchill's targets in rash and ill-conceived accusations over their pro-reform activities for the Joint Select Committee on India. Churchill, in an incendiary speech to the House of Commons characterized Hoare and Derby's alleged improper influence as "repugnant" and "grossly irregular and highly objectionable".<sup>117</sup> He characterized the alleged breach of Privilege as "gross and grave"<sup>118</sup>

This incident did significant damage to both Churchill's reputation and his chances for success in his India campaign. Despite Hoare and Derby being acquitted Churchill spoke in the House of Commons on 13 June 1934, making accusations of evidence having been suppressed. Amery records in his diary that he spoke next, mocking Churchill for having "achieved the unique feat of disclosing a mare's nest inside a mare's nest...and worked it up into a climax of his chosen motto being 'fiat justitia ruat caelum' [Let justice be done even if the heavens fall]. And Winston turned around and asked me to translate 'If I can trip up Sam the government is bust'. The house convulsed."<sup>119</sup> Instead of discrediting Hoare's White Paper on India, and compromising the party leadership, Churchill had instead managed to make both himself and his arguments the subject of ridicule.

While Churchill's opposition to reform in India may have stemmed in part from ambition to replace Baldwin as party leader, if that were his sole purpose, he persisted well beyond all reason. Once in his backers dwindled to a minority of backbencher reactionaries and he was not likely to overthrow the leader of his party on India.

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<sup>117</sup> Speech of 16 April 1934, *Complete Speeches*, V:5356.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, V:5357.

<sup>119</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 382-383.

Churchill's personal ambition and contrary position on India led to a dismissal of the validity of his arguments and generated negative contemporaneous commentary on Churchill's character and judgment that continues to be cited by modern commentators. Not surprisingly, some highly negative statements against Churchill originate from Samuel Hoare during this period, such as when he wrote, as quoted by Arthur Herman in his book, *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*,

I believe that at the back of his mind he thinks he will not only smash the Government but that England is going Fascist,"... "and that he, or someone like him, will eventually be able to rule India as Mussolini governs North Africa.<sup>120</sup>

Such contemptuous opinions demonstrate the continued influence Churchill's colleagues' opinions when they appear in modern historical assessments of Churchill.

One of the sources of this damaging depiction was a deliberate campaign to counter Churchill's India crusade. Churchill was the primary political proponent for the retention of India. Certainly Churchill's contemporaries viewed him as the key impediment to their policy goals. As Linlithgow warned Churchill "... your Indian campaign will make my job as chairman of the joint select committee harder in one way in that Sam Hoare and other protagonists will have to go ... up-and-down the country defending this policy."<sup>121</sup> That is precisely what pro-reform proponents had to do. In a letter to the Viceroy of India dated 5 May 1933, Hoare writes, "We are trying to get up an effective organization to meet the Winston propaganda in the country."<sup>122</sup> Hoare writes again to the Viceroy in a letter dated 19 May 1933, "Churchill has got a lot of money from various sources and the attack is being cleverly organized. By the time this letter reaches you, you will have seen that

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<sup>120</sup> Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 394.

<sup>121</sup> CHAR 2/193

<sup>122</sup> WSC, V/2:594.

we have started a counter propaganda.”<sup>123</sup> A single man was the face of the pro-empire campaign and if that one man was discredited so too would his campaign be discredited.

Once Churchill’s supporters in the House of Commons dwindled to a minority and Baldwin had successfully staked his leadership of the Conservative party on prevailing on the India issue, the targeting of Churchill as the primary threat to India Bill could become even more direct. On 28 June 1933 the Conservative Central Council would meet the introduction of the India Bill. A highly political editorial appeared in *The Times* on 8 June 1933 titled “The Conservative Choice”. The article was a clear warning to those members of the party who may choose to follow Churchill’s banner that they may be inviting uncertainty and danger for the Conservative party given the likely consequence of revolting against Baldwin for little gain in policy; “Though parliament will rightly give fullest examination to the White Paper there can be no permanent reversal of the broad lines of policy which it represents...what would follow from a Churchill triumph at this representative gathering?...Mr. Baldwin might think it necessary to withdraw from the leadership of the party, and even from public life.”<sup>124</sup>

The effects of the government’s campaign to counter Churchill’s propaganda directly were clear as the meeting took place. Counter-propaganda combined with Baldwin’s deliberately staking his political career on it and Churchill’s own excessive language and intemperate behavior to drum up hostility against him. When Churchill addressed the meeting his speech was continually interrupted with cries of “no”, shouts of “withdraw!” counter-cheers and laughter.<sup>125</sup> A member challenged Churchill’s failure to offer solutions only criticisms of Baldwin’s vision by interrupting with a shout of “What is your plan?”<sup>126</sup> Churchill responded, “I have been asked what is my plan. I will answer if you will treat me with consideration. [Interruption] It is easy

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, V/2:604.

<sup>124</sup> *The Times* Archive Collection [www.thetimes.co.uk](http://www.thetimes.co.uk) 8 June 1933, “The Conservative Choice.” <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1933-06-08/13/2.html> Retrived 8 December 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Speech of 28 June 1933, *Complete Speeches*, V:5277.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, V:5278.

to run propaganda to victimize a particular man. [Dissent and laughter].”<sup>127</sup> The highly political editorial in *The Times* three weeks earlier illustrated the manner in which this had been done to Churchill and he failed to justify his opinions.

Churchill was often his own worst enemy, employing rhetoric and undertaking actions that greatly aided in diminishing his own reputation without assistance from government organized propaganda. Although his position on India may have stemmed from rational strategic concerns, the extremity and emotionalism of his language and his public reactionary justifications of his stance devalued and radicalized his message. The rational underpinnings of his case became lost in rhetoric, passion, and his failure to link his position to his real strategic fears.

That aspect of Churchill’s rhetoric did not go unnoticed or unjudged by his colleagues. Neville Chamberlain noted Churchill was an, “‘extraordinarily brilliant’ speaker but a man of dubious ‘character’ and ‘judgment’: ‘I have noticed that in all disputes of a departmental character that I have had with him he has had to give way because his case was not well founded.’”<sup>128</sup> Churchill himself acknowledged his rhetoric could get away from him and undermined him in a particularly damaging way. When he admitted, “‘I very often yield to the temptation of adapting my facts to my phrases.’”<sup>129</sup>

In a colorful yet telling moment in 1936, Baldwin said to a friend,

When Winston was born lots of fairies swooped down on his cradle gifts-imagination, eloquence, industry, ability, and then came a fairy who said, “no person has a right to so many gifts,” picked him up and gave him such a shake and twist that with all these gifts he was denied judgment and

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<sup>127</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:5278.

<sup>128</sup> Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: the British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution*, (New York: Envoy Press, 1986), 60.

<sup>129</sup> Norman Rose, "Churchill and Zionism", *Churchill*, edited by Robert Blake and William Roger Lewis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, , 1993, 147-166), 151.

wisdom... [which is why] while we delight to listen to him in this House we do not take his advice.”<sup>130</sup>

Being perceived as having the case that is not well founded reflects negatively on Churchill and his potential rational arguments. Being racist and alarmist in language does not help but contribute to negative assessment of Churchill's nature and character. In addition, Churchill's own speeches and articles tended to support his contemporaries' accusations of his lack of a modern viewpoint. Churchill himself created a dramatic and sensationalistic record to be used by later historical commentators in the formation of the dual portrait.

Consider the dismissive racism in Churchill's speech on 18 March 1931;

Here is you have nearly 350 millions of people, lifted to a civilization, and to enough of peace, water, sanitation and progress far above anything they could possibly have achieved themselves or could maintain. This wonderful fact is due to the guidance and authority of a few thousand of British officials.<sup>131</sup>

In the same speech Churchill was equally contemptuous of his colleagues, condemning the, “hysterical megalomania of the Round Table Conference.”<sup>132</sup>

Two of Churchill's own speeches from November and December 1930 utilized alarmist rhetoric far more suited to the label hysterical. He warned his audience;

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<sup>130</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: The Wilderness Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 155.

<sup>131</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:5006.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* V:5006.



If the destinies and fortunes of the Indian people are handed over to the politically minded, highly educated Hindus, once they obtained power and control of India, they would reduce that country to the deepest depths of Oriental tyranny and despotism.<sup>133</sup>

The [Indian nationalist] extremists...picture to themselves an early date when they will obtain complete control of the whole of Hindustan, when the British will be no more to them than any other European nation, when white people will only be in India upon sufferance, when debts and obligations of all kinds will be repudiated and when an army of white janissaries, officered if necessary from Germany, will be hired to secure the armed ascendancy of the Hindu.<sup>134</sup>

Churchill described Gandhi as “this malevolent fanatic”<sup>135</sup> in a speech to a conservative meeting in 20 August 1930. In a later speech on 23 February 1931 Churchill declared “It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious middle temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the east, striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace...”<sup>136</sup> Racism cannot be discounted as a factor in demonizing language Churchill used in his depictions of Hindus, and of Gandhi in particular, and in his pessimistic view of Indian potential. Evident racism re-enforced his contemporaries’ dismissal of Churchill and his contemporaries’ record of his prejudice greatly impacted how he is negatively portrayed today.

One of the most serious outcomes of Churchill’s fear-mongering rhetoric on India was the diminished impact his speeches would have when applied to his other great cause of the inter-war period, re-armament in the face of the growing threat of Nazi aggression. Rhodes James notes the cost to Churchill and his credibility when he used extreme language in making his case to retain India, “By the violence of his speeches and the

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<sup>133</sup> Speech of 6 November 1930, *Complete Speeches*, V:4927.

<sup>134</sup> Speech of 11 December 1930, *Ibid.*, V:4934-4935.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4913.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, V:4986.

exaggerations of his images he had previously debased the coinage of alarmism. Many of Churchill's phrases used in the India controversy were to be subsequently repeated in another context, with inevitably a lesser impact.”<sup>137</sup> Churchill, the boy who cried wolf, had demonized Gandhi. With Hitler the real demon had arrived but no one was listening anymore.

It is clear that Churchill did in fact have considerable contempt for Gandhi and his nationalist aspirations. Churchill clearly did not perceive the true intentions of Gandhi nor believe in Gandhi's commitment to his socially progressive, pacifist beliefs. This is problematic when in hindsight we know Churchill was wrong in every way save only in his recognition of the threat Gandhi did pose to Churchill's intention for Britain to retain control of India indefinitely.

Modern historians in addressing Churchill's extreme antipathy for Gandhi have to contend with the fact that today Gandhi is one of the world's most admired historical figures. Consider a small selection of recent news articles regarding the attitudes of both Britons and people around the world when comparing Gandhi and Churchill. A November 2005 article from BBC news was entitled “Heads prefer Gandhi to Churchill: Mahatma Gandhi provides the role model for head teachers.”<sup>138</sup> The article analyzing their attitudes concluded,

Head teachers would rather be like Mahatma Gandhi, the advocate of "passive resistance", than Britain's wartime leader Winston Churchill.

A survey of head teachers, carried out by their professional training college, says heads most admire the leadership style of the Indian leader...

And the most popular style was typified by Mahatma Gandhi, who led a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience in India against British colonial rule ...

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<sup>137</sup> Rhodes James, *Churchill: a Study in Failure*, 214.

<sup>138</sup> *BBC News*, “Heads prefer Gandhi to Churchill. Mahatma Gandhi provides the role model for head teachers”, Monday 14 November 2005, 10:56 GMT.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/4435032.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4435032.stm) Retrieved 27 July 2014.

In contrast, only about one in 10 heads approved of the "coercive leadership" model of Winston Churchill.<sup>139</sup>

During extensive global surveying during Britain's Millennium celebrations, the BBC surveyed the attitudes of its readers both in Britain and the world. In articles that sought the opinions of both prominent experts and its global readership, the BBC reported in 2000;

In May, we wanted your choice of the greatest world leader of the last thousand years. We also asked two experts for their views: John Simpson and Jon Snow, who chose Winston Churchill and Elizabeth I respectively. BBC News Online users begged to differ and put Mahatma Gandhi firmly into the top spot ... He led India's movement for independence from British rule and is one of the most respected spiritual and political leaders of the 1900s...<sup>140</sup>

In this particular public survey, Churchill came in second.<sup>141</sup> Consider also the second millennium survey pitting opinions of Gandhi against those of Churchill. Again in 2000 the BBC reported,

In December we asked you to vote for the greatest man of the last thousand years. We asked the views of United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan and businessman Richard Branson, who chose Adam Smith and Leonardo da Vinci respectively... But BBC News Online readers put

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<sup>139</sup> *BBC News*, "Heads prefer Gandhi to Churchill. Mahatma Gandhi provides the role model for head teachers", Monday 14 November 2005, 10:56 GMT.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/4435032.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4435032.stm) Retrieved 27 July 2014.

<sup>140</sup> *BBC News*, "Who was your choice for greatest world leader of the past 1000 years: Mahatmas Gandhi"

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/millennium/may/winner.stm> May 2000 Retrieved 27 July 2014.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

Mahatma Gandhi firmly at number one ... He led India's movement for independence from British rule and is one of the most respected spiritual and political leaders of the 20th century.<sup>142</sup>

In this second survey Winston Churchill fell to eighth behind Gandhi.<sup>143</sup>

The modern reader, and certainly, since he or she does not live in an social or moral vacuum, the modern historian, must contend with forming a picture of Winston Churchill that can encompass the realities of Churchill's racism and hatred of Gandhi. In acknowledging the words and actions of Churchill from both himself and from the reports of those around him modern historical commentary inevitably transmits and preserves the highly negative half of the dual portrait of Churchill as being hopelessly reactionary and morally flawed when it came to Indian self-determination.

Churchill was thusly dismissed as a man who failed to hold his temper, whose oratory could carry him away from the facts and into hysteria, who could appear childish and irrational when faced with opposition advocating the very thing he fears the most. This behavior was and is most often attributed to flaws in the character and personality of Churchill. However, some of Churchill's excesses could be interpreted as symptoms of mild mania and self-medication with alcohol. It is possible that some of the derisive and dismissive opinions of Churchill's colleagues can be viewed through this prism when seeking to understand why so much sensationalistic content exists to haunt him still.

While the relevance of Churchill's depressive realism has been discussed in the previous chapter, a further diagnosis of Churchill by Nassir Ghaemi is relevant to understanding the impact Churchill's 'unconventional persona' may have had on the behavior that triggered his wilderness years and the formation of the negative side of Churchill's dual portrait during this time. Ghaemi wrote,

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<sup>142</sup> *BBC News*, "Who was your choice for greatest man of the past 1000 years: Mahatmas Gandhi" <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/events/millennium/dec/winner.stm> Retrieved 27 July 2014 December 2000.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

Many assume that Churchill's isolation made him depressed; it may be that Churchill's depression made him isolated. Churchill was relegated to the Wilderness, by Baldwin and others, because his unconventional persona (partly reflecting his mood illness) provided an excuse to ignore his sadly realistic political judgment.<sup>144</sup>

Ghaemi contends that Churchill's depressive episodes cycled between episodes of mild mania and that Churchill, in an age before modern psychiatric drugs, was self-medicating with alcohol. As Ghaemi writes, "observations suggest that when he wasn't depressed, Churchill probably had hypomanic (mild manic) symptoms..."<sup>145</sup> and that Churchill

self-medicated with liquor. 'I have taken more out of alcohol,' he averred, 'than alcohol has taken out of me.' Most historians have seen alcohol as a rationale for his moodiness, making a cause out of what may have been an effect.<sup>146</sup>

Churchill's depression may have made him the far-sighted strategist of the positive side of his dual portrait but it may have been the periods when he was not depressed but manic that contributed to the negative side of the portrait. An important observation by Ghaemi to this effect may help to explain the origins of some of the more damaging contemporary reports of Churchill's intemperate and extreme behavior.

Many historians now acknowledge his depression, but they generally don't appreciate that when he was not depressed, Churchill's moods shifted frequently. He was never "himself", because his "self"

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<sup>144</sup> Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness*, 65.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

kept changing. When his depressive episodes subsided, he became another person - disagreeable and aggressive.<sup>147</sup>

This other side of the coin of Churchill's depression aligns well with a considerable number of the letters, diaries, memoranda, and other records of those who dealt with Churchill on the matter of India, and indeed on a host of other issues, in which they report precisely this behavior which to them seemed to have no explanation other than what has come down to us as one side of Churchill's dual portrait; the widespread and serious doubt, on the subject of India, that he is sane. This is a severe obstacle to see past then and now in order to understand that Churchill did in fact have valid strategic reasons for the retention of India with the British Empire. Churchill himself may have been flawed. The way Churchill made his points may often have been flawed. However that does not mean the points themselves were flawed.

A great deal has been said concerning Churchill's emotional, irrational and reactionary reasons for his stance on India. Churchill the mid-Victorian could conjure up the glory of the high Imperial age to appeal to patriotism, Anglo-Saxon superiority, and the past benefits of Empire. Churchill the orator, when speaking in the House of Commons, could fall victim to adapting his facts to his words. Churchill the alarmist could publish fanciful articles that foretold the utter catastrophe that will accompany constitutional reform for India. Churchill the racist could fail to imagine a non-white society capable of governing itself. However, as we saw in the previous chapter's analysis of the Linlithgow letter exchange, Churchill the private correspondent, with no audience save his fellow correspondent, was capable of producing modern, rational and valid strategic reasons for his position on India. Despite that, Linlithgow's responses to Churchill's assertion of a dire future reflect the then prevailing lack of the foresight that Churchill, in the positive side of his dual portrait, is so lauded for possessing. Linlithgow wrote,

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<sup>147</sup> Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness*, 60.

You envisage, I think I discern, an approaching period of red truth and claw, a struggle for the means to live. I doubt it, Winston!<sup>148</sup>

While we in hindsight know Britain would soon face just such a struggle to maintain itself economically, politically, and indeed literally, once in the midst of World War II, Linlithgow continues,

Forgive me, then, if I say that it is not, it seems to me, so much I am “mouthing the bland platitudes of an age that has passed away, 20 years behind the times”, but rather *you* who are hanging, hairy, from a branch, while you sputter the atavistic shibboleths of an age destined very soon to retreat into the forgotten past.<sup>149</sup>

It is a remarkable statement coming from any of Churchill’s contemporaries. However it comes from a fellow Conservative politician and a professed friend of Churchill. It comes in the form of a private letter directly to Churchill and not correspondence between two of Churchill’s detractors. It is not produced for propaganda or to influence the opinions of anyone other than Churchill himself. The image it portrays is the honest opinion of Linlithgow. He views Churchill’s motivation on India, despite the prescient arguments Churchill has just communicated to him, as Churchill, “hanging, hairy, from a branch, while you sputter the atavistic shibboleths of an age destined very soon to retreat into the forgotten past.”<sup>150</sup> This is a portrait of Churchill as a hopelessly old-fashioned reactionary irrationally hanging from the branch of a dying concept of

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<sup>148</sup> CHAR 2/193

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

Empire that he could not shake. It is striking, and is still being handed down to us today despite the great advantage historical hindsight gives us over Linlithgow, writing in 1933.

According to Middlemas and Barnes,

More than any other factor, [Churchill's] opposition and the support it gathered, and the maneuvers in which this man indulged, held back the progress of Indian self-government. In the teeth of a need so urgent, he fought against reform with the brilliance and a tenacity which would have dignified a better cause.<sup>151</sup>

True, Churchill was not on the side of the angels in his crusade against Indian self-government. There can be no question that he was advocating racism, suppression of political freedom, and exploitation of one group for the benefit of another. Morally, there are certainly better causes. This applies in particular, especially from today's viewpoint, to Churchill's hatred and persecution of a figure such as Gandhi, who is now widely viewed as a more impressive world leader, and certainly a more moral leader, than Churchill. The question is not whether Churchill's cause was better in any moral, social or democratic sense, but whether it was a better in order to safeguard Great Britain as that nation would soon be engulfed in World War II.

Gopal maintains that India was Churchill's 'blind spot'.

The isolated instances of policy or improvements in personal relations with Nehru which bring him out in a better light deserve mention; but they cannot deface a shadow thrown on a glorious reputation.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 669.

<sup>152</sup> Gopal, "Churchill and India", 471.



It seems when it comes to Empire, pessimistic and pragmatic self-interest when determining the best strategic position for your nation will not necessarily generate a “glorious” reputation. Nor will it be recognized as equally motivated by other pessimistic pragmatic strategic positions taken within the same time frame that do in fact generate a glorious reputation.

His contemporaries ignored Churchill over disarmament as much as they derided Churchill over India. We have seen many reasons why the chorus of voices dismissing and damaging Churchill came about. One of the prime factors in the negative portrayal of Churchill by his contemporaries is their disbelief of another conflict such as World War II engulfing Britain in the near future. Churchill’s colleagues did not see, did not believe, the danger their nation would face in the near future. It is thus understandable that they failed to perceive the strategic realism behind Churchill’s insistence on the retention of India.

Later historical commentators have the advantage of viewing Churchill with the knowledge that his predictions of the ‘gathering storm’ were accurate, realistic and far-sighted. They can and have re-examined the derisive contemporary commentary of Churchill’s opposition to disarmament and applaud him for his determined if lonely crusade to warn of the danger facing Britain. It is a portrait of Churchill as a prescient clear thinking strategist who became a great war leader. The opposing portrait of the irrational imperialist reactionary, unable to grasp post World War I political reality, is logical to re-assess for the same reason. The failure of contemporaries to see Churchill’s strategic realism is understandable. The way Churchill made his points was often flawed. However that does not mean the position he advocated was invalid. The failure of modern commentators to recognize there was a strategically sound basis for Churchill’s imperialism is not as easy to understand.

## CHAPTER 4 TRUE STRATEGIC AND IMPERIAL INTENTIONS

It has been argued that Churchill's relentless opposition to Indian constitutional reform was not the product of an irrational old-fashioned brand of imperialism with little grasp of the true issues facing Great Britain.

Churchill's crusade against any concession of Imperial power in India can be interpreted as a highly modern view, rationally informed by a vision of the dangers and rapid reversals of history that Great Britain could be subject to in the near future. Churchill appears to have undergone a conscious evolution from mid-Victorian Liberalism, to 'depressive realism'. World War I was no historical progression of nations. In its aftermath Churchill remained an imperialist, but he was an imperialist who had developed a modern ruthless view of the purpose of Empire, especially in times of strategic peril. In Churchill's true worldview the purpose of Empire was not for Britain to make sacrifices of blood and treasure in order to protect and serve the Indian people. Instead, India was a vast reservoir that sacrificed her blood and treasure to safeguard Britain.

Churchill's publically expressed justification of Empire as only existing for the protection and welfare of the Indian people was often heard in Churchill's speeches and broadcasts from 1929-1939. Those speeches would lead one to anticipate that, upon becoming Prime Minister in 1940, Churchill's policies regarding India would match his rhetoric. He would have, as Prime Minister, enacted a virtuous Empire that sought to benefit the Imperial Power only so far as it was in balance with the interests of its colonial possession. He would have conferred the justice peace and material security upon its people that he claimed them in need.

In notes for an undelivered speech to the House of Commons in 1943, Churchill, now Britain's wartime Prime Minister, wrote,

Now if you go back to centuries, you see quite a different kind of world. We see the exploitation of weaker races by the white man... But the broad, shining, liberating and liberalizing tides of the Victorian era float across this scene. The exploitation of weaker and less well armed peoples became odious, together with the idea of subject races... For the last 80 years – for generations – the British have had no idea what ever of exploitation in India, but only service.<sup>153</sup>

Despite Churchill's public rhetoric of a just and benevolent empire persisting well after 1940, it is through his wartime premiership that Churchill's worldview, stripped of all its lofty rhetoric, can be discerned. Decisions and actions undertaken by Churchill from 1939 to 1945 belie his portrait of a just and benevolent British Empire. Despite his contemporaries' assertions to the contrary, Churchill was not mired hopelessly in an old-fashioned, 19th century concept of 'the white man's burden'. Instead, the need to control the fate of India in order to secure the survival of Great Britain was the primary motivation in Churchill's actions towards her. Throughout his wartime premiership, Churchill engaged in the ruthless exploitation of India. He displayed a callous disregard for the lives of the people of India, the financial solvency of the nation of India, and any pledges that had been made concerning Indian self-determination. His actions belied his public justifications of Empire. He did not act in India's interest. These were the actions of a pragmatic imperialist placing the needs of his nation and people above all other political or moral requirements.

In 1931 Churchill argued the way to govern India was to make it clear Britain was going to hold absolute power over India for many lifetimes to come and then take up the white man's burden and rule over India

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<sup>153</sup> CHAR 9/191 A

without making concessions of any kind. The Indian people would abandon their ambitions and take up the yoke of British rule. In continuity with this pre-war vision of how to rule India, once becoming Prime Minister in 1940-1945, Churchill, opposed any suggestion that Britain seek the cooperation of the people of India in the war effort by offering concessions. For the duration of the war Churchill sought to suppress all Indian nationalist political activity and any actions on the part of Britain and its representatives that could be construed as constitutional progress. It is possible to interpret Churchill's actions to block even the promise of constitutional reform at war's end was a dangerous sign of weakness in the face of Indian nationalism and international pressure on Britain to divest itself of India. At a time of uncertainty, Churchill believed that the path of least risk was a firm and unwavering commitment to hold India indefinitely.

In Churchill's 1931 recommendations on how to govern India he said that no disloyalty was to be tolerated from the Indian people. In 1940-1945, in continuity with his pre-war position, he repeatedly denounced members of the Congress party as malevolent enemies. As he condemned them, in language normally reserved for traitors, he ordered Congress suppressed by force, jailed its leadership and even wished them dead. Churchill requested of Amery, "ask Linlithgow to convey privately to Gandhi that we had no objections to his fasting to death if he wanted to."<sup>154</sup>

Churchill's repeated insistence when Prime Minister that any constitutional progress was out of the question was at odds with his more moderate colleagues' inclination to offer concessions to Indian nationalism in the hope of keeping India quiet and productive for the duration of the war. With resignation both Amery, Churchill's Secretary of State for India, and Wavell, Viceroy of India, had to set aside their progressive agendas and conformed to Churchill's policy decision. Wavell told Churchill, "if our aim is to retain India as a willing member of the British Commonwealth, we must make some imaginative and constructive move without

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<sup>154</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 667.

delay.”<sup>155</sup> Yet Wavell acknowledged, “when he appointed me Viceroy it was with the intention and expectation I should simply keep things quiet in India till the war was over.”<sup>156</sup>

When Amery first took his post he planned to work toward constitutional advance while maximizing India's contribution to the war.<sup>157</sup> Amery concurred with Churchill's refusal to tolerate sedition, admitting, “personally I should be all for letting Gandhi fast to death if he likes.”<sup>158</sup> However, Amery, in the summer of 1940 attempted to put forward a proposal that would allow India to frame her own constitution after the war ended. On 26 July 1940 Churchill told Amery, “he would sooner give up political life at once, or rather go out into the wilderness and fight, than to admit a revolution which meant the end of the Imperial Crown in India.”<sup>159</sup>

There is clear evidence that Churchill was imagining a post-World War II world in which Britain still completely controlled the fate of India. During Cabinet meetings, Churchill repeatedly advocated a plan for the radical reconstruction of India after the war, “based on extinguishing landlords and oppressive industrialists and the peasant and untouchable, probably by collectivization along Russian lines.”<sup>160</sup>

Churchill's commitment to inaction when it came to Indian self-government frustrated Amery and Wavell. Both believed India could not be held against her will and both had made valid arguments to Churchill that sharply contradicted his belief Britain could hold India indefinitely. Amery told him, “you have got to do it against the whole tide of nationalist emotion. I also added that we are pledged to a quite different policy. This he just brushed aside contemptuously.”<sup>161</sup> Wavell made a practical military case against Churchill's course of inaction. Wavell wrote to Churchill,

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<sup>155</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, 98.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>157</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 620.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 866.

<sup>159</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 636–637.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 1033.

...nor do I think that in any case we can hold India down by force. Indians are a docile people, and a comparatively small amount of force ruthlessly used might be sufficient; But it seems to me clear that the British people will not consent to being associated with the policy of repression, nor will the world opinion approve of it, nor will British soldiers wish to stay here in large numbers after the war to hold the country down ...<sup>162</sup>

The question becomes why did Churchill persist in the face of very convincing arguments as to its futility? To answer that one must ask what the alternative was according to Churchill's worldview. In previous statements Churchill made it clear he believed the loss of India would trigger the dramatic and rapid loss of Britain's ability to control its own destiny. Britain would cease to be a world power, would cease to have the economic, military and strategic advantages it currently enjoyed. As Churchill had said, there would be no recovery from the loss of Empire. To have India's goodwill, to hope to keep her in the Commonwealth with guarantees of self-government was to lose everything in exchange for something Churchill simply did not value. Goodwill and the Commonwealth would not stave off the disaster he envisioned. With what was best for Britain at the center of all his policy, and given his worldview, Churchill had no other option than to take the risk and attempt to, in effect, brazen it out and see how long he could hold off the progression he paid lip service to in his speeches.

Churchill was often, just as during his wilderness years, the single dissenting opinion on India policy during World War Two. Despite the loneliness of his position, his dissenting opinion now that he was Prime Minister was often the one that prevailed. Were it not for Churchill, it could be argued that far different approaches would have been undertaken in the treatment of and the disposition of the resources of India. Churchill was again and again successful in asserting his opinion in the face of opposing views among his cabinet members, appointees, allies and military commanders. As a method of insuring the retention of control

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<sup>162</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, 97.

over India, Churchill pleaded with, bullied and raged at anyone who even broached the subject of Indian constitutional reform.

On 18 July 1940, Churchill chose to plead with Amery, who was eventually convinced to abandon the more progressive concessions he had intended “with a passionate appeal I had in a letter from Winston, not to proceed with a constitutional revolution in India in the middle of the war.”<sup>163</sup> On 8 October 1943, Churchill chose to try to bully Wavell, who had just been named Viceroy of India, with less success. Wavell, who had a pro-reform agenda, recorded in his diary that “P.M. was menacing and unpleasant when I saw him at 3 PM, ... and indicated that only over his dead body would any approach to Gandhi take place.”<sup>164</sup> As Viceroy, Wavell persisted in bombarding the Prime Minister with telegrams and letters many of which advocated action that Churchill did not want to take. Wavell later wrote Mountbatten reported to him that, during a meeting with Churchill, “he did (rather unwisely, I think) touch on the political problem and the P.M. blew up and damned not only him but me and all my works.”<sup>165</sup>

The Cabinet appeared too often to experience the rage. In Amery’s opinion, Churchill’s tirades worked all too well to keep Cabinet members in line. “None of them ever really have the courage to stand up to Winston and tell him when he is making a fool of himself,”<sup>166</sup> Amery complained,

When in the cabinet room a particular question crops up, they are overborne by the Prime Minister’s vehemence and are glad to find escape from open disagreement with him by accepting arguments against a particular matter brought up...<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 663.

<sup>164</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 23.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>166</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 836.

<sup>167</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 452.

By sheer force of personality, Churchill's excessive emotionalism, which had worked against him in his interwar crusade against Indian self-government, became, in the Cabinet room, a dramatic advantage to ending the discussion. And Churchill had another advantage. Amery was attempting to convince Cabinet to take actions. All Churchill needed to do was create inertia in the face of what remained a theoretical threat of escalating Indian unrest at an unspecified time in the future. Amery could still make diary entries critical of Churchill, ripe for future historians to pick through for evidence of Churchill's unbalanced behavior. However many of Amery's derisive diary entries, such as, "Winston exploded for some 20 minutes to begin with and continued exploding and rumbling for the next two hours. I felt it was useless to argue the case at length", demonstrated the Churchillian pester-nag-and-bite method's success in exhausting Amery and bogging down Cabinet.<sup>168</sup>

Churchill was able to quell Indian nationalism, jail its leaders and impose his will on both his cabinet and on India virtually unopposed. Churchill's tenacious fight to delay Indian constitutional reform during the interwar years emerges in hindsight as looking as strategically sound as his prescience in attempting to halt disarmament. If Indian self-government had progressed further prior to World War II it is possible India would not have been a stable base of for military operations and may have been able to resist the degree of economic exploitation Britain needed to achieve there.

All of Churchill's efforts to obstruct, deny and retreat from constitutional reform for India ultimately resulted in Britain exercising much greater control over India than it would have if members of his administration been allowed to pursue a more progressive policy. With more control comes more responsibility for those you claim dominion over. Churchill's lifelong public justification of Empire as existing to safeguard the welfare of the Indian people could not be more clearly demonstrated to be contrary to his true intentions than it was by the Great Bengal Famine.

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<sup>168</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 901.



The Great Bengal Famine of 1943 had its roots in a complex interaction of food shipments out of Bengal to supply the war effort, the failure of the 1943 rice crop, inflation and hoarding driven by scarcity, and the failure of authorities to respond to the large-scale human disaster. Estimates are of one to three million dead from starvation and addition deaths from disease. In a telegram to Churchill and Secretary of State for India, Amery, on 9 February 1944, the Viceroy wrote, ““Bengal Famine was one of the greatest disasters that had befallen any people living under British rule and damage our reputation both here among Indians and foreigners in India is incalculable.””<sup>169</sup> Wavell was pointing to precisely the reason why Britain’s failure to act in an adequate and timely way exposes the false public face of Churchill’s Imperialism. The victims were people under British rule. Britain was not only responsible temporally, Britain was, especially according to Churchill’s virtuous Empire rhetoric, responsible morally.

Madhusree Mukerjee makes an argument that, the British, far from the benevolent imposers of civility and justice, were by our modern standards acting as war criminals.

In fact depriving civilians of an occupied territory of vital foods and failing to supply them with adequate relief constitute war crimes as understood today. Given that the War Cabinet enjoyed absolute control over shipping to and from India, that tens of thousands of nationalists were in prison, that the estimation of military intelligence India was “occupied and hostile country,” and that the War Cabinet spoke for India – five times, for instance turning down offers of grain on their behalf – India was presumed by the United Kingdom to be occupied territory.<sup>170</sup>

Churchill cannot claim to have remained unaware of the situation or its severity. On 31 July 1943, Avery circulated this memorandum to the war cabinet that opened with, “the Indian economy is being strained almost

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<sup>169</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 54.

<sup>170</sup> Murkerjee, *Churchill’s Secret War*, 272-3.

to the breaking point by the enormous demands laid on it in its dual role as a source of supplies and of men for the army, and as a base for military operations.”<sup>171</sup> Several days later, on 4 August 1943 Amery records, “I urged the Indian demand for 500,000 tons ... Warning the cabinet very earnestly of the danger of the whole war effort being disturbed as a result of the breakdown in transport, mining and supply.”<sup>172</sup> It was not just the Secretary of State for India issuing warnings to Churchill and Cabinet. The Viceroy reported, “without the ready procurement of food, induced by a sufficient flow of imports, factories cannot work, nor coal be mined, nor railways operate; nor airfields be built, nor the forces be fed.”<sup>173</sup>

Churchill engaged in obstructionist behavior in Cabinet. Amery wrote,

“[I] tried to bring the subject back to the main point that if India broke down it would be the end of operations based in India ... It was quite obvious that he had no intention at present of doing anything to meet the fact that Wavell has said that he cannot supply the Army ... This is quite illogical and unsatisfactory ...”<sup>174</sup> Despite famine relief having been directly linked to Britain’s ability to continue military operations, giving Churchill more than ample reason to act, he continued to view the famine only in terms of the impact it was having on the Indian people.

Mountbatten reported Churchill was,

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<sup>171</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 911.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 933.

<sup>173</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 914.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 979-980.

as intractable as ever on India, seems to regard sending food to India merely as ‘appeasement’ of Congress and it was only the efforts of the Chiefs of Staff, who realized the necessity for feeding India if it was to be a stable base of operations, which produced any food at all.<sup>175</sup>

At its worst the famine caused the death of up to 2000 people a week. Viceroy Linlithgow and Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, had also warned Churchill and Cabinet of the risk the famine posed to Indian’s contribution to the war effort, its Army and its use as a base for military operations. Amery records in his diary 16 August 1943 of passing on to Churchill “a very urgent telegram from Linlithgow saying that neither he nor Auchinleck can be responsible for what might happen to future operations from India if the food situation is not met.”<sup>176</sup>

Yet in the face of an on-going large-scale humanitarian disaster in a colonial possession under his control, Churchill was unconcerned with the famine. He refused and ignored key British officials such as Wavell, Amery, and Allied commander for South-east Asia Mountbatten in their efforts to combat the famine. Churchill’s words and lack of action during a humanitarian catastrophe in India proves conclusively his often repeated Victorian platitudes of a paternalistic Empire bringing justice, civility and protection to its subject people were not beliefs he truly held. Furthermore, Churchill’s callous attitude revealed a deep antipathy toward the Indian people themselves.

A brief survey of Amery’s diary confirms Churchill’s lack of concern over the famine. Amery wrote, “the trouble is that Winston so dislikes India and all to do with it that he can see nothing but the mere waste of shipping space involved.”<sup>177</sup> In a special meeting of the Cabinet to discuss the Indian food situation, “Winston was less offensive than he might otherwise be. But he had great difficulty in holding himself in and came very

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<sup>175</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 89.

<sup>176</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 935.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 951.

near to suggesting that we really could not let Indian starvation or multiplying too fast interfere with operations.”<sup>178</sup> Amery recorded Churchill’s comment, “the starvation of anyhow underfed Bengalis is less serious than sturdy Greeks.”<sup>179</sup>

The apparent racial bias of Churchill’s Malthusian lack of concern with the starvation in Bengal did not escape Churchill’s colleagues. Wavell bitterly complained in his diary that Churchill’s claim in a cabinet meeting that further food supplies, “could not be provided without taking it from Egypt and the Middle East where reserve was being accumulated for Greece and the Balkans. Apparently it is more important to save the Greeks and liberated countries from starvation than Indians.”<sup>180</sup>

Despite Churchill’s deliberate, callous and often racist unconcern with the starvation in Bengal in his private and governmental communications, his planned but undelivered speech to Parliament in 1943 showed the extent to which the privately unsentimental and ruthless Churchill could use the lofty rhetoric of Victorian Imperialism to justify Britain’s continuing rule over India with a remarkable degree of hypocrisy. This public idealism versus private realism is a clear continuation of a calculated strategy Churchill embarked upon as early as 1929. Three times in his speech notes Churchill nobly boasted of feeding India out of Britain’s own supplies and even managed to use it to begin to lay the foundations for a further justification for his long held intention to hold India indefinitely; the moral and material debt that India was allegedly incurring as Britain supposedly sacrificed for her defense.

We are also sending food to India from our own depleted resources because of the partial failure of the Indian crops.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 943.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 943.

<sup>180</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 19.

<sup>181</sup> CHAR 9/191 A

We are also feeding India. We are dipping into our own form preserves in this country to send [hundreds] [Lord Cherwell suggests “scores”] of thousands of tons of wheat to India because there has been a partial failure in the crops. That is another important fact.<sup>182</sup>

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So that, to sum up we are to defend India with our blood and treasure; we are to feed India out of our scanty stores; we are to make a plan by which the Indians can order us to clear out of India; and we are to be left owing them a heavy debt. That is the present situation.<sup>183</sup>

Churchill repeated references in his 1943 speech notes to providing India with not only Britain’s food but Britain’s blood and treasure. However, the claim to have defended India with blood and treasure was just as much a disingenuous portrayal of Churchill’s justifications for holding India as his claims to have fed India. Wavell pointed out to Churchill, “that India had defended us in the Middle East in the first two years of the war rather than we defend India.”<sup>184</sup> Amery told Churchill, “we are getting out of India far more than was ever thought possible and that India herself is paying for more than was ever contemplated when the present settlement was made.”<sup>185</sup> In reality, India’s Army, food, goods and treasure served Britain.

Churchill’s notes for his undelivered 1943 speech reflected Churchill anger mounted as the balance of debt Britain owed to India mounted. By the end of World War II the debt owed to India totaled 1300 million pounds sterling, Churchill’s bitterness is obvious, as is his now repeated use of the claim to ‘defend India with our blood and treasure’.

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<sup>182</sup> CHAR 9/191 A

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy’s Journal*, 13.

<sup>185</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 836.

Owing to the fact that all our export trade is destroyed and all our ships are carrying soldiers and munitions for the common cause, we are becoming deeply indebted to India. 400,000,000 pounds of British investments in India have been repurchased by the Indian capitalists. We already owe £400 million more, and India is gathering sterling balances here at the rate of 300,000,000 pounds a year. Thus we are to defend India with our blood and treasure, we are to do all in our power to enable them to turn us out of India afterwards if they wish and afterwards we are to be left owing them a heavy debt. Even that is not thought good enough by some people.<sup>186</sup>

Churchill's anger over the growing debt is clear in his speech notes. Privately, he frequently advocated Britain repudiate its debts to India, incurred during the war in a time of duress. This was again a position that not only benefitted Britain highly disproportionately but would have placed India in serious social and economic jeopardy. Yet Churchill appeared not to be concerned with the price India might pay, but the price Britain would pay.

During War Cabinet meetings, Amery clashed with Churchill over the latter's schemes to repudiate Britain's debt to India and charge her for her own defense. The case Churchill was laying the foundations for returned again and again;

[Churchill asked], "are we to incur hundreds of millions of debt for defending India in order to be kicked out by the Indians afterward? This may be an ill contrived world but not so ill contrived as all that."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> CHAR 9/191 A

<sup>187</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 836.

We got on to the Report on Sterling Balances... [Churchill] went on with a long description of how he was going to present his counterclaim to India for all we have done for her defense.<sup>188</sup>

Churchill appeared to be genuinely offended by both the idea of Britain owing India anything and the idea that on top of that insult India meant to add the injury of secession. Churchill also appeared to be rationally, if ruthlessly, looking for a new public justification for what he always intended, to retain control of India.

Wavell had told Churchill the British people would not stomach the ruthless violence required to hold India against her will and would not participate in doing so as soldiers. Wavell had also warned Churchill that international opinion would not tolerate Britain laying future claim to India by force. If it were India who owed Britain a great moral and financial debt, and not in truth the other way round, Churchill would be back in a position of strength. If the British people believed they had sacrificed such vast sums of Blood and Treasure to save an ungrateful Dependency, Churchill may have hoped to win back the popular support he would need to hold India against her will. If a debt to Britain for India's defense was recognized under law, it may blunt pressure from other nations.

The avocation of repudiation of Britain's debt to India was very much in line with the repudiation of all concessions to Indian nationalism Churchill also advocated in the same 1944 War Cabinet meeting. Churchill clearly did not intend to make concessions to India of any type. Amery's diary from August 1944 recounts,

Winston in a state of great exultation describing how after the war he was going to go back on all the shameful story of the last twenty years of surrender, how once we had won the war there would

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<sup>188</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 992-993.

be no obligation to honour promises made [to India] at a time of difficulty, and not taken up by the Indians...<sup>189</sup>

It was this outburst that pushed Amery to the limits of his tolerance of Churchill for the sake of the war effort. These Churchillian Cabinet outbursts occurred with frequency and with many other witnesses, which perpetuated and re-enforced the perception formed of Churchill during the wilderness years as an irrational and ill-informed rhetorician.

Despite the admiration Churchill garnered as a war leader during World War Two, the dual portrait of him had become more divergent than ever. His colleagues now knew many of Churchill's warnings during the wilderness years were correct, yet his reputation for irrationality, rage and ignorance when it came to India only seemed to grow. Once the war ended, Amery's diary records a clear return to the pre-war portrait of Churchill as 'not sane',

I have stood much during these four years which I should not have stood but for the common danger and for Winston's indispensable gifts as a war leader. Now the danger is over...while the dangers arising from his lack of judgment and knowledge in many respects and his sheer lack of sanity over India make him increasingly dangerous.<sup>190</sup>

As they had in the previous decade Churchill's behavior and statements led contemporaries to the highly negative conclusions about Churchill's worldview. During the August 1944 War Cabinet discussion on sterling balances Churchill engaged in a number of extreme outbursts regarding India. Amery lost his patience with

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<sup>189</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 992-993.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 995.



Churchill, “and couldn't help telling him that I didn't see much difference between his outlook and Hitler's.”<sup>191</sup>

This constitutes the second great dual portrait of Churchill as framed by Amery: a great war leader but not much different from Hitler when it came to India.

Perhaps Amery was going too far with his allusion to Hitler. It cannot be denied that language employed by Churchill throughout the period of 1929 to 1945 could be racist, extreme and overly emotional. The dramatic nature of this sort of behavior, and the records of it that persist, can easily provide a picture of a man operating from an irrational point of view and obscure any informed and strategically valid point of view. Churchill's continued use of an outdated Victorian justification for Empire in public further obscured any informed strategically valid point.

Strip away the emotional and intemperate nature Churchill manifested and the duplicitous public rhetoric he indulged in. The underlying correlation between all the concerns he expresses from 1929-1945 has an internal logic, consistent with a man operating under the assumption that the worst-case scenario will occur and there is need to take the least amount of risk to put Britain in the best possible position. Behind Churchill's outbursts and tirades was Churchill expressing pessimistic and ethnocentric positions. He did so amid a sea of contemporaries whose positive inclinations and more progressive ideals often prevented them from seeing the direst consequences. It is not surprising that these contemporaries viewed Churchill as irrational, ignorant and out of touch; the negative half of the dual portrait. They had come to the same conclusion about Churchill over India as they had with disarmament in the interwar years; Churchill's contemporaries had failed to see the underlying strategic validity of Churchill's positions. They were still failing to recognize that the same underlying strategic realism was still driving Churchill during the war years and beyond to maintain the strongest Imperial grip possible on India.

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<sup>191</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, *The Empire at Bay*, 993.

From 1929-1945 Churchill fought to prevent the loss of British control over India. From 1929-1939 we have seen that it was a lonely fight that earned him nothing but ridicule and political exile. With World War II it was still a lonely battle. Many British politicians still favored concrete actions, concessions and promises to India for independence immediately following the war's end. While his contemporaries generally acknowledged the importance of maintaining control over India during the war, the valid reasoning behind Churchill's refusal to trade constitutional concessions later for cooperation during the war was not acknowledged. However as World War II ended,

Churchill had ordered a committee to review postwar security. Its appraisal identified the Soviet Union as the West's new adversary. India, which enabled access to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Soviet Union, and which was also a source of fighting men, was projected to remain vital to British security. "It is of paramount importance that India should not secede from the Empire," the appraisal declared.<sup>192</sup>

This appraisal makes the Churchill of the interwar years look very prescient indeed. However unlikely it was that Britain could hold back the forces of Indian nationalism after the war's end, there is no doubt a rational, informed, strategically valid argument existed to do precisely what Churchill always intended, to try to keep India indefinitely.

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<sup>192</sup> Murkerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, 249. Also in, Gopal, "Churchill and India", 469.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The negative side of the dual portrait of Churchill, childish, angry, and impossible to reason with, may often have been true. Churchill's extremity in language and behavior does not necessarily equate to an actual lack of sanity. However, Churchill is commonly depicted as being not quite sane when it came to India. The psychological and personality flaws Churchill displayed while railing against both the dissolution of the Empire and the disarmament of Great Britain do not mean that the underlying reasoning behind his opposition to any attempt to dissolve the British Empire or pursue disarmament was anything but rational, strategically sound and prescient on both counts. Yet the negative image of Churchill when it comes to his opposition to Indian independence has proven just as resilient as the positive image of Churchill as the prescient voice in the wilderness and the great war leader.

There are a number of reasons why the dual portrait persisted. Churchill displayed intractable opposition to Gandhi and to the right of self-determination for all people. In that sense it has persisted because we know Churchill was by our standards morally wrong. Though Churchill would have had a different definition of morality – i.e. to act in the interests of the British people – historians cannot help be a product of their own time and place. It persisted because historical analysis has used the record left by Churchill's contemporaries without factoring in their lack of awareness of the “gathering storm”. Lacking our hindsight, those contemporaries can see no legitimate case for Churchill's crusades for empire and arms. In hindsight we know Churchill was right. Historians must reassess the opinions of those before them from the vantage point of their own time and place.

Churchill's negative portrait persisted because the utter catastrophe he predicted if India received greater access to self-government was not a catastrophe that would have fully manifested until a conflict like World War II. Due to Churchill's dogged slowing of the march toward Indian independence, it was a catastrophe that never came to fruition. Had things been slightly different this would not necessarily be so. The catastrophe Churchill predicted over disarmament in hindsight looks more rational, even prophetic, because the catastrophe was linear and more rapid to come upon England. This catastrophe came to fruition, in Hitler, National Socialism and war.

The negative portrait persisted because Churchill himself obscured his motives regarding India. He did not base his case for the retention of India on the grounds of the security of Britain in upcoming conflicts clearly and publicly. Instead Churchill chose the language, values and goals of mid-Victorian Imperialism to make his case. In fighting his India crusade with fossilized rhetoric he seemed all the more a fossil himself. This can be viewed as a strategic choice by Winston Churchill as to what to expend his political capital and energy upon. His opposition to the loss of British power and influence in India was widely unpopular. However to make a case against disarmament in the inter-war period was even more so. Churchill chose to portray an outdated worldview because at least a spirited defence of the fading glory of Empire had some support. However, a romantic, nostalgic, and mid-Victorian fantasy was not the root of his reasoning and actions regarding India. There is ample evidence that Churchill was reacting and adapting to a modern situation a post-World War I situation, and that once he became Prime Minister his actions in no way reflected romanticism and a nostalgic sense of duty to protect and elevate the Indian people.

Churchill's opposition to any compromise of Britain's hold on India was as prescient as his opposition to disarmament and appeasement and they both stemmed from his modern post-World War I worldview. Had Churchill linked his two interwar crusades more clearly and publicly to that modern post-World War I worldview there would have been less of a split or dichotomy in how he is perceived on each issue. That these

two issues were strategically linked in Churchill's own mind is clear. Churchill's failure to make the strategic link between these two issues clear throughout his speeches, articles and public appearances allowed the rise of the dual portrait to occur in the first place. Once linked, a reassessment of the validity of the predominant perception of Churchill and India tells a different story.

In one of the few instances where Churchill linked to two publically, a 1933 radio speech concerning the Government of India Bill, Churchill warned of "the storm clouds are gathering over the European scene" and asked, "is this then the time to plunge our vast Dependency of India into the melting-pot?"<sup>193</sup> That statement is strikingly similar to Churchill's 21 March 1935, speech to the India Defence League Demonstration at the Albert Hall, in which he said, "the storm clouds are gathering over Europe. Our defenses have been shamefully neglected" and then asked "is this the time to plunge our vast oriental dependency into the melting pot...?"<sup>194</sup> Had such bold and clear strategic thinking appeared in the many speeches Churchill gave in opposition to proposed constitutional change in India throughout the 1930s it is likely historians would never have perpetuated the dual portrait.

On 14 October 1899, Churchill, with his journalistic commission from the *Morning Post*, headed for the South African Cape. Eventually, having found his way from Durban to Estcourt, he encountered a young Leo Amery, himself a correspondent with *The Times*. They were both anxious to see action. As Toye recounts, "On the night of 14 November Churchill and Amery accepted Haldane's invitation to join a reconnaissance mission towards Ladysmith the next day aboard an armoured train... When he and Amery, who shared a tent, were called at 5:30 AM, the latter was convinced the train would not depart on time so stayed in bed. In fact, it left promptly and Churchill only just caught it, setting off on a journey that would end in his capture and imprisonment. Years later, during a discussion of early rising, Amery took the episode as proof that the early

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<sup>193</sup> *The Glasgow Herald*, 30 January 1935. "Built by the Pygmies", <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2507&dat=19350130&id=9adAAAAAIBAJ&sjid=haUMAAAAAIBAJ&pg=4933,4293329> Retrieved 1 December 2014.

<sup>194</sup> *Complete Speeches*, V:5558.

worm is likely to get caught. Churchill responded: ‘If I had not been early, I should not have been caught. But if I had not been caught, I could not have escaped, and my imprisonment and escape provided me with materials for lectures and a book which brought me enough money to get into parliament in 1900 – 10 years before you!’<sup>195</sup>

Though a small incident, it is an interesting view of the divergent attitudes of two men, Churchill and Amery, whose opinions on India would be so debated and contrasted throughout the rest of their lives. Richard Toye explicitly uses Amery as a foil to Churchill, as “his career forms a useful counterpoint to that of Churchill ... they both shared a strong commitment to Empire, but that commitment took a very different form for each of them.”<sup>196</sup> In this small incident, both men were anxious to see action, and one no more a coward than the other. Both were in possession of the same information concerning the reconnaissance mission and the armoured train departure and no political ideology was at stake one. Yet Amery believed the prevailing wisdom and assumed the best-case scenario; the train always leaves late and so will leave late this day too. Churchill mistrusted the prevailing wisdom, perceived the real possibility, the worst-case scenario, that today when he needs to be on it, the train will leave on time. In a way, for the rest of their political lives, Churchill and Amery made essentially the same choices. One shared the prevailing opinions, assumed safety and time for sleep during which opportunity and advantage would not be lost. The other rarely shared the prevailing opinions and assumed one should never risk sleep when faced with danger or opportunity. One assumed the best, the other planned for the worst.

Churchill's tenacity was of priceless value when Britain was facing Nazi Germany. It was excessive in many ways when dealing with Indian nationalism. However it achieved his ultimate policy goals during the pre-World War II and World War II period. It is not surprising Churchill employed the same personality and political traits when pushing his concerns over Empire and world war that he did on most other matters. We

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<sup>195</sup> Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, 66-7.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

applaud him on his lonely stand, railed against the divestiture of Britain's armaments in the pre-World War II period. We admire his prescient and shrewd foreseeing of the coming conflict. So few other politicians understood the dangers that Churchill seemed to see so clearly, and we condemn them all or their shortsightedness. Yet, the only other major issue Churchill seemed obsessed with during this same period was his railing against the divestiture of Indian rule. It is not unreasonable to search for a rational link between these two policy issues in Churchill's intellectual process. Churchill foresaw a world conflict that could engulf his nation. He sought to do all he could to prepare his nation for defense and victory. He saw India as a key component to Britain's ultimate success in war, just as he saw India as key to Britain's ultimate success as a nation, as a people and as a world power.

Ultimately Churchill wanted the status quo maintained in India. This is true of both the wilderness years and the war years. He wanted the status quo maintained indefinitely, certainly for the lifetimes over everyone alive at that time. He believed that giving even an inch to the cause of Indian nationalism would inextricably alter the internal dynamics of the Indian subcontinent. Churchill did not wish to run the risk of even the slightest evolution constitutionally because the very act of suggesting, let alone promising, eventual Indian independence could trigger internal changes, conflicts, realignments, relocations, reallocations of loyalty. It would trigger external changes as rival powers may seek to establish a sphere of influence or outright imperial takeover. All of which would strain, if not render impossible, Britain's use of India as a resource to be heavily relied upon in times of trouble and a resource to offer great benefits to Britain in times of peace. His intentions toward India were not to hold it merely for the duration of the upcoming world conflict he had predicted. It was his clear intention to hold India beyond the lifetime of anyone alive in the 1930s. By this timetable India would still today be a British colony with its many millions of people not participating in democracy and building a vibrant economy on their own terms as is the case today but instead still under paternalistic British domination.

Churchill obsessively defended an un-virtuous Empire in terminal decline beyond the end of World War Two. His vision of the greatness of Britain and of the British people masterfully braved the darkness of World War II. That same vision led Churchill to oppose the inevitable march toward self-determination for all peoples that events of the Second World War helped engender. Churchill believed that, in defending the British Empire and Britain's right to hold India, he was pursuing high moral purposes. He saw great virtue in what he considered to be the British people's rightful destiny to rule India. He believed this work elevated and strengthened the people of Britain.

Many of Churchill's political contemporaries believed that the pursuit of high moral purposes meant they had to begin the process of allowing the people of India a greater measure of self-determination. Some had a growing awareness of the political and military difficulties in holding a vast Dominion that no longer wishes you to rule it. Field Marshal Wavell, appointed by Churchill as Viceroy of India, argued a pragmatic military case that the British people no longer had the will to do what it would take to rule India against its will. Many of Churchill's colleagues, unaware of any looming world conflict, were strategically correct to ease India out from under British rule, strategically correct to hope that a peaceful and cooperative dissolution of British rule may result in the generation of enough goodwill in India for it to remain in the Commonwealth and within Britain's sphere of influence.

Churchill's position was not a moral position. It was a deeply self-interested and nationalistic position. His ruthless tactics were more in line with an earlier exploitative Victorian era view of Empire. And contradictorily, in Churchill's defense of Britain's Empire, it was more the just and virtuous purpose of Empire he emphasizes. However, his true and realistic motive can be seen when Churchill writes in 1933: "In my view England is now beginning a new period of struggle and fighting for its life ... and the crux of it will not only be the retention of India but a much stronger assertion of commercial rights".<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> CHAR 2/193



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