

# 1 Myths of continuity and European exceptionalism

## Britain, decolonization, and the Commonwealth family ideal

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### **Britain, dominion ‘daughters’, and India’s road to independence**

At midnight on 31 December 1929, the Indian National Congress (INC) greeted the prospect of a new year and a new decade with a new set of political demands: *purna swaraj*. Urged on by incoming President Jawaharlal Nehru, the INC passed the Purna Swaraj Resolution and soon settled on 26 January as Independence Day. At meetings throughout the country, a pledge would be read out proclaiming that ‘[t]he British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.’<sup>1</sup>

*Purna swaraj* marked a watershed within a nationalist struggle against Britain that originated in the late nineteenth century but whose momentum and mass participation had increased exponentially since the First World War. The 1930 pledge emerged as a product of British imperial policymaking since 1917, the Indian political demands it failed to fulfil, and the mounting non-cooperation campaigns they provoked. For the first time, India demanded not simply *swaraj* (home rule or self-rule) *within* the British empire but rather the right to break away *from* it. In so doing, India committed itself to a path that diverged sharply from precedents offered by Britain’s dominions, which in 1930 included Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Irish Free State.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Independence Pledge’, issued at Allahabad, 17 January 1930 and jointly drafted by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, reprinted in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (hereafter *SWJN*), Vol. 4 (New Delhi, 1973), 216.

<sup>2</sup> John Darwin, ‘Britain’s Empires’, in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford, 2008), 2. The Irish Free State became a dominion in 1922; Newfoundland ceased to be one in 1933 when it forfeited responsible government during the depression, and ultimately become a province of Canada in 1949.

It would take another seventeen years for Britain to grant India its independence. During the interim, the rulers of empire proved reluctant to abandon their stated assumption that any future political advance in the Indian subcontinent would take place according to patterns established in white settler-dominated territories in the nineteenth century. In fact, the British proved as stubbornly resistant to shedding this notion as they once had been to accepting that India might one day follow in dominion footsteps in the first place. From the late 1830s and 1840s on, the so-called 'white' settler colonies enjoyed increasing autonomy over their internal affairs. Over time, they achieved 'responsible government' – effectively equivalent to full self-government – although Britain maintained control over their external relations. Starting in 1907, colonies with responsible government became known as 'dominions', a term distinguishing them from the Indian empire and other colonies directly ruled by Britain. 'Dominion status', as W. David McIntyre summarizes, was tantamount to 'a half-way house between colonial and independent status'.<sup>3</sup> Dominions' military, financial, and material contributions to Britain's 1914–1918 war effort allowed their leaders to demand an even fuller recognition of their sovereignty over matters foreign and internal alike. The Balfour Report of 1926 defined both Great Britain and the dominions as 'autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations'.<sup>4</sup> The 1931 Statute of Westminster legally formalized this devolution of authority, with the British Parliament relinquishing the power to legislate on dominions' behalf.

Indian nationalists had long observed these developments with keen interest. Just two years after dominions were given their name, Mohandas Gandhi stressed in *Hind Swaraj* that the INC 'has always desired self-government after the Canadian model'.<sup>5</sup> At the time, British authorities could not envisage a comparable road map for the subcontinent either then or at any point in the future. But the First World War wrought changed policies towards India which, like the dominions, made extreme sacrifices on the empire's behalf without consent. The INC's growing strength made Britain contemplate political concessions in the effort to conciliate Indian opinion and ensure wartime loyalty. The year 1917 brought the Montagu Declaration stating that Britain's goal for India was the 'gradual realization of responsible government' within the British

<sup>3</sup> W. David McIntyre, 'The Strange Death of Dominion Status', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 27:2 (1999), 194.

<sup>4</sup> Darwin, 'Britain's Empires', 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Hind Swaraj* (1909), in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Electronic Book, accessible via [www.gandhiserve.org/e/cwmg/cwmg.htm](http://www.gandhiserve.org/e/cwmg/cwmg.htm)) (New Delhi, Publications Division of the Government of India, 1999, 98 volumes) (hereafter *CWMG*), Vol. 10, 251.

empire. This was followed by the 1919 Government of India Act granting Indians a power-sharing role in provincial affairs but maintaining full British control over the central administration, India's defence and internal security, foreign relations, and finance.<sup>6</sup>

The limited level of authority Indians actually acquired rendered it obvious that the promised progress towards 'responsible government' was by no means equivalent to gaining a significant degree of *self*-government. Moreover, reforms were immediately compromised by British crackdowns on civil and political dissent as wartime special powers were extended indefinitely, leading to protests and martial law. Free speech was suppressed; Indian activists could be held indefinitely without trial for alleged political crimes; trials could be held without jury; and police surveillance and army brutality increased – most notoriously during the massacre of civilians at a peaceful demonstration in Amritsar in the Punjab in 1919.<sup>7</sup> Repression made Britain new enemies, while the Government of India Act, intended to appease 'moderate' Indians, offered too little in the way of reform as compensation to win Britain many friends. The year 1920 saw nationalists led by Gandhi – widely revered as the 'Mahatma', or 'great soul' – embark upon a succession of transformative campaigns of non-cooperation and non-violent passive resistance to British rule.

By the time the 1919 Act underwent an official review and the viceroy, Lord Irwin, formally declared in 1929 that Britain intended dominion status for India in the future, it was too late. To ascendant INC leaders like Nehru, it was not simply that Irwin had specified nothing whatsoever about when India might expect to achieve this. It soon became clear that any short- and medium-term constitutional changes would involve 'safeguards' whereby Britain remained in control of India's defence, foreign relations, and currency, and the viceroy still enjoyed extensive powers.<sup>8</sup> 'Dominion Status was for some distant hereafter', Nehru concluded; it was nothing more than 'political trickery, barely veiling the fixed intention to hold on to India as an imperial domain and possession for as long as this was possible. The claws of imperialism would continue deep in the living body of India.'<sup>9</sup> If Britain meant the 'Dominion Idea' to work towards 'the containment of colonial nationalism', as John

<sup>6</sup> Maria Misra, *Vishnu's Crowded Temple: India since the Great Rebellion* (London, 2007), 110, 126.

<sup>7</sup> Derek Sayer, 'British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre 1919–1920', *Past & Present*, 131 (1991), 130–64.

<sup>8</sup> John Darwin, 'The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 79–81.

<sup>9</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi, 2000, first published 1946), 440. See also 'Presidential Address', Lahore, 29 December 1929, in *SWJN*, Vol. 4, 191. Nehru's many arguments contrasting dominion status with actual independence include 'Speech at the All Parties Conference', Lucknow, 29 August 1929, in *SWJN*, Vol. 3 (New Delhi, 1972), 57–61; Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (New Delhi, 2001, originally published 1936), 416–25.

Darwin has argued, by 1930 it had backfired spectacularly in India.<sup>10</sup> To INC leaders like Nehru who found themselves repeatedly jailed for their political activities, the dominion ‘half-way house’ seemed no different than an India that remained locked into the British empire.

Gandhi himself addressed the issue while visiting Britain in 1931. His twelve-week stay to attend the Round Table Conference on Indian constitutional reform took place during a lull in a four-year civil disobedience movement launched the previous year, when he captured world attention via campaigns like the salt march protesting British monopolies and taxation policies. He aspired to a future when Britain and India could be free to be partners on equal terms if they chose, not India’s “‘subjection” in glorified language’. Reflecting on his shift away from earlier aims, he commented to British audiences that ‘I found that dominion status is a status common to members of the same family – Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand etc.’ Britain treated existing dominions as ‘daughter nations’ both because most of their populations were English-speaking and on account of ‘natural links’ that had ‘grown out of the mother country’. But whereas biological, familial metaphors tied Britain and the dominions together, in India ‘[a]lien rule is like foreign matter in an organic body. Remove the poison and the body will at once start recuperating.’<sup>11</sup>

Although Gandhi did not explicitly mention race, his statements about dominions’ ‘natural’ connection to Britain, common English mother tongue, and the mother/daughters familial analogy perceptively alluded to the power of ‘race sentiment’ within British thinking and imperial policymaking. Steady emigration from Britain to the white settler-dominated dominions created a strong sense of demographic and cultural community spanning these parts of the ‘British world’ – even in Canada and South Africa whose European populations were ethnically diverse and often divided, and which respectively included many French-speakers and Afrikaners alongside Britons and the British-descended.<sup>12</sup> ‘[A]n aggressive sense of cultural superiority as the representatives of a global civilization then at the height of its prestige’ was common amongst Britons at home and dominion-based whites alike<sup>13</sup> – a superiority bestowed by whiteness and distributed among kith and kin of the same ‘stock’. Indians, meanwhile, like other colonized peoples in Asia and

<sup>10</sup> Darwin, ‘Dominion Idea’, 64.

<sup>11</sup> C. Rajagopalachar and J.C. Kumarappa (eds.), *The Nation’s Voice: Being a Collection of Gandhiji’s Speeches in England and Sjt. Mahadev Desai’s Account of the Sojourn [September to December, 1931]* (Ahmedabad, 1958; first published 1932), quotes taken from 192, 126, 195–6, 222; see also 79–80.

<sup>12</sup> James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Darwin, ‘Dominion Idea’, 72.

Africa, fell outside Britain's racial family and were widely deemed insufficiently prepared to share its political privileges.

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If the vague prospect of dominion status was no longer enough for the INC by 1930, it was still too much for Britons loathe to concede anything at all and for whom India was condemned to eternal political childhood. None voiced the latter position more often or with greater determination than the prominent Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) and former Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill.<sup>14</sup> In a series of speeches given in 1930 and 1931, he denounced as 'preposterous' the idea that India ever 'would be likely to live in peace, happiness and decency' with 'the same forms of government which prevail among the British, Canadian or Australian democracies'.<sup>15</sup> The 'lessons of history which we have learnt in our experience with the great self-governing dominions' did not remotely apply to India, he insisted:

Here you have nearly three hundred and fifty millions of people, lifted to a civilisation and to a level of peace, order, 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 thousands of British officials responsible to Parliament who have for generations presided over the development of India. But if that authority is injured or destroyed, the whole efficiency of the services, defensive, administrative, medical, hygienic, judicial; railway, irrigation, public works and famine prevention, upon which the Indian masses depend for their culture and progress, will perish with it. India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages.

Britain should refuse to pander to 'the political aspirations towards self-government of a small number of intellectuals' who were categorically unrepresentative of the Indian population; such people had 'no real contact with the masses' and were 'incapable of giving them the guidance they require', Churchill intoned.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the disinterested Indian Civil Service presided over by benevolent British officials, '[n]epotism, back-scratching, graft and corruption in every form will be the handmaiden of a Brahmin domination.' So divided was the subcontinent along caste, class, and especially religious lines that any claim by the Indian National Congress to speak on behalf of 'the

<sup>14</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, 'Churchill and India', in Robert Blake and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *Churchill* (Oxford, 1993), 457–71; Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World that Made Him and the World He Made* (London, 2010), ch. 6.

<sup>15</sup> 'India (Government Policy)', 3 December 1931, House of Commons, in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, Vol. V, 1928–1935 (London, 1974), 5110.

<sup>16</sup> 'Our Duty in India', 18 March 1931, Albert Hall, London, in Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill, Complete Speeches*, V, 5006–7, 5004; 'The March of Events', 26 March 1931, Constitutional Club, London, in Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill, Complete Speeches*, V, 5011.

nation' could only be risibly self-serving. 'India' was merely 'an abstraction' and 'a geographical term', Churchill told his British listeners. 'It is no more a united nation than the Equator.'<sup>17</sup>

Britain not only had the 'duty' to act 'in the interests of India' and protect 'the masses', untouchables, Muslims, princes, Europeans, and others from the threat of 'Hindu despotism'.<sup>18</sup> With these duties came legitimate 'rights and interests' of its own, including 'the interest of Lancashire' that Churchill repeatedly invoked in the early 1930s.<sup>19</sup> India's effect on this northwest English county became a prime example of India's impact on the British nation. Nor was he alone in his assessment given the historic importance of the region's cotton industry within the British economy – a sector highly dependent upon global, and especially Indian, trade. Textiles (especially cotton cloth from Lancashire) remained Britain's largest export and India its largest overall market during the 1930s, but both had declined precipitously since the First World War. While 1,248 million yards of British cloth were sold in India in 1929, within just two years this had plummeted to 376 million – by which time approximately one-third of Lancashire's cotton workers were unemployed.<sup>20</sup> Although the causes of its economic crisis were in fact manifold (the global depression as well as stiff competition from Japanese manufacturers and other international producers also took their toll), within Britain a popular diagnosis of the stricken region's ills laid the blame squarely on the Indian National Congress' doorstep. More than any other factor, it was the Gandhi-led boycott of foreign textiles that 'spells the doom of Lancashire', as Churchill put it.<sup>21</sup> If the empire was striking back, it was commonly perceived as having scored its most destructive hit in Lancashire.

<sup>17</sup> 'March of Events', 5011.

<sup>18</sup> 'Our Duty in India', 5008–9. Churchill's wording stretched back to deeply-established British claims that 'oriental despotism' prevailed in pre-colonial India and to a longer history of British dismissals of elite Indian (especially Hindu) political aspirations; see especially Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj: The New Cambridge History of India*, III:4 (Cambridge, 1994), 37–8, 66; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995). Similarly, Churchill's homage to the Indian Civil Service's virtues was (and remains) a familiar and resilient trope within hagiographical accounts of British rule; amongst other writings in this vein, see David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* (London, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> 'India: "A Frightful Prospect"', 26 January 1931, House of Commons, in Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill, Complete Speeches*, V, 4956; Andrew Muldoon, "'An Unholy Row in Lancashire": The Textile Lobby, Conservative Politics, and Indian Policy, 1931–1935', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14:2 (2003), 96.

<sup>20</sup> B.R. Tomlinson, 'India and the British Empire, 1880–1935', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 12:4 (1975), 339–40, 364; B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914–1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London, 1979), 2, 122; B. Chatterji, 'Business and Politics in the 1930s: Lancashire and the Making of the Indo-British Trade Agreement, 1939', *Modern Asian Studies*, 15:3 (1981), 528, 530.

<sup>21</sup> 'March of Events', 5012.

Cotton cloth had long played a central role within Indian anti-colonialism and ranked high among the INC's signature campaigns and symbols. By the 1930s, Gandhi's internationally famous persona owed much to his ascetic spiritualism, vegetarianism, fasts, and not least his clothing that rendered him an unconventional curiosity in Western eyes.<sup>22</sup> When Churchill notoriously dismissed him as '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', he mocked Gandhi's habitual attire consisting of little more than a hand-spun cotton loincloth (*dhoti*), shawl, and sandals.<sup>23</sup> In tandem with his politics, the Mahatma's apparel had come a long way since his days as a young law student in the 1880s, freshly arrived in London and eager to dress like an English gentleman in tailor-made suits.<sup>24</sup> No longer content to play a part within the British imperial system, his instantly recognisable attire was emblematic of the INC's championing of import substitution and Indian-made products (*swadeshi* goods, or those 'of one's own land') that culminated in the civil disobedience campaign against textiles from abroad in the early 1930s.

For decades Gandhi had rallied against the combined havoc that Western civilization, its industrial machinery, and Manchester (the nucleus of Lancashire's cotton industry) had wreaked upon India. Building upon nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nationalist critiques of imperialism's economic drain of India, he and his Congress allies decried Britain's historic decapitation of indigenous Indian cloth manufacture for its own profit. Britain, nationalists claimed, had ruthlessly demoted the subcontinent to a mere producer of raw cotton for shipment to British mills, where it was woven into cheap fabric and re-exported to India.<sup>25</sup> Rural peasants paid the highest price, losing an invaluable source of extra income from making their own cloth that once supplemented the pittance they earned from agriculture, which provided employment for only half the year. 'Lancashire rose on the ruins of the Indian Village industry', Gandhi contended, turning the revival of cottage production of home-spun coarse cotton cloth (*khadi*) into a winning formula combining economic, cultural, and political nationalism and

<sup>22</sup> Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (Cambridge, 2011), Introduction and ch. 1; David Hardiman, *Gandhi in His Time and Ours: The Global Legacy of His Ideas* (London, 2003), ch. 9.

<sup>23</sup> 'A Seditious Middle Temple Lawyer', 23 February 1931, Winchester House, Epping, in Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill, Complete Speeches*, V, 4985.

<sup>24</sup> Among countless studies of Gandhi, see standard works by Judith M. Brown, including *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, 1989); Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi* (Cambridge, 2011). His own assessment of his student years in London can be found in Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, translated by Mahadev Desai (New York, 1983; reprint of 1948 edn.), 38–72.

<sup>25</sup> Aside from his 1931 statements discussed later in this chapter, see also *Hind Swaraj*, 303–7; 'Presidential Address at Belgaum Congress', 26 December 1924, in *CWMG*, Vol. 29, 490–4.

regeneration.<sup>26</sup> As an explicit denunciation of imperialism and the harm it had done to India, his celebrated wardrobe provided a tangible illustration of anti-colonial alternatives. Spinning, weaving, and wearing *khadi* became iconic nationalist practices – the ‘livery of freedom’, in Nehru’s estimation.<sup>27</sup> *Khadi* symbolized both the INC’s fight against British exploitation and the nationalist elite’s empathy and common cause with India’s impoverished masses, acting as a direct refutation of the recurrent British charge that the INC was an unrepresentative organization with unrepresentative goals. ‘In India several millions wear only a loin-cloth’, Gandhi explained to a British reporter. ‘That is why I wear a loin-cloth myself. They call me half-naked. I do it deliberately in order to identify myself with the poorest of the poor in India.’<sup>28</sup>

He also stressed his affinity to Britain’s poor during his visit in the autumn of 1931. During the Round Table Conference he eschewed exclusive accommodations in favour of spartan lodgings in London’s East End; every morning he started his day with a walk through its working-class districts, engaging in friendly exchanges with those he encountered along the way.<sup>29</sup> Amidst the suffering of the Great Depression, Gandhi had gained an international reputation as a symbolic hero to the poor and downtrodden that extended to Britain as well as the United States and other countries via intense media coverage of the 1930 salt march and other campaigns.<sup>30</sup> Regardless of his wider appeal and expressions of sympathy, however, he insisted that his primary concern was India’s poor whose plight was exponentially worse than that of Britain’s own. He repeatedly refuted this analogy during his 1931 stay, never more categorically refuting it than during his two-day excursion to Lancashire where many identified him and the INC’s textile boycott as the main source of their troubles.<sup>31</sup> ‘I am pained at the unemployment here’, he said, and regretted whatever small part he personally might have played in it. ‘But there is no starvation or semi-starvation. In India we have both’, with ‘half-starved skeletons, living corpses’ in every village.<sup>32</sup> His duty was ‘to the

<sup>26</sup> ‘Speech at Meeting of Labour M.P.s’, London, 16 September 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 369.

<sup>27</sup> Susan S. Bean, ‘Gandhi and *Khadi*, the Fabric of Indian Independence’, in Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider (eds.), *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington, DC, 1989), 355–76 (see 373 for Nehru’s quote); Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London, 1996), chs. 3 and 4; Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi’s Nation: Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington, 2007); C.A. Bayly, ‘The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930’, in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 285–321.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Interview to “The News Chronicle”’, London, 17 September 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 371; see also ‘The Loin-Cloth’, *Young India*, 30 April 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 52, 8–9.

<sup>29</sup> James D. Hunt, *Gandhi in London* (New Delhi, 1978), 205–7.

<sup>30</sup> Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885–1947* (Oxford, 2007), 185–7.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Speech in Lancashire’, 26/27 September 1931, *Young India*, 15 October 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 415.



starving millions of India, compared with whose poverty and pauperism the poverty of Lancashire dwindles into insignificance'.<sup>33</sup>

Gandhi hoped that face-to-face meetings with British cotton manufacturers and workers would give him the chance to explain Lancashire's deleterious effect on India and correct misunderstandings spread by his detractors about the rationale behind the INC's boycott. As a local newspaper reported,

Mr. Gandhi then went on to state his view that Indian poverty is the result of British policy through the overthrowing of India's old cotton industry by the machines of Lancashire more than a hundred years ago. He argued that the descendants of those who destroyed the supplementary means of livelihood . . . could not now complain if the descendants of the dispossessed tried to rehabilitate themselves.<sup>34</sup>

For their part, Lancashire mill owners, trades unionists, workers, and the unemployed all hoped that seeing the grievous state of regional affairs first hand would lead him to call off the boycott. In this they were to be sorely disappointed. Noting that Britain's jobless received benefits nearly ten times higher than average Indian incomes, he told an unemployed workers' deputation that '[e]ven in your misery you are comparatively happy . . . I wish well to you, but do not think of prospering on the tombs of the poor millions of India.'<sup>35</sup>

The *Manchester Guardian's* account of Gandhi's meeting with cotton representatives suggests he succeeded in driving home the fact that local industry could expect no return to the past, when the colonizing nation had thrived at the expense of the colonized. One man left fearing a future in which 'fully 40 per cent of the spindles and looms in Lancashire will never run again'. But if many grudgingly faced up to economic reality, they struggled to accept Gandhi's deeper moral arguments about the comforts of even the least privileged social sectors within Britain when juxtaposed to the condition of India's peasantry struggling for sheer survival. 'It all depends on what one was accustomed to', one attendee reflected, while another reported that 'We put it to him that in the East a lower standard of life is the normal thing, and he agreed, but said that there were many millions in India who were below the lowest standard possible even in the Orient.'<sup>36</sup> British common-sense understandings of its cotton sector's predicament during the Great Depression thus reflected an ingrained sense of imperial entitlement vis-à-vis India, one laden with assumptions of poverty relativism that balked at acknowledging British culpability for colonial conditions. Whereas Gandhi insisted on

<sup>33</sup> 'Statement to the Press', Springvale Garden Village, 26 September 1931, from *The Sunday Observer*, 27 September 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 412.

<sup>34</sup> 'Speech at Adult School', West Bradford, 27 September 1931, from *The Clitheroe Advertiser and Times*, 2 October 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 418.

<sup>35</sup> 'Interview to Unemployed Workers' Deputation', West Bradford, 27 September 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 419–20.

<sup>36</sup> 'Account of Meeting with Representatives of Cotton Trade', Edgeworth, 27 September 1931, from *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 516, 514–15, 517.



Figure 1.1 Mohandas Gandhi and cheering mill workers while leaving one of the textile mills at Spring Vale, Darwen, Lancashire, UK, 26 September 1931. Credit: GandhiServe.

comparison, in Britain inequality between colonizers and colonized was taken as the inevitable norm, part of a status quo in which Lancashire's right to India's textile market and the local benefits it once bestowed were taken for granted.

Many Britons whom Gandhi met were as concerned about defending Britain's 'rights and interests' in India as Churchill was; unlike Churchill, however, who refused even to meet Gandhi face to face, others had mastered the art of basic courtesy and approached him without personal animosity or blatant disrespect. Whether walking through working-class London or travelling on his many excursions outside the capital, Gandhi repeatedly encountered public enthusiasm and affection. 'People come out of their houses and shake hands with me and wish me well', he reported of the East End. Even in Lancashire, where passions often ran deepest and where he fully expected to be met with resentment, crowds rushed to meet his train and lined the streets when he arrived.<sup>37</sup> 'Women mill

<sup>37</sup> 'Interview to Evelyn Wrench', London, on or after 17 October 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 54, 34; 'Statement to the Press', West Bradford, 27 September 1931, from *The Clitheroe Advertiser and Times*, 2 October 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 53, 421–2; 'Speech at Plenary Session of Round Table Conference', London, 1 December 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 54, 231.

workers shouted “Three cheers for Mr. Gandeye, hip hip – Hurrah”, one of his travelling companions recalled. Outside the factories, ‘a number of women brought their babies and pushed them into [his] arms’.<sup>38</sup> Despite grave concerns about their own livelihoods, representatives of the cotton industry described him as ‘one of the most remarkable men I have ever met’ or went so far as to admit that ‘If I were an Indian, I should be a disciple of Gandhi.’<sup>39</sup>

Gandhi and his cause, as these reports suggest, could claim friends as well as Churchillian-style foes at the heart of the empire. Alongside those who were casually sympathetic, open-minded, or simply curious to catch a glimpse of an exotic celebrity were others – Quakers, pacifists, communists, and some Independent Labour Party MPs like A. Fenner Brockway among them – broadly supportive of the INC’s goals or at least willing to listen to nationalist arguments.<sup>40</sup> Churchill’s views were by no means shared by all: his was an extreme voice even within his own Conservative Party strongly committed to empire, and his unbending stance on India denied him prominent Tory leadership positions even if it won him popularity among a considerable part of its electorate. Nonetheless, subsequent policy towards India in the wake of Gandhi’s visit and the Round Table Conference underscored the extent to which the political climate reigning within 1930s Britain remained staunchly pro-imperialist.

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The years ahead brought another cycle of Congress-led civil disobedience, stepped-up colonial repression, and the jailing of INC leaders (significantly, Gandhi was again in custody only a week after he returned from Britain).<sup>41</sup> Further political reforms also followed: with the 1935 Government of India Act, Britain resumed its process of bringing Indians into the administration. Whereas in 1919 the provinces of British India came partly under Indian control, 1935 brought full Indian provincial self-government as well as power-sharing at the centre. Like before, however, in 1935 the British were careful to keep a firm hold over imperial priorities – including defence, finance, and foreign relations – and the viceroy retained extensive discretionary powers. Furthermore, provincial ministries handed over to elected Indians could revert

<sup>38</sup> Mirabehn [Madeleine Slade], *The Spirit’s Pilgrimage* (Arlington, VA, 1960), 141; on the 1931 visit, see 133–45.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Account of Meeting with Representatives of Cotton Trade’, 517, 515.

<sup>40</sup> Rajagopalachar and Kumarappa (eds.), *The Nation’s Voice*, 113–17, 122–5, 129–31, 197; Hunt, *Gandhi in London*, 197–9, 205–11; more broadly, see Owen, *British Left*, ch. 7; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993), ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Overviews providing further in-depth treatment of 1930s and 1940s India include Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Oxford, 1994); Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885–1947* (Delhi, 1983); Misra, *Vishnu’s Crowded Temple*; D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism, 1929–1942* (Cambridge, 1997).

to direct British control if it was deemed necessary to maintain order. To many nationalists, it was obvious that the British did not consider the 1935 Act as a prelude to *purna swaraj* but rather intended to remain in India indefinitely. British policies also enhanced India's politicization along religious lines, which exacerbated communal divisions between Hindus and Muslims. The year 1935 entailed a continuation of 'divide and rule' approaches to India's diversity, with Britain rejecting INC claims to be a secular organization representing all of India whose reach extended beyond the Hindu majority and into mass society across the subcontinent. By the 1940s, this approach had provided far more political space for the Muslim League to emerge as a counterweight to the INC – a trajectory that took shape in the cauldron of the Second World War and reached its fullest extent once the war ended.

When the British viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared India to be at war against Nazi Germany along with Britain and the rest of the empire in 1939, he did so unilaterally without any consultation with the INC or any of the provincial ministries presided over by Indians – a clear demonstration of the limited autonomy over their own affairs Indians enjoyed in practice. The INC's elected leaders resigned from office in protest, civil disobedience resumed, and India's manpower and economic resources were again corralled to service the needs of the British empire at war in 1939–1945, just as they had been in 1914–1918. Renewed non-cooperation between 1939 and 1942 brought mass arrests, disruption, and a draconian British clampdown on dissent accompanied by a refusal to implement further political change demanded by the INC. Imperial intransigence was unsurprising, for not only was Britain hugely dependent on India's contributions to the war. Starting in May 1940, it was led by a prime minister whose categorical opposition to Indian nationalism had long rendered him a diehard imperialist since 1931: Winston Churchill.<sup>42</sup>

Wartime conditions gave rise to stepped-up anticolonial pressures to which Britain needed to formulate a credible response, and Churchill's was grudging at best. When he and United States President Roosevelt jointly issued the Atlantic Charter in August 1941 outlining common national priorities, their claim to 'respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live' and their 'wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them' came high on the list. Yet not long after Churchill stressed that the declaration was not meant to apply to India or other British imperial territories; it concerned European nations that had fallen under Nazi occupation.<sup>43</sup> As he famously

<sup>42</sup> Yasmin Khan's *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War* (London, 2015) appeared too late to be drawn upon here.

<sup>43</sup> 'The Atlantic Charter, 14 Aug. 1941', and 'The Atlantic Charter: Extract from a Speech by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons', 9 September 1941, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 372, cols. 67–9, reprinted in A.N. Porter and A.J. Stockwell (eds.), *British*

declared a year later, 'We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.'<sup>44</sup>

Over the coming months and years, Britain's empire in Asia was shaken to its core by another Axis occupier, Japan, and also challenged by the United States itself – an essential British ally which entered the war after Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor, but equally a nagging thorn in Britain's side given its ideological opposition to European imperialism. Between late 1941 and spring 1942, Japan scored a rapid series of victories throughout Southeast Asia that rewrote the region's subsequent history. The next chapters discuss Japan's wartime impact on the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina, which resulted in a permanent weakening of European control and strengthened colonial nationalist movements, and the onslaught on Britain's territories was no less severe. Thought to be impregnable, Britain's naval base at Singapore fell to Japan, over 130,000 British imperial troops were taken prisoner, and the inability to defend a two-hemisphere empire was exposed for all to see. Japan occupied British Malaya at the cost of more military and civilian internments, redirected its rich sources of rubber, tin, and other commodities towards its own war machine, and advanced through Burma and thus to neighbouring India's gates.<sup>45</sup>

Britain's need for India's troops, money, and supplies had never been more desperate given the danger of Japanese invasion, yet never more at risk given the spread of nationalist non-cooperation with the 'Raj', as the British imperial Indian state was widely known. INC non-cooperation, American anti-colonialism, and pressure from Britain's own Labour Party (now part of the wartime coalition government) strengthened the conviction that concessions needed to be offered in order to guarantee India's wartime support. This forced Churchill, much against his will, to send a delegation headed by Sir Stafford Cripps, Labour MP and member of the War Cabinet, to India to negotiate in March 1942. The Cripps mission extended an unprecedented offer to Indian nationalists: the promise of dominion status tantamount to full independence after the war in exchange for cooperation vital to securing the victory. Yet it came with the crucial proviso that no individual province or princely state of the Indian subcontinent would be forced to become part of a unified, independent nation.

Depending on one's perspective, the Cripps mission could be chalked up either as a success or a fiasco. Crafted as a propaganda tool designed to appease American critics of empire and Labour Party supporters of Indian self-

*Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938–64: Vol. 1, 1938–51* (Basingstoke, 1987), 101, 104–5; Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay 1941–1945: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1977), 128–31.

<sup>44</sup> 'A New Experience – Victory', 10 November 1942, The Lord Mayor's Luncheon, Mansion House, London, in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897–1963, Vol. VI, 1935–1942* (London, 1974), 6695.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London, 2004), chs. 2–4.

government within Britain, it achieved its intentions. However, its refusal of the INC's demand for immediate participation in India's central government and its provincial opt-out clause when independence finally came led Congress to reject the offer as yet another sign of bad faith – further evidence that the British intended to remain indefinitely as well as strengthen their position by continuing to foster division and separatism among princes and provinces with a Muslim-majority population. Such suspicions were well-founded: Cripps' negotiations with nationalist leaders were impeded at every step by Churchill's obstructionism. For Churchill, limiting Cripps to making an unsatisfactory offer destined to fail in fact qualified as a success. The prime minister had not budged an inch from his position of 1931, and 'never doubted that the imperial interest would be best served by yielding nothing at all', as R.J. Moore surmised. Together with the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, he 'espoused a do-nothing policy for the present and looked forward to a post-war British presence. Churchill favoured the eventual solution of the Indian problem whereby "we might sit on top of a tripos – Pakistan, Princely India and the Hindus"'. Linlithgow, for his part, believed Britain would remain in charge of India for another thirty years.<sup>46</sup>

Gandhi responded by calling on Britain to 'Quit India' at once and launched a mass movement under this banner in August 1942. He, Nehru, and other INC leaders great and small were rounded up and jailed, in many cases for the duration of the war; mass action took the form of urban strikes, peasant revolts, widespread sabotaging of India's communications infrastructure, and violent clashes with the police and army.<sup>47</sup> Imperial forces of law and order engaged in a ruthless backlash, with savage reprisals ranging from mass whippings of convicted rioters and the torturing of protestors to burning villages believed to harbour alleged 'terrorists'.<sup>48</sup> Approximately 2,500 people were shot and killed and up to 60,000 imprisoned, and the INC was outlawed and officially depicted as a revolutionary, underground organization. The Raj became increasingly ungovernable and its moral legitimacy was in tatters; communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims simultaneously grew in both violence and vehemence. The British authorities' need for amenable collaborators given the void left by the INC, meanwhile, enhanced the power of the Muslim League led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and with it the League's demand for a separate nation for India's Muslims: Pakistan.

By war's end in 1945, British rule in India was in its death throes. Cripps' promise of post-war independence had never been retracted, and the British could entertain no hope of re-establishing authority, order, and credibility, all

<sup>46</sup> R.J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India, 1939–1945* (Oxford, 1979), 43, 138; see also Wm. Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* (New York, 1992), 152–61; Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, 223–9.

<sup>47</sup> Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India*, 136. <sup>48</sup> Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, 244–53.

casualties of war and repression. It was no longer a question of postponing independence but of cutting British losses, attempting an exit from the sub-continent with as much dignity as possible under adverse circumstances in the face of escalating communal violence that the crippled imperial state could neither control nor contain. The British sought to secure a decolonization that would ideally salvage some shred of honour and influence and not be condemned as an ignominious ‘scuttle’. Policymakers invariably claimed they had hoped – one day – to hand over power to a united independent India. In the event, a long history of divide and rule tactics and wartime courting of the Muslim League to offset the power of a Hindu-dominated Congress created the conditions for the British Raj to be succeeded not by one independent state but rather two, India and Pakistan, headed respectively by Nehru and Jinnah. *Purna swaraj*, first demanded at midnight on the eve of 1930, finally came at midnight on 15 August 1947.

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### Post-war transitions and a new Commonwealth

In the coming decades, India’s political evolution would become just one of many transformations to rock the British empire’s foundations, ultimately resulting in widescale decolonization and a decline in Britain’s world power status.<sup>49</sup> Britain’s history of decolonization began in 1947–1948 under a Labour government headed by Clement Attlee, elected in July 1945 and remaining in office until 1951. Burma and Ceylon (later Sri Lanka) followed India and Pakistan on the road to independence, and Britain withdrew from the mandated territory of Palestine. But did the end of the Raj and the loss of its Indian ‘Jewel in the Crown’ in fact signal the end of the British empire? ‘The British Empire is an Empire only because of India’, Gandhi had stated in 1931, while Churchill predicted that ‘[t]he loss of India will be the death blow of the British Empire’ and ‘would be final and fatal to us. It could not fail to be part of

<sup>49</sup> What follows is an inevitably selective overview of Britain’s decolonization history after 1945. Some of the many impressive wider treatments include Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization: Collected Essays* (London, 2006); Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire, IV*; John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke, 1988); John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830–1970* (Cambridge, 2009), chs. 11–14; Martin Thomas, Bob Moore, and L.J. Butler, *Crises of Empire: Decolonization and Europe’s Imperial States, 1918–1975* (London, 2008), Part I by L.J. Butler; Sarah Stockwell, ‘Ends of Empire’, in Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire*, 269–93. Martin Shipway places the end of Britain’s empire in comparative perspective in *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of Colonial Empires* (Malden, MA, 2008), as does Martin Thomas in *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and Their Roads from Empire* (Oxford, 2014).

a process which would reduce us to the scale of a minor Power' – a rare instance of the two sharing common ground.<sup>50</sup> Come 1947, however, reigning British politicians and policymakers did not publicly view the independence of India and Pakistan as the beginning of an inevitable imperial decline and fall – nor had either Labour or the Conservatives resigned themselves to this prospect years later.

The history of South Asian nationalist struggles and British defences of their vested interests in the subcontinent in the face of the mounting challenges outlined earlier are crucial to recall when analyzing developments across the empire that followed. Just as importantly, they underpinned the consolidation of a powerful British narrative of what the Raj (and its end) meant, which became characteristic of common understandings of empire and decolonization that went on to enjoy a long metropolitan afterlife. The story that went to press in 1947 was one of continuity rather than rupture, one of a gradual, consensual devolution of power, and one in which laudable British intentions and not the untoward force of circumstances carried the day. It owed its basic plot to a pre-existing model that prescribed a preordained path from colonial to dominion status; in the post-war era, this was updated to emphasize a gradual, largely seamless, metamorphosis from British empire into a multiracial Commonwealth of nations. For when India and Pakistan became independent they officially did so *as dominions*, a transitional arrangement secured in exchange for an earlier British handover date despite the longstanding INC demand that India become an 'independent sovereign Republic'. To the delight of the last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, the guise of dominionhood helped make Indian independence 'the greatest opportunity ever offered to the Empire', not a sign of its terminal condition.<sup>51</sup> Above all, the arrangement ideally distracted from the demeaning reality that Britain was being driven out of the subcontinent and hoped to withdraw as quickly as possible to avoid becoming embroiled in a communal civil war.<sup>52</sup>

Instead, in 1947 British commentators ranging from Mountbatten to Prime Minister Attlee to journalists from across the political spectrum packaged India's and Pakistan's independence as a success story for domestic consumption. Independence was a voluntary 'transfer of power', not a radical break; it was a credit to liberal British ideals and the intended, inevitable result of

<sup>50</sup> 'Answers to Questions', Oxford, 24 October 1931, in *CWMG*, Vol. 54, 89; 'India', 22 April 1931, Junior Imperial League Rally, Chingford, in Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill, Complete Speeches*, V, 5015; 'India', 30 January 1931, in Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill, Complete Speeches*, V, 4971; see also David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London, 2002), 34.

<sup>51</sup> Wm. Roger Louis, 'The Dissolution of the British Empire', in Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, IV, 335–6.

<sup>52</sup> John Darwin, 'British Decolonization since 1945: A Pattern or a Puzzle?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12:2 (1984), 193–4.



benevolent rule and careful planning that made colonial subjects ‘ready’ for self-rule. Indeed, it spelled no less than the fulfilment of British hopes dating back to the nineteenth century, a process ushered through critical stages of evolution in 1919, 1935, and ultimately in 1942, when the Cripps mission extended the generous offer of post-war independence.<sup>53</sup> Absent from official and media self-congratulation was any allusion to the decades-long history of British delaying tactics, national self-interest in the Raj, and ferocious repression of nationalists struggling for freedom; so, too, was any suggestion that Britain no longer had the power to govern or that communal divisions and violence owed anything to British policies that fomented Hindu–Muslim tensions and led to the tragic bloodbath following partition. As Chandrika Kaul outlines, two British narratives of independence came together in 1947 – ‘a pro-empire version apparently co-existing with a celebration of decolonization’.<sup>54</sup>

After independence, this worked to absolve Britain from responsibility for the bloodshed that immediately followed, when up to one million died during the mass migration of as many as twelve million uprooted people between the new states of India and Pakistan. Communal massacres, in this reading, were but the unfortunate result of India’s inherent, age-old divisions and evidence that anarchy ensued once Britain ceased to be in charge – just as Churchill and other imperial diehards had insistently prophesied.<sup>55</sup> Communalism even claimed Gandhi as a victim, murdered on 20 January 1948 in New Delhi by an anti-Muslim Hindu nationalist who disagreed with the Mahatma’s commitment to a free India that welcomed all religious communities. Despite everything, however, after 1947 ‘India came to be seen as a paradigm of successful decolonization’ within Britain, Nicholas Owen argues, ‘deliberately portrayed as the tidy winding-up of a job well done’ even though it marked ‘the most violent of its retreats from empire, surpassing even the Mau Mau period in Kenya and the Malayan Emergency’ still to come.<sup>56</sup> Far from being a source of shame on account of its human consequences, broken promises (for example, to the princely states forced to become part of India or Pakistan regardless of princes’ wishes or previous British commitments), or for revealing Britain as unable to maintain its empire, ‘transferring power’ signified the opposite. As a Colonial Office report asserted in 1950, ‘the transfer of power is not a sign of

<sup>53</sup> Nicholas Owen, ‘“More Than a Transfer of Power”: Independence Day Ceremonies in India, 15 August 1947’, *Contemporary Record*, 6:3 (1992), 415–51.

<sup>54</sup> Chandrika Kaul, ‘“At the Stroke of the Midnight Hour”: Lord Mountbatten and the British Media at Indian Independence’, *Round Table*, 97:398 (2008), 691. Excellent accounts of partition include Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven, 2007); Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Kaul, ‘“At the Stroke”’, 690.

<sup>56</sup> Owen, ‘“More Than a Transfer”’, 443, 416, 442; see also Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire 1939–1965* (Oxford, 2005), 58–68.

weakness or of liquidation of the Empire, but is, in fact, a sign and source of strength.<sup>57</sup>

Given the long shadow cast by 1939–1945, pronouncements insisting on strength were as unsurprising as they were imbued by a combination of denial and wishful thinking. For Britain, the battle against the Axis powers had involved neither neutrality, as it had for Portugal, nor years of brutal Nazi occupation endured by the Netherlands, France, and Belgium. Undefeated at home, Britain emerged victorious in the fight against fascism, weathering the trials and tribulations and ultimately able to look back on the war as the nation's 'finest hour', as Churchill so memorably intoned. War had fortified existing national myths about Britain's imperial virtues and forged others anew, not least through flattering self-comparisons with enemies as well as allies. '[O]ur Empire, so magnificently united in this period of grave emergency, was not founded on conquest and oppression, like some Empires of the past, which the Germans are seeking to copy, but upon bold adventure, love of liberty and justice, and spiritual ideals', declared the President of the Empire Day Movement in the annual BBC radio broadcast to mark the occasion in 1943.<sup>58</sup> The Third Reich was defined by racism, aggression, invasions, and predatory foreign occupations; British imperial rule, by contrast, was benign, characterized by decency, moderation, lofty liberal ideals, racial tolerance, and noble plans for a future in which partnership, welfare and development initiatives, and a roadmap for planned self-government were all in the cards.

Conveniently ignoring conditions which prevailed within the South African dominion and across many of its colonies (not least in white settler territories like Northern and Southern Rhodesia as well as Kenya), Britain and its empire also claimed the moral racial high ground over the United States in which racial inequalities, segregation, and colour bars prevailed.<sup>59</sup> 'Being British meant being white', Sonya Rose summarizes, but also 'being tolerant, at least more tolerant than white Americans; it meant a paternalist stance that helped people of colour to "develop" and eventually "earn" their independence.'<sup>60</sup> These core ideals both bolstered national pride and helped defend the empire against American anti-colonial pressures that Britain could not afford to ignore, either before or after 1945.

<sup>57</sup> 'The colonial empire today: summary of our main problems and policies: CO International Relations Dept. paper. Annex: some facts illustrating progress to date' [May 1950], CO 537/5698, no. 69, reprinted in Ronald Hyam (ed.), *The Labour Government and the End of Empire 1945–1951, Part I (British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A, Vol. 2)* (London, 1992), 358.

<sup>58</sup> 'Empire Day Message', from Viscount Bledisloe, Empire Day, 1943 (PRO/CO 875/19/17), quoted in Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939–1945* (Oxford, 2003), 243.

<sup>59</sup> Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 25–9, 42, 51–3.

<sup>60</sup> Rose, *Which People's War?*, 262; see also 258.

For if victory – militarily over its enemies, and morally over enemy and ally alike – was sweet, its costs were enormous. The Second World War left Britain politically hamstrung and economically destitute.<sup>61</sup> Despite the empire's massive contributions that included conscription and forced labour to enhance production for a wartime economy, Britain lost a quarter of its national wealth and went from being the world's largest creditor to the world's largest debtor nation. Not only did Britain incur close to £5 billion in war debts; over £1 billion in pre-war overseas assets had also been shed. American creditors imposed the most demanding terms and conditions, coupling loan agreements that fell far short of Britain's needs with intense political pressure to press forward with reform in the empire already seen in the Indian subcontinent. Britain continued to attempt American appeasement along similar lines as during the war itself, publicly committing to a process of political reform but stressing that social and economic development was the pre-requisite if the road to self-government – always at some unspecified time, and always within the framework of the empire and Commonwealth – was to advance on stable foundations. Meanwhile, initiatives like the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945 legitimized a progressive new imperialism laden with good intentions to help colonial peoples that simultaneously provided desperately-needed aid to the metropole itself. Of the two goals, the latter took precedence: as Larry Butler rightly concludes, 'the aim of all this activity was less to benefit colonial populations than to restore Britain's economic independence.'<sup>62</sup>

Just as Gandhi and the INC had stressed the advantages Britain enjoyed at India's expense, policymakers in the second half of the 1940s looked to the empire to underwrite Britain's domestic recovery and reconstruction. George Orwell's pre-war prediction that without the empire England would be reduced 'to a cold and unimportant little island where we should all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes' would have resonated deeply in the immediate aftermath of war within a Britain suffering harsh winters alongside acute fuel and food shortages. Even basic staples such as bread – and the humble potato itself – became newly rationed.<sup>63</sup> Empire and imperialism shone like a beacon of economic salvation for a metropole in crisis. Raw materials including tropical foodstuffs, metals, and other goods became targeted for increased production for export both to Britain and internationally.

<sup>61</sup> Philip Murphy, 'Britain as a Global Power in the Twentieth Century', in Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series* (Oxford, 2012), 48–61.

<sup>62</sup> L.J. Butler, in Thomas, Moore, and Butler, *Crises of Empire*, 58.

<sup>63</sup> George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (New York, 1958; originally published 1937), 159–60; cited in Nicholas Owen, 'Critics of Empire in Britain', in Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, IV, 208.

Produce from colonies that formed part of the Sterling Area could either be bought for the home market on favourable terms or sold outside the empire for the dollars Britain needed to restore its balance of payments deficit and gradually chisel away at its American loans. Britain increasingly relied upon oil supplies from its 'informal empire' in the Middle East, while the Gold Coast produced cocoa, Northern Rhodesia provided copper, and Malaya yielded lucrative quantities of rubber and tin.

Britain's need for Malayan exports underlay its crackdown on an insurgency in the colony that marked the start of the 'Emergency' declared in 1948. Like other revolts the Dutch and French confronted in Southeast Asia considered in Chapters 2 and 3, Malaya's was closely connected to the upheavals of Japanese occupation and the spread of communism across much of the region which gathered new momentum as China came under communist rule in 1949 and the Cold War increasingly dominated relations between East and West. Although its causes were manifold, the insurgency in Malaya can partly be seen as a popular backlash against intrusive economically inspired colonialism given the adverse impact of development policies Nicholas White aptly describes as 'hopelessly optimistic, ignorant of local conditions, and downright exploitative'.<sup>64</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, Malaya, and elsewhere, the late 1940s and early 1950s brought what historians have termed a 'second colonial occupation' and an intensification of metropolitan investments which, in turn, had to be defended.<sup>65</sup> So too did white settlers in colonies like Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia, who played important roles in the agricultural and mining sectors geared towards international markets. Counterinsurgency campaigns pitting imperial troops (including many young British conscripts doing their obligatory National Service) against opponents variously dismissed as 'bandits', 'communist terrorists', or simply 'savages' were undertaken not just to preserve the empire from communist incursion but also to protect profitable economic interests deemed critical to the metropole's reconstruction.

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Ultimately, the disruptive, self-serving imperialism of the second colonial occupation and the wartime upheavals that gave rise to it became signposts marking the road to decolonization.<sup>66</sup> But at the time, British officials remained

<sup>64</sup> Nicholas J. White, 'Reconstructing Europe through Rejuvenating Empire: The British, French, and Dutch Experiences Compared', *Past and Present*, 210: Supplement 6 (2011), 228. On the Malayan emergency, see Susan L. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944–1960* (London, 1995), ch. 2; T.N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge, 1999), ch. 4; Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London, 2007), ch. 10.

<sup>65</sup> D.A. Low and J.M. Lonsdale, 'Introduction: Towards the New Order, 1945–63', in D.A. Low and Alison Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1976), 13.

<sup>66</sup> White, 'Reconstructing Europe', 236.

convinced that colonial self-government could be safely postponed for the foreseeable future, in many cases for at least a generation. In the interim, imperial revival and the containment of radical change seemed possible. Insurgencies in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus during the 1950s could be broken, it was argued, and the 'hearts and minds' of colonized peoples won over. In many territories, organized nationalist demands for independence were all but invisible to colonial authorities. Some movements were still in their formative stages when the war ended; others simply had yet to take recognizable nationalist forms, or were denied recognition as nationalist. The Mau Mau revolt (predominantly among the Kikuyu) in Kenya, for example, was habitually depoliticized and psychologically pathologized, described as evidence of Africans' innate primitivism and savagery – not, as David Anderson summarizes, 'the product of frustrated legitimate nationalist aspiration against colonial oppression' that stemmed from land hunger and a thirst for freedom within a colony geared towards white settler interests.<sup>67</sup> Elsewhere, other movements were believed to appeal mainly to small elite minorities, as had long been the case in India. This was partly due to the fact that political pressures from colonial peoples resident in Britain were more perceptible than demands emanating directly from the colonies themselves. The 1945 Pan-African Congress seemed a case in point: organized in Manchester and taking a firm stand against imperial oppression, racism, and inadequate 'pretentious constitutional reforms', it was attended by West African and West Indian students, professionals, and activists along with African American supporters.<sup>68</sup>

Nationalism in Africa seemed an easy candidate for colonial containment or indeed pre-emption, posing nowhere near the threat it had in India in the immediate post-war period. Limited local concessions and the cultivation of amenable working relationships with 'moderate' (pro-Western) Africans, British authorities felt, would ensure measured political development along British-approved lines, while potential 'extremists' could be marginalized or suppressed. Not only was nationalism claimed to be in its infancy; so too were Africans, who were commonly seen by leading Labour and Conservative figures alike as far too politically immature to govern themselves. In 1943, Labour MP and Home Secretary Herbert Morrison had contrasted self-governing dominions that formed 'a family of adult nations' and India, which only had to wait until the

<sup>67</sup> David M. Anderson, 'Mau Mau at the Movies: Contemporary Representations of an Anti-Colonial War', *South African Historical Journal*, 48 (2003), 73. See also Dane Kennedy, 'Constructing the Colonial Myth of Mau Mau', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25:2 (1992), 242–60; John Lonsdale, 'Mau Maus of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya', *Journal of African History*, 31 (1990), 393–421; Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 267.

<sup>68</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002), 58–9; Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London, 1995).

war ended for self-government, with other colonies. 'It would be sheer nonsense – ignorant, dangerous nonsense – to talk about grants of full self-government to many of the dependent territories for some time to come', he argued. Acting with undue haste 'would be like giving a child of ten a latch-key, a bank account, and a shotgun'.<sup>69</sup> By 1950, the Colonial Office simultaneously promoted progressive objectives while still insisting on delaying political advance until colonial peoples were sufficiently 'adult', maintaining that '[o]ur aim is to create independence – independence within the Commonwealth – not to suppress it . . . A vigorous, adult, and willing partner is clearly more to be desired than one dependent, adolescent, and unwilling' – hastening to add that 'there is no intention to abandon responsibilities prematurely'.<sup>70</sup> For all their expressed intentions, London-based officials and colonial administrators shared many outlooks with white settler advocates like Kenya-raised Elspeth Huxley, who habitually criticized whatever political concessions were contemplated as coming too fast and too soon. Africans suffered from superstition and 'tropical inertia' that made them averse to hard work, and depended upon colonial benevolence for their civilizational advance, she insisted in 1949: 'to give political freedom to countries at present too immature, backward and unstable to use it wisely' would potentially 'lead to chaos and perhaps Communist influence, and thence to the wiping out of economic gains . . . and possibly even to the strategic encirclement of the west'.<sup>71</sup>

In this reasoning, Britain not only could but most decidedly *should* control the process of political change in order to ensure a moderate tempo and thereby a moderate, pro-Western tone. This would shore up what remained of the empire for the foreseeable future, and ideally with the United States' backing. For as the Cold War intensified in the late 1940s and early 1950s, playing the card of the communist threat, real or imagined, proved a highly effective means of strengthening Britain's hand in Anglo-American diplomatic stakes. The American political establishment retreated from the demand that Western European imperial powers advance steadily towards decolonization, opting instead to subsidize imperial rule as the best means of fighting the global advance of communism in Asia and Africa. 'For all the "holier than thou" attitudes of the Americans, the British and French Empires were propped up in the democratic cause of saving the global free market from communist annexation', Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson emphasize.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> 'Mr. Herbert Morrison Replies to Critics of Empire', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 January 1943.

<sup>70</sup> 'The Colonial Empire Today', CO 537/5698, no. 69, in Hyam (ed.), *Labour Government and the End of Empire 1945–1951, Part I*, 334–5; see also Ronald Hyam, 'Africa and the Labour Government, 1945–1951', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 16:3 (1988), 153.

<sup>71</sup> Elspeth Huxley, 'British Aims in Africa', *Foreign Affairs*, 28:1 (1949), 49, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Decolonization', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 22:3 (1994), 493.

American support for the British empire was crucial, but Britain was equally determined to use the empire to maintain its position vis-à-vis America itself. However much the strains of war had weakened it, after 1945 Britain nonetheless remained the third-ranking world power after the United States and Soviet Union. For over a decade, British statesmen from across the political spectrum were determined to keep it that way. Britain's unpalatable dependence on American material aid and diplomatic acquiescence to its overseas ambitions could be tempered and complete subservience as the admittedly junior partner in the Anglo-American 'special relationship' avoided, it was believed, by retaining empire and remaining at the head of the 'Commonwealth of Nations' that expanded where empire had contracted.<sup>73</sup> Coupled with the assumption that Britain's rightful place was among the three great powers, the Commonwealth ideal as it coalesced under the Labour government after 1945 remained powerful well after the Conservatives returned to office in 1951, first under Churchill and then Anthony Eden. Its star only gradually faded during and after Harold Macmillan's period as prime minister from 1957 until 1963.

It was via the Commonwealth that the dominion idea emerged, alive, well, and reinvented, from the tunnel of the Second World War and the independence of India and Pakistan. Lord Mountbatten's satisfaction that both new states could initially be claimed as dominions despite the INC's obdurate opposition to all that this status had implied soon paved the way for a determined campaign to keep both under the Commonwealth umbrella. In the late 1940s, Britain's prior focus on the ultimate achievement of dominion status as the purported objective of imperial rule shifted to a rhetoric revolving around inclusion within the Commonwealth. "'Commonwealth", which began as a synonym for Empire, came to signify its antithesis', McIntyre notes; in place of 'Dominion Status' came 'fully independent Member of the Commonwealth', while 'British' no longer officially came before 'Commonwealth of Nations' after 1948.<sup>74</sup>

Above all, leading Labour politicians insisted that the Commonwealth was no longer limited to the exclusive 'club' consisting of the British 'mother country' plus its 'daughter nations', which Gandhi had distinguished from British-Indian relations in 1931. As Prime Minister Attlee explained to 'My dear Nehru' in a letter pleading him to support Indian membership, 'We have now reached another stage in the development of the Commonwealth. Hitherto

<sup>73</sup> Darwin, *Empire Project*, 561, 571; David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 2000), ch. 7; Ronald Hyam, 'Introduction', in Hyam (ed.), *Labour Government and the End of Empire 1945-1951, Part I*, xlix, lxxi; David Goldsworthy, 'Introduction', in David Goldsworthy (ed.), *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1951-1957, Part I (British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A, Vol. 3)* (London, 1994), xxv-xxxiii, xlv.

<sup>74</sup> W. David McIntyre, 'Commonwealth Legacy', in Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, IV, 693, 696.

the Dominions, although in South Africa the majority of the population are Dutch and in Canada a large percentage French, have been countries whose population has had a large element of United Kingdom stock' – a comment that revealingly ignored South Africa's African majority and Asian minorities, not to mention Canada's native American population. 'It has been a matter of pride to me that during my Premiership in Great Britain the family circle should have been enlarged by the coming of age, so to speak, of the nations in Asia. The British Commonwealth of Nations is now in effect the Commonwealth of British and Asiatic Nations', bound together by 'close association' but with 'complete freedom' for all its members – fully harmonious, in other words, with *purna swaraj*.<sup>75</sup> Nehru soon persuaded India's Constituent Assembly to concede to Commonwealth status by securing a formula whereby India was not required to recognize the British monarch as its formal head of state. As Nehru well knew, agreeing to Commonwealth membership could not stand in the way of India playing an independent role in world affairs that sharply deviated from Anglo-American priorities, as the coming era of non-alignment and public attacks on surviving forms of colonial domination would powerfully demonstrate.

Celebrated as a British triumph, the agreement with India made republicanism compatible with the Commonwealth and gave the organization the newly multiracial profile it needed if it hoped to win credibility as an entity fit for post-war modernity. This was bolstered when Pakistan and Ceylon joined soon after (although Burma stood aside, and Ireland withdrew). The evolving Commonwealth appeared to bode well for a future in which links between members could be maintained to mutual strategic and economic benefit on an increasingly bipolar world stage. Via the Commonwealth, Britain hoped to retain global power status and prestige as a 'third force' along with the American and Soviet superpowers. Instead of the loss of empire spelling Britain's decline, the growth and metamorphosis of the Commonwealth would attest to Britain's resilience, adaptability, and ability to dictate the course and pace of change, as well as indicate dedication to racial inclusivity and equality.<sup>76</sup>

Commitment to the Commonwealth was Labour Party orthodoxy between the late 1940s and early 1960s, but many of its attitudes were widely shared among Conservatives. Publicizing its newly multiracial character extended beyond the realm of party politics to become central to the British monarchy's self-fashioning as it entered a 'new Elizabethan era' with Queen Elizabeth II's ascent to the throne at the age of twenty-five in 1952. Significantly, she

<sup>75</sup> '[Relationship between India and the British Commonwealth]': Personal Letter from Mr. Attlee to Pandit Nehru, 11 March 1948, PREM 8/820, 29–37, reprinted in Hyam (ed.), *Labour Government and the End of Empire 1945–1951, Part IV*, 153–5.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Commonwealth* (London, 1965; first published 1962), 307.



learned of her father's death while on holiday at a game reserve in Kenya – just one of many trips she and other members of the royal family made to Africa and other parts of the Commonwealth throughout her adult life. Another extended tour took place just months after her coronation in June 1953, when London had hosted a spectacular pageant of colonial and Commonwealth troops and leaders who came to take part in the parades and festivities. In her 1953 Christmas message broadcast from New Zealand, the Queen committed herself 'heart and soul' to upholding the Commonwealth as 'an equal partnership of nations and races' within which 'the United Kingdom is an equal partner with many other proud and independent nations, and . . . is leading forward yet other still backward nations to the same goal'.<sup>77</sup>

Queen and Commonwealth alike acted as powerful symbols of continuity and renewal in the 1950s, rooted in tradition but meant to signify the antithesis of aging relics belonging solely to the past. As the first British monarch to assume the title 'Head of the Commonwealth', Elizabeth II played an integral part in making monarchy a cord that tied Britain and the far-flung empire/Commonwealth together as a unified, harmonious, and progressive 'family of nations'.<sup>78</sup> Within this Commonwealth family, still-'backward' members were being dutifully chaperoned and groomed to assume responsibility over themselves. Like the Queen herself, this was a family portrayed as youthful, attractive, fertile, and modern, its organizing values being equality and partnership – not one characterized by hierarchical power relations in which parental authority dominated.

Like the colonial and Commonwealth visitors who travelled to Britain to mark her coronation, moreover, the peripatetic Queen enacted her own high-level version of a key practice that had forged many of the links knitting Britain together with its colonies and Commonwealth and which was meant to sustain these ties after the Second World War: migration. 'A Commonwealth of scattered nations could only have been brought into being by the movement, mingling and interrelationship of its peoples across the seas' argued Patrick Gordon Walker, one of the Labour Party's most ardent Commonwealth

<sup>77</sup> Tom Fleming (ed.), *Voices Out of the Air: The Royal Christmas Broadcasts 1932–1981* (London, 1981), 74, quoted in Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government and the Postwar Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2013), chs. 3–5 (especially ch. 4 on the coronation); Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 93–5, 104, 118; Ben Pimlott, *The Queen: Elizabeth II and the Monarchy* (London, 2012; first published 1996), especially 182, 203–4, 217, 309–13; Peter H. Hansen, 'Coronation Everest: The Empire and Commonwealth in the "Second Elizabethan Age"', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, 2001), 57–72; Sonya O. Rose, 'From the "New Jerusalem" to the "Decline" of the "New Elizabethan Age": National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1945–56', in Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller (eds.), *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York, 2010), 240–3.

devotees, in 1962.<sup>79</sup> The Commonwealth formed ‘a true cultural community because its members could move freely amongst one another’, its demographic fluidity rendering it ‘a natural unit’.<sup>80</sup> ‘Natural’ did not mean biological, he insisted, denouncing assumptions that its ‘cohesion rested in the last resort upon a community of kith and kin: that its political unity arose out of a biological unity’ in which Britain as the ‘mother country’ presided over ‘a Commonwealth of daughter states that had sprung from British loins’.<sup>81</sup> Nothing supported his argument more than Britain’s dual commitment to unrestricted intra-Commonwealth migration and common citizenship.<sup>82</sup> This had been reaffirmed with the 1948 British Nationality Act, whereby all colonial and Commonwealth subjects – regardless of race – counted as British subjects sharing common citizenship and rights, including the right to settle in Britain itself.<sup>83</sup>

In making ‘British subject’ and ‘Commonwealth citizen’ formally synonymous, the 1948 legislation projected an overarching vision of nationality that encompassed domestic Britain, the former dominions of the ‘Old Commonwealth’, and Britain’s Asian, African, and Caribbean colonies and ex-colonies in the process of building a ‘New Commonwealth’.<sup>84</sup> As Chapter 7 will show, shared citizenship alongside unrestricted migration both to and from Britain created the conditions for unprecedented numbers of West Indians, Indians, Pakistanis, and others to settle in Britain between 1948 and 1962, when the first in a series of immigration restriction acts was passed with the implicit if not explicit aim of curbing the ‘coloured’ influx from the ‘New Commonwealth’. Indeed, Gordon Walker’s emphasis on the fundamental importance of free movement of peoples to the Commonwealth’s cohesion and survival owed much of its urgency to the fierce public and parliamentary debates about whether to depart from this principle at the start of the 1960s. Legislation he passionately (if unsuccessfully) opposed that retreated from the 1948 Act was testament to the Commonwealth ideal’s declining political purchase by the early 1960s, a theme explored further later in this chapter. However, tensions between Britain’s stated commitment to a progressive, multiracial Commonwealth and the countless occasions when the interests of white British subjects, the erstwhile ‘white dominions’ of the ‘Old Commonwealth’, and white minorities in British colonial Africa received

<sup>79</sup> Gordon Walker, *Commonwealth*, 142. Gordon Walker had served as Undersecretary and then Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations between 1947 and 1951. His positions receive fuller treatment in Elizabeth Buettner, “‘This is Staffordshire not Alabama’: Racial Geographies of Commonwealth Immigration in Early 1960s Britain”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42:4 (2014), 712–15.

<sup>80</sup> Gordon Walker, *Commonwealth*, 231. <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 232, 88. <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 142, 193.

<sup>84</sup> Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, 1997), ch. 1.

priority had been present from the outset. Formal citizenship was less important than a conception of national identity shared among a ‘racial community of Britons’ distributed across the metropole, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, East Africa, Central Africa, and most problematically of all, South Africa.<sup>85</sup>

In imperial and Commonwealth reality if not rhetoric, ‘British stock’ and white ‘kith and kin’ took precedence, denials notwithstanding. Britain’s history of post-war migration was as much a story of white emigration as colonial immigration, for despite labour shortages at home the British government actively encouraged outward movement to arenas with established traditions of white settlement. Between 1945 and 1960, over 566,000 British-born nationals moved to Australia, 150,000 to New Zealand, 582,000 to Canada, 125,000 to South Africa, and 82,000 to Southern Rhodesia. British policy-makers believed that replenishing these parts of the empire/Commonwealth with ‘British stock’ would, as Kathleen Paul asserts, ‘ensure that even as the dominions asserted their political autonomy, their cultural and economic links would still tie them to Britain’.<sup>86</sup> The family metaphor appeared repeatedly in political discourse about citizenship and was largely applied to whites. Persons of ‘British stock’ in settler colonies and dominions were likened to ‘brothers and sisters’, ‘first cousins’, or the ‘true children’ of Britons at home whether figuratively or literally, given the high volume of recent departures.<sup>87</sup> Africans, Asians, and West Indians, by contrast, were widely imagined as childlike in political and civilizational terms, but lacked the ancestry and cultural attributes that rendered overseas kith and kin part of the inner family circle, regardless of geographical distance.

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### From 1950s imperial crises to the ‘wind of change’

For indigenous populations in Britain’s white settler colonies, the multiracial family of empire in the 1950s spelled subordination with seemingly no end in sight. When the Conservative Party returned to power late in 1951 with Churchill resuming the role of prime minister until 1955, the new government did not adopt a fundamentally different approach to the empire and Commonwealth than had been devised under Labour. Colonial policy was neither a prominent nor a divisive electoral issue, and Britain’s stated aim remained that of guiding its colonies towards responsible self-government within the Commonwealth – but without undue haste. Overall, however, Conservatives (including Churchill himself) showed as little enthusiasm

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., xv; Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 11, 149, 175.

<sup>86</sup> Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 29 (see 25–34 for emigration data). <sup>87</sup> Ibid., 20–3.

about many of the remaining colonial territories as they did for decolonization. As Philip Murphy argues, because for many Conservatives imperial priorities had long centred on the dominions and India, the empire that survived ‘lost much of its emotional appeal after 1947 and became, for the most part, a series of intellectually demanding puzzles which they were no longer interested in solving’.<sup>88</sup>

Containing change remained a key objective, but non-settler colonies never had a strong hold on the British imagination; there, gradual progress towards independence within the Commonwealth continued apace and elicited little fervent Conservative reaction.<sup>89</sup> In West Africa, for example, the British political establishment persisted in the conceit that London remained fully in control, although nationalists had propelled political advance further and faster than had been hoped for or anticipated. Alongside Malaya, the Gold Coast achieved independence as Ghana in 1957, while Nigeria followed in 1960 and Sierra Leone in 1961.<sup>90</sup> West Africa’s resident British population was small and limited largely to expatriate officials, development workers, and members of the business community, few of whom tried to stand in the way of independence under African majority rule. By contrast, the course of decolonization history proved far rockier, violent, divisive, and protracted where vocal minority communities of kith and kin had set down roots, as was the case in East Africa (especially Kenya) and Central Africa.<sup>91</sup>

White settlers in post-war British Africa succeeded in winning considerable support for their privileged status among colonial officials as well as a significant proportion of Conservative politicians at home, who redirected their imperial energies towards a commitment to settler interests.<sup>92</sup> Kenya as well as Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland (the three colonies brought together in 1953 within the framework of the Central African

<sup>88</sup> Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951–1964* (Oxford, 1995), 30–1. See also Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, 271, ch. 9. On the continuities and shifts across the period of Labour followed by Conservative rule, see David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945–1961: From ‘Colonial Development’ to ‘Wind of Change’* (Oxford, 1971).

<sup>89</sup> David Goldsworthy, ‘Keeping Change Within Bounds: Aspects of Colonial Policy during the Churchill and Eden Governments, 1951–57’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18:1 (1990), 81–108.

<sup>90</sup> In 1956 Sudan had preceded Ghana and Malaya to independence; Cyprus also became independent in 1960.

<sup>91</sup> Independence also proceeded more smoothly in East African colonies without significant white settler interests (as was the case with the decolonization of Tanganyika, later Tanzania, in 1961 and Uganda in 1962).

<sup>92</sup> Murphy, *Party Politics*, 58. On the history of the CAF, see especially Murphy’s many treatments, including ‘Introduction’, in Philip Murphy (ed.), *Central Africa, Part I: Closer Association 1945–1958 (British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A Volume 5)* (London, 2005), xxvii–cxvi, alongside Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Vol. 1: The White Man’s World* (Oxford, 2011), ch. 6.

Federation) were arenas where Britain committed itself to ‘multiracial partnership’, but this stopped far short of racial equality. With the ratio of Europeans to non-Europeans being 1:93 in Kenya, 1:26 within the overall Federation (CAF), and 1:13 in Southern Rhodesia alone, white populations could never have held on to the disproportionate political, economic, and social status they enjoyed if political advance worked in the direction of majority rule.<sup>93</sup>

Settlers and their advocates in Africa as well as London thwarted meaningful political reform and successfully defended their position for much of the 1950s, which effectively meant consolidating white supremacy. It was only later in the decade that white minority privileges under alleged ‘partnership’ schemes appeared increasingly untenable – at least within the metropole and among the wider international community, if not to the settlers themselves or their diehard champions. The 1950s began with attempts to curb ‘extremism’ and minimize change in the name of gradual, reformist, and purportedly progressive multiracialism and power-sharing. As the decade drew to a close, however, Britain’s reputation as an enlightened overseer with an unfailing ability to steer overseas events in desired directions – a reputation assiduously cultivated and eagerly asserted, regardless of its dubious veracity – had suffered severe blows.<sup>94</sup> For some (if certainly not all) Britons, the Kenya Emergency, the Suez Crisis, and the rising tensions within and surrounding the Central African Federation irrevocably damaged the British empire’s legitimacy and called its future into question, even if they did not cause longstanding colonial mentalities to evaporate overnight.

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Officially declared in October 1952 in response to the Mau Mau insurgency, the brutalities of the Kenya Emergency lasted until 1960. Violence perpetrated by Mau Mau insurgents driven by land shortages and opposition to white minority power gripped the settler community, domestic British opinion, and international observers alike. Mau Mau activists killed far more Africans than Europeans, but British reporting of the Emergency focused on white victims (both actual and potential), especially in its early stages.<sup>95</sup> Metropolitan media coverage portrayed ‘a racial community of Britons . . . under siege’ by Mau Mau’s regressive reign of terror, emphasizing threats to British kith and kin – not European violence or African deaths, internal divisions, political

<sup>93</sup> Murphy, *Party Politics*, 58.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Lynn (ed.), *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2006).

<sup>95</sup> Over the course of the Emergency, Mau Mau killed 32 Europeans and wounded 26 others, while over 2,600 African civilians were killed or wounded for opposing the rebellion. As David Anderson notes, ‘More European civilians would die in road traffic accidents between 1952 and 1960 than were killed by Mau Mau.’ David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London, 2005), 84.

grievances, and points of view. ‘Imagery of violence in colonial wars often converged on a common theme’, Wendy Webster notes: ‘the threat to an Englishness symbolized by the idea of home.’<sup>96</sup> Never more sensationally did Mau Mau attacks on isolated rural settlers dominate British headlines than in reportage of the murders of the Ruck family at home on their farm in early 1953.

The Ruck incident possessed all the ingredients to guarantee its resonance among Kenya’s European community and in the metropole. Peter and Esmée Ruck and their son Michael represented the Kenyan settler ideal and its imagined future, and thus became the ideal victims to galvanize white colonial society clamouring for the restoration of law and order by any means necessary.<sup>97</sup> The parents were the picture of an attractive couple with socially impeccable credentials living modestly on their African farm, he the son of an English clergyman who went to Kenya after the Second World War, she the African-born niece of a British Lord who trained as a physician and provided medical treatment to local Africans.<sup>98</sup> Attacked while taking an evening stroll in their garden, their assailants proceeded into the house itself and murdered six-year-old Michael in his bed. Mau Mau’s invasion into the inner sanctum of white settler domesticity and the ‘butchering’ of the child rendered the tragic death of innocence in the hands of ‘savages’ complete. ‘Into your midst there has come a vile, brutal wickedness of satanic power which has been unleashed in this land and is still at large’, proclaimed the reverend leading the memorial service in Nairobi. And if words failed to capture the full horror of the killings, pictures came to their aid. The *Illustrated London News* accorded the Ruck murders a two-page spread, with several photographs featuring the blond child, his parents, and the bed where he died, now empty and bloodstained but still surrounded by teddy bears, a globe, and a toy ‘model railway left ready for another day of play which never came’.<sup>99</sup>

The apparent involvement of one of the family’s African servants in the killings made the Rucks’ story even more horrifying. If the ‘racial community of Britons’ in Africa could not trust their ‘houseboys’ – as adult African men employed as domestics by Europeans continued to be called, their rhetorical

<sup>96</sup> Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 124, 129 (on filmic portrayals of 1950s Kenya, see 122–34, alongside Anderson, ‘Mau Mau at the Movies’).

<sup>97</sup> Scholarly assessments of the Ruck murders include Lonsdale, ‘Mau Maus of the Mind’, 407; Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 136–7; Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 93–8; Caroline Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London, 2005), 42–3.

<sup>98</sup> Some reports stated that Esmée Ruck was born in Kenya, others in South Africa; her maiden name was De Smidt, suggesting partial Afrikaner descent. ‘Family of Three Found Slashed to Death’, *Daily Mirror* (London), 26 January 1953; ‘Murder Raid in Kenya’, *The Times*, 26 January 1953.

<sup>99</sup> ‘“A Vile, Brutal Wickedness”: The Murder of the Ruck Family by Mau Mau Terrorists in Kenya. A Shocking Crime Redeemed Only by the Heroism of an African Houseboy’, *Illustrated London News*, 7 February 1953, 190–1.

equivalence to immature children continuing well into an era characterized by proclamations of multiracial equality within Britain's empire and Commonwealth 'family' – whom could they trust?<sup>100</sup> Many settlers believed their Kikuyu employees to have taken Mau Mau oaths, seeing it as 'a revolt of the domestic staff . . . as though Jeeves had taken to the jungle', in the words of Graham Greene.<sup>101</sup> The fact that some Africans remained loyal to their masters counted among Mau Mau's many uncertainties and complexities. Killed alongside the Rucks was another African 'houseboy' who died trying to help them during the attack; some commentators in the British press played up such evidence of Kikuyu loyalty, but most considered it an exception that proved the satanic rule. As the *Illustrated London News* concluded, '[a]n unusual aspect of the crime was the heroism of the African houseboy.'<sup>102</sup> Epitomizing the contradictions of Britain's multiracial empire in microcosm, the Ruck home was not the tranquil idyll inhabited by a symbolic multiracial family of equals so proudly celebrated within British post-war rhetoric. Instead, it was one in which vulnerable white kith and kin could never be sure which of their 'childlike' African subordinates might faithfully protect them, and which were 'savages' bent on murder who needed to be identified and crushed.

Settler demands that the Rucks' killers be brought to justice were swiftly met, and within months seven Kikuyu had been convicted and hanged.<sup>103</sup> Death sentences for the Kikuyu found guilty of the Ruck murders formed part of an intense British counterinsurgency campaign in which colonial authorities often turned to execution as a first resort rather than a last, regardless of the strength of evidence against the accused. Moreover, tens of thousands suspected or convicted of Mau Mau-related activity were subjected to attempted 'rehabilitation' in detention camps, where they suffered long-term internment (often without trial), hard labour, habitual beatings, torture and sexual violence, and collective punishments that achieved international notoriety among critics of colonialism.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Peter Evans, *Law and Disorder, or Scenes of Life in Kenya* (London, 1956), 83–4.

<sup>101</sup> Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (London, 1980), 188, cited in Lonsdale, 'Mau Maus of the Mind', 407.

<sup>102</sup> Peter G. Bostock, letter to the editor, 'Loyal Kikuyu', *The Times*, 30 January 1953; 'Murder Raid in Kenya'; "'A Vile, Brutal Wickedness'". On the broader theme of Mau Mau as a civil war among the Kikuyu, with as many remaining loyal to the colonial government as rebelling, see Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>103</sup> '70 Mau Mau Killed in Week', *The Times*, 17 July 1953.

<sup>104</sup> Hangings and detention camps are the respective foci of studies by Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, and Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, both of which appeared in 2005 and generated considerable public controversy, a theme Chapter 9 treats further. On British counterinsurgency campaigns in Kenya and elsewhere, see also Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge, 2012); David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967* (Oxford, 2011).

Over time, the often indiscriminate brutality of Britain's methods to defeat the Mau Mau movement – officially labelled an 'Emergency', not a 'colonial war' – came under fire within Britain. Metropolitan opposition had initially been limited to a small segment of the political left spearheaded by, among others, the MP Fenner Brockway (introduced earlier as one of Gandhi's metropolitan supporters in the 1930s). Reports of abuses perpetrated by British troops, colonial administrators, and settlers (along with attempted cover-ups) gradually grew familiar to readers of many British newspapers, however, and were increasingly aired within the House of Commons by the mid-1950s. Mau Mau became one of the main issues that caused anti-colonial activists linked to a number of pre-existing organizations to form the Brockway-led Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) in 1954. The MCF quickly became the most influential metropolitan pressure group challenging the colonial status quo with a formal membership exceeding three million.<sup>105</sup>

It may have taken little to convince British audiences of Mau Mau's barbaric inhumanity given the stereotypes about African primitivism long prevalent within Western cultures, but stories of *British* atrocities publicized by Labour politicians affiliated with the MCF and reported in the press caused increasing unease about counterinsurgency tactics. The idea of Britain restoring the peace in Kenya was acceptable; draconian repression by security forces, however, compromised Britain's good name and moral reputation as a benevolent colonial ruler.<sup>106</sup> Particularly damning indictments of British methods compared counterinsurgency techniques to 'Gestapo tactics' and the collective persecution of the Jews by the Nazis – an analogy that also arose to question Dutch and French campaigns in the East Indies and Algeria, as will be discussed in the following chapters.<sup>107</sup> Likening British actions in Africa to the Nazism against which Britain had recently fought a war and celebrated its own racial tolerance revealed dangerous cracks weakening the foundations of multiracial colonial and Commonwealth proclamations.

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The mid-1950s not only subjected Britain's conduct in Kenya to critical scrutiny. Like nothing else, the Suez Crisis of November 1956 revealed that 'Britain could not act independently of the United States, nor did the British state possess the economic or military strength to be ranked as a great power',

<sup>105</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism*, ch. 6; Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 97–9, ch. 9; Owen, 'Critics of Empire', 205–6.

<sup>106</sup> Joanna Lewis, "'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau': The British Popular Press and the Demoralization of Empire", in E.S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds.), *Mau Mau and Nationhood: Arms, Authority and Narration* (Oxford, 2003), 227–50; Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 286; Howe, *Anticolonialism*, 318; Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 176–81, 267.

<sup>107</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism*, 206; Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 117.



Roger Louis summarizes.<sup>108</sup> Maintaining Britain's international prestige and world power standing depended on the ability to assert authority in the strategically vital Middle East, considerable swathes of which counted as part of Britain's 'informal empire'. Assured use of the Suez Canal Zone was essential if Britain's military presence in the Middle East and Asia and access to oil supplies were to remain secure. Gamal Abdel Nasser's rise to power in Egypt during a 1952 coup and his nationalization of the Canal (formerly under British and French control) in July 1956 placed these interests in jeopardy. Prime Minister Anthony Eden (who had succeeded Churchill the previous year) became hell-bent on toppling him. Britain secretly forged an agreement with France and Israel whereby Israel would invade Egypt and pave the way for an Anglo-French intervention that would remove Nasser and reoccupy the Canal. But the Anglo-French assault on Egypt ground to a screeching halt thanks to the United States' furious opposition to the invasion that provoked a ceasefire followed by military withdrawal. Eden's covert machinations leading up to the invasion incurred the wrath of the Eisenhower administration with devastating and immediate consequences: Washington threatened to withhold support for a loan Britain sought from the International Monetary Fund, placing the value of the pound sterling at risk and leaving Britain no alternative but to toe the American line.

The Suez Crisis has rightly merited the inglorious distinction of a fiasco ever since. It forced Britain to learn a humiliating lesson like no other event in post-war history: that it could hold no hope of acting unilaterally without American acquiescence to its global aims. In Egypt in 1956, Washington's view that the Suez invasion ran counter to the struggle against communism decisively nipped Britain's attempt to reassert its interests by force in the bud. Britain's display of a style of colonialism the United States wanted consigned to history risked driving African, Middle Eastern, and Asian peoples into the arms of the Soviet Union. (Tellingly, the Eisenhower administration compared Britain's actions in Egypt with the Soviet invasion of Hungary that same year.) Like never before, Britain's status as a global power was exposed as a relic and its position as the manifestly junior partner in the Anglo-American special relationship visibly confirmed. As Nicholas Owen fittingly concludes, '[a]s a display of obsolete and ineffective imperialism, the Suez crisis could hardly be bettered'.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Wm. Roger Louis, 'Public Enemy Number One: Britain and the United States in the Aftermath of Suez', in *Ends of British Imperialism*, 696. Further analysis of the Suez Crisis can be found in William Roger Louis, 'American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire', *International Affairs*, 61:3 (1985), 409–16; Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* (Oxford, 1989); Darwin, *Empire Project*, 590–609.

<sup>109</sup> Owen, 'Critics of Empire', 206.

Suez inflicted both immediate and long-term damage. It ruined Eden's reputation and his already precarious physical health, forcing his resignation in a matter of weeks; Harold Macmillan succeeded him as prime minister early in 1957 and set about the task of repairing the ruptured special relationship.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the crisis divided the Commonwealth, with Nehru openly supporting Nasser during the confrontation, and left Britain open to fierce opposition at the United Nations.<sup>111</sup> At home, Suez also divided British politicians and the wider public, with opponents of the invasion staging a large-scale demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square.<sup>112</sup> In retrospect, many have considered it as the most decisive development responsible for accelerating the pace of Britain's decolonization. Almost immediately afterwards, Ghana and Malaya became independent, and Macmillan requested an internal audit, which suggested that Nigeria, much of the West Indies, and a number of other territories would soon follow them.

Yet these had been agreed political objectives *before* the Suez Crisis erupted. Suez's impact, in short, came in combination with other events and emergent outlooks that changed the game. British decision-makers increasingly felt that the key to friendly postcolonial relations and to maintaining former colonies within the Commonwealth meant transferring power sooner rather than later to 'moderate', pro-Western politicians groomed as appropriate successors. Ideally, this would work not simply to marginalize 'extremists' but also curb the threat of new armed insurgencies. In any case, decisions taken in London soon after Suez meant that Britain would soon lack the ability to fight protracted revolts of the duration and scale of those it was still battling in Malaya, Cyprus, and Kenya. A 1957 Defence White Paper inaugurated a shift in Britain's overall military capacity from one dominated by conventional forces to one devoting increasing emphasis and expenditure to nuclear deterrence. With conscription (National Service) set to end starting in 1960 and thereby shrinking the available manpower, it was only a matter of time before Britain's capacity to fight lengthy colonial counterinsurgencies would become as militarily unsustainable as it was politically contentious.

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British domestic misgivings about colonial brutality during Mau Mau did not yield the official inquiry many Labour MPs demanded, nor did it provoke mass protests against colonial policy. But by the late 1950s counterinsurgency rationales had become widely discredited – as had unquestioning support for

<sup>110</sup> Ritchie Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957–1960', *Historical Journal*, 38:2 (1995), 455–77.

<sup>111</sup> Louis, 'Public Enemy Number One'.

<sup>112</sup> Richard Whiting, 'The Empire and British Politics', in Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire*, 181–4.

white settler privileges in Kenya as well as the Central African Federation, where African mobilization resisting white dominance had become impossible to ignore. Revelations of the brutal deaths of eleven Kikuyu interned at the Hola detention camp in 1959 generated intense debates in the House of Commons spearheaded by Labour, with anticolonialism having moved from the party's margins to its mainstream.<sup>113</sup> News of Hola came alongside controversies surrounding emergencies declared in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia to crack down on African dissidents, who colonial authorities claimed were planning a massacre of Europeans, Asian communities, and African 'moderates'. Over fifty Africans were killed by security forces and over 1,000 detained without trial. The emergencies served as a convenient pretext for the Central African Federation's white rulers to stage a showdown with African opponents. Suppression 'had been carefully coordinated and it is clear that the Federal government was seeking a confrontation with the nationalists all of whom, by virtue of their very nationalism, were deemed to be extremists', Bill Schwarz notes. Yet far from killing off African nationalism, 'more than any other single act the imposition of the emergencies hastened the destruction of the Federation'.<sup>114</sup> A British investigation into events in Nyasaland generated the unwelcome verdict that the territory had effectively become a 'police state' within a Federation blatantly skewed in favour of white settler interests, not the multiracial power-sharing arrangement that protected the rights of its African population as trumpeted by its defenders. Together, Hola and the Central African emergencies put defenders of counterinsurgency tactics and white minority rule on the defensive themselves, and within British politics even the Conservatives grew increasingly divided about settler colonialism in Africa.

The years 1959 and 1960 found the British government under Macmillan contemplating a different future for multiracial colonial societies that diverged from the status quo that strongly favoured white interests. Independence under majority rule now became recognized as part of the immediate future in Britain's African colonies, with or without white settler populations. Nothing signalled this more famously than Macmillan's pronouncements during and after his six-week African tour early in 1960, when his travels took him first to independent Ghana, then to Nigeria and through the Central African Federation before concluding in South Africa. Macmillan's rhetoric contained a revealing

<sup>113</sup> Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, ch. 10; Howe, *Anticolonialism*, 318–20; Lewis, "'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau'", 243–7; Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 326–7; Richard Toye, 'Arguing About Hola Camp: The Rhetorical Consequences of a Colonial Massacre', in Martin Thomas and Richard Toye (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Empire: Arguing Colonialism in the Public Sphere* (Manchester, in press).

<sup>114</sup> Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 351. See also John Darwin, 'The Central African Emergency, 1959', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21:3 (1993), 217–34.

combination of tried and tested ideologies alongside signs of new British approaches now in competition with them. He celebrated the transition of the Commonwealth from an organization of countries of ‘predominantly British stock’ to one encompassing India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya, and Ghana within its ‘brotherhood’.<sup>115</sup> ‘The wind of change’ was blowing through Africa ‘whether we like it or not’, he told both houses of South Africa’s parliament in Cape Town – the ‘wind’ in question being that of ‘African national consciousness’ that could no longer be ignored, while the ‘we’ implicitly encompassed the British, white South Africans, and whites in East and especially Central Africa alike. Still publicly proclaiming an adherence to multiracialism, Macmillan also used his African tour to distance Britain from South African-style beliefs in white racial supremacy that found expression in apartheid, stressing that ‘our policy is non-racial’.<sup>116</sup>

South Africa’s commitment to apartheid that placed it at odds with most other member states soon led to its exclusion from the Commonwealth in 1961. Between 1960 and 1964, the ‘wind of change’ brought decolonization to much of British Africa along with many colonies in the Caribbean and further afield. In contrast to previous multiracial schemes which in reality had worked to strengthen the hand of white minorities, ‘non-racial’ approaches allowed Kenya to become independent under African majority rule in 1963 and Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia to do likewise at the beginning of 1964 (when they respectively became Malawi and Zambia). By 1964, little was left of the empire aside from a range of small scattered islands, Hong Kong, and Southern Rhodesia, which subsequently became simply ‘Rhodesia’ – the rump of the discredited Central African Federation disbanded at the end of 1963. While much of the British empire that remained after the late 1940s was wound up between Suez and 1964, the resilience of white minority rule made Rhodesia an unresolved problem that remained contentious and divisive within Britain, the Commonwealth, and beyond until 1980.

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Britain’s high noon of decolonization between the late 1950s and mid-1960s thus brought a radical contraction of the nation’s territorial reach and power, coupled with indisputable signs that Britain was the subordinate partner

<sup>115</sup> The Rt Hon. Harold Macmillan, MP, ‘Africa’, *African Affairs*, 59:236 (1960), 191, 194.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Address by Mr Macmillan to Both Houses of the Parliament of the Union of South Africa, Cape Town’, 3 February 1960, reprinted in Ronald Hyam and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1957–1964, Part I (British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A Volume 4)* (London, 2000), 167–74. The passages quoted here appear on 170–1. New assessments of the implications of Macmillan’s African tour and speech in Cape Town can be found in Larry Butler and Sarah Stockwell (eds.), *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization* (London, 2013).

within the Anglo-American special relationship that had fundamentally underpinned its international position since the Second World War. Regardless of how much had changed in reality, however, British political proclamations remained remarkably similar to those characteristic of the late 1940s and early 1950s: decolonization British-style was presented as voluntarily undertaken, long in the planning, and the fulfilment of imperial objectives. Upon returning from Africa in 1960, Macmillan contrasted the 'collapse and break-up' of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires after the First World War with Britain's recent imperial trajectory happening 'in the flood of its greatness, undefeated in war'. Great changes had come, but 'it has been an evolution, not a revolution – a process, I firmly believe, not of decline but of growth'.<sup>117</sup> His narrative crossed party lines to take similar form in contemporary Labour discourse. As Patrick Gordon Walker described it not long after, 'the evolution of the Commonwealth came about because British imperial rule increasingly assumed such a nature that it could fulfil itself only by annulling itself. Otherwise the normal process of imperial disintegration would have taken place.' Britain's course was an exceptional and elevated one, 'distinguishing it from other forms of European Imperialism'.<sup>118</sup>

Thus viewed through rose-coloured glasses, decolonization gave Britain much to be proud of. Although political differences of opinion and desired policy did emerge between (as well as among) the Conservatives and Labour, unseemly squabbles, schisms, and radical ruptures had largely been avoided. Nor had Britain's military forces or diehard colonial settlers directly intervened in ways that changed the face of Britain's decolonization process or dramatically reconfigured the metropolitan political order, as will be explored in later chapters with reference to France between 1958 and 1962 and Portugal in 1974.<sup>119</sup> Britain had no single decolonization episode that came even remotely close to French Algerian proportions, and staged its succession of colonial exits without becoming tainted by violent aftermaths comparable to those afflicting the Belgian Congo. Indeed, Belgian, and especially French, histories of decolonization had done much to influence British policymakers' own thoughts and actions. France's imminent departure from much of Africa in 1960 played a role in Britain's decision to move down the same road, while steering clear of crises like those raging in Algeria and the Congo had been high on Macmillan's and Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod's list of imperial priorities

<sup>117</sup> Macmillan, 'Africa', 199. His memoirs told a similar story in 1972; see Darwin, 'British Decolonization', 188–9.

<sup>118</sup> Gordon Walker, *Commonwealth*, 15.

<sup>119</sup> Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, 1984); Hendrik Spruyt, *Ending Empire: Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition* (Ithaca, 2005), ch. 4.

in 1960 and 1961.<sup>120</sup> Britain needed to be on guard against becoming dragged down by France's struggle in Algeria, which placed it at risk of being 'tarred with a French colonial brush' among influential colonial critics at the United Nations and in the United States and Soviet Union. Above all, France's Algerian crisis demonstrated to British policymakers that settler extremism needed to be curbed so that 'nothing comparable should be allowed to develop in anglophone Southern Africa', as Martin Thomas has written.<sup>121</sup>

British commentators used other European colonial powers' hamstrung political orders, illiberal imperial policies, and ensuing colonial crises to show themselves to the best advantage, celebrating Britain's own colonial record as one of enlightenment, achievement, and continuity as empire morphed seamlessly – and seemingly painlessly – into Commonwealth with dignity.<sup>122</sup> Britain had valiantly coped with colonial 'emergencies' to restore peace, not fought bitter 'wars' against nationalists, the story went. To be sure, critical contemporaries (and most historians) have provided other accounts of British decolonization as rooted in messy, lethal realities as opposed to myths. Their work serves as an important reminder of Britain's own violent and deadly decolonizations, particularly those occurring soon after the Second World War in South Asia as well as the Middle East. Despite the million who died and the millions more displaced during the course of India and Pakistan's partition, for example, 'British government servants submerged these chaotic withdrawals within a broader narrative of managed decolonization that made little concession to past British failures', Thomas emphasizes. '[T]he devastation left behind . . . had limited material consequences for Britain, helping the idea of low-cost "escape" from empire take root in the public imagination and the British official mind.'<sup>123</sup> The fanciful tales tirelessly reiterated by powerful figures did much to shape wider metropolitan responses to the end of empire. Alongside many other voices, politicians made important contributions to the multifaceted narratives available to the British public about the empire and Commonwealth as they underwent decisive transitions, disseminating a story of continuity as opposed to radical rupture.

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<sup>120</sup> Whiting, 'Empire and British Politics', 184–6; Darwin, 'British Decolonization', 203; 'Colonial Policy: Speech by the Rt Hon. Iain Macleod, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the Conservative Party Conference, 11 Oct. 1961', reprinted in A.N. Porter and A.J. Stockwell (eds.), *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938–64, Vol. 2: 1951–64* (Basingstoke, 1989), 559.

<sup>121</sup> Martin Thomas, 'A Path Not Taken? British Perspectives on French Colonial Violence after 1945', in Butler and Stockwell (eds.), *Wind of Change*, 168, 172; see also Thomas, *Fight or Flight*, 329, 338, 345.

<sup>122</sup> Goldsworthy, 'Introduction', xli.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas, 'Path Not Taken?', 172; Thomas, *Fight or Flight*, 118.

### The British public encounters decolonization

In the growing number of assessments of British domestic experiences of decolonization that now range from superficial asides to in-depth studies, scholars have found evidence of every conceivable attitude and level of engagement across society. Some point to visible expressions of anti-colonialism within the metropole such as the public outcry over the Suez invasion, unease that could extend to strident critiques of counterinsurgency tactics in 1950s Kenya, and the Movement for Colonial Freedom's three million-strong membership. As Stephen Howe qualifies, however, many Britons formally counted as MCF affiliates by virtue of being part of a trade union that had declared its collective support; those who were members on paper far exceeded the number of informed and dedicated anti-colonial activists. For most, 'imperialism as an issue was far too diffuse, distant, and apparently abstract to arouse widespread commitment outside the ranks of the already politicized'.<sup>124</sup> Staunch anti-colonialism was a 'minority pursuit' and British public opinion 'overwhelmingly apathetic'. But by the 1950s, 'the more informed it was the more critical it was likely to be', and 'such real faith as there had ever been in an imperial mission had been almost wholly lost'.<sup>125</sup>

Together with scholars working in related disciplines, historians have engaged in heated debates about the extent to which Britons at home were influenced by, interested in, or even conscious of the overseas empire. Howe himself counts among those taking a more sceptical view, rightly arguing that only focused empirical studies can convincingly substantiate general claims about empire's impact (or lack thereof) on various aspects of British life and thought.<sup>126</sup> Characteristic arguments that imperialism had little effect on metropolitan society and culture have been advanced by Bernard Porter.<sup>127</sup> Few Britons were passionately engaged with the empire during its heyday, he insists, let alone at the time of its decline and fall. Historians like Porter advocating the 'minimal impact' thesis point to public surveys conducted during and after the 1940s suggesting that many Britons had vague and highly inaccurate understandings of empire; some even seemed unable to name any British colonies. Aside from niche minorities who included imperialist zealots

<sup>124</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism*, 237, 240.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 322, 326; see also Lewis, "'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau'".

<sup>126</sup> Stephen Howe, 'Internal Decolonization? British Politics since Thatcher as Post-Colonial Trauma', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14:3 (2003), 286–304; Stephen Howe, 'When (if ever) Did Empire End? "Internal Decolonisation" in British Culture since the 1950s', in Lynn (ed.), *British Empire in the 1950s*, 214–37.

<sup>127</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004); Bernard Porter, 'Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36:1 (2008), 101–17. Unsurprisingly, Porter's assertions provoked a hostile backlash; for a measured critique, see Stuart Ward, 'Echoes of Empire', *History Workshop Journal*, 62 (2006), 264–78.

and professionals earning their livelihoods from overseas careers, this argument ran, most Britons knew little and cared less about empire.

Polemics of this nature published in the 2000s, however, were made possible by the proliferation of interdisciplinary studies over more than twenty years that documented the opposite: namely, that imperialism had long been an important (albeit largely neglected) dimension of British popular culture, society, and material life. Starting in the mid-1980s, John MacKenzie's monographs, edited collections, and the 'Studies in Imperialism' series he launched with Manchester University Press provided space for an expanding group of authors to assess imperialism's far-from-minimal impact on Britain.<sup>128</sup> Imperial culture in Britain was never experienced uniformly and was not always consciously contemplated, let alone openly celebrated or condemned. It was often a 'banal imperialism' that permeated everyday metropolitan life in ordinary, mundane, and subtle ways to form part of schooling, religious and civic associational life, and a rich commodity and leisure culture across the social spectrum.<sup>129</sup> Empire and the Commonwealth remained widely present and highly influential during the decolonization era, as a growing body of scholarship convincingly demonstrates.<sup>130</sup> Even once empire seemed increasingly anachronistic and became subjected to critique and satirical portrayals in the 1950s and 1960s, it closely informed common understandings of national identity, patriotism, and race consciousness, structuring attitudes about racial 'others' and white Britishness alike.

Decolonization-era British engagements with empire and Commonwealth ranged from the participatory to the imaginative. As noted earlier, the high rate of post-war emigration to the old dominions and settler colonies in Africa gave many Britons first-hand encounters with these destinations. Even greater numbers gained second-hand exposure through ongoing links with relatives and friends who had recently relocated overseas. Stories relayed back home by and

<sup>128</sup> Among his many contributions, see John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986); John M. MacKenzie, 'Comfort and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36:4 (2008), 659–68; John M. MacKenzie, 'Passion or Indifference: Popular Imperialism in Britain, Continuities and Discontinuities over Two Centuries', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy* (Manchester, 2011), 57–89.

<sup>129</sup> Krishan Kumar, 'Empire, Nation, and National Identities', in Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire*, 301. Excellent overviews include Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), especially the editors' 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire', 1–31; Andrew Thompson's balanced, well-researched treatments, including *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005), esp. ch. 9; Andrew Thompson with Meaghan Kowalsky, 'Social Life and Cultural Representation: Empire in the Public Imagination', in Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire*, 251–97, along with other essays in this volume.

<sup>130</sup> Schwarz, *White Man's World*, esp. 1–32; Ward (ed.), *British Culture*.



about mobile 'kith and kin' made Australia, Canada, Rhodesia, and other places come alive as viable life choices for many, even if most never personally took them up (opinion polls conducted in Britain between 1948 and 1975 revealed that 30–40 per cent of those surveyed claimed they desired to resettle overseas).<sup>131</sup> Conscription, moreover, took many of the generation of young men coming of age after 1945 overseas for the first time via National Service performed in Malaya, Singapore, Kenya, and elsewhere.<sup>132</sup> For every colonial administrator, development worker, student volunteer, and affluent pleasure traveller who made their way to the colonies and former colonies for short trips or long periods of work were many more Britons who connected with the surviving empire and Commonwealth without ever leaving home via engagements fostered by Women's Institutes, Christian Aid, and other associational channels (some of which had explicitly-declared imperial and Commonwealth interests, others not). Other Britons extended hospitality to or studied alongside the growing numbers of colonial and Commonwealth students enrolled at British universities.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps most powerfully of all, encounters with recently-arrived migrants from the West Indies, South Asia, and elsewhere served as reminders of Britain's ties with empire in the age of decolonization, a theme that lies at the heart of Chapter 7.

Millions more were on the receiving end of media portrayals disseminated through British cinemas and theatres, on television, and through bookshops and libraries in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>134</sup> Whether experienced up close and personally or from the proverbial armchair, each of these countless opportunities for direct and indirect engagement with the end of empire told its own story that was available to be received and interpreted in individualized ways. Like the allegedly factual versions propagated by political leaders, imaginative fictional portrayals also revealed both consciousness of imperial decline and denials that Britain's international position had fundamentally changed, sometimes simultaneously. Such was the case with Ian Fleming's James Bond novels published between 1953 and 1966 (when the last instalment penned by

<sup>131</sup> Thompson with Kowalsky, 'Social Life', 260–8; Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 57; A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester, 2005).

<sup>132</sup> Richard Vinen, *National Service: Conscription in Britain, 1945–1963* (London, 2014), ch. 13.

<sup>133</sup> Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, 2012); Anna Bocking-Welch, 'The British Public in a Shrinking World: Civic Engagement with the Declining Empire, 1960–1970', PhD dissertation, University of York (2012); Ruth Craggs, 'Cultural Geographies of the Modern Commonwealth from 1947 to 1973', PhD dissertation, University of Nottingham (2009).

<sup>134</sup> Among many studies, see especially Webster, *Englishness and Empire*; Kathryn Castle, *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism Through Children's Books and Magazines* (Manchester, 1996); Rachel Gilmour and Bill Schwarz (eds.), *End of Empire and the English Novel since 1945* (Manchester, 2011).

Fleming himself appeared a year after his death), and never more clearly than in *Doctor No* (1958).

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Along with the other books featuring British Secret Service agent 007, *Doctor No* gave its readers an elite Englishman's view of a world in transition at a time when the Cold War coincided with imperial retreat but when conventional racial and imperial assumptions nonetheless remained strong.<sup>135</sup> Written largely at 'Goldeneye', Fleming's home in Jamaica, the book emerged from a setting where imminent change was clearly on the horizon. The severe limitations on Britain's power on the international stage and subservience to the United States exposed by the Suez Crisis had become undeniable even in the rarefied and luxurious world of Goldeneye, where in 1957 Anthony Eden joined the ranks of the many famous personalities to visit Fleming while recovering from physical ailments after resigning as prime minister. Published the following year, *Doctor No* was one of several James Bond adventures set in Jamaica itself, where Bond battles a standard-issue foreign villain whose half German, half Chinese ancestry and financial backing by the Russians epitomized a composite merger of the Nazi adversary of yesteryear and the contemporary communist Cold War threat. As in the series' other novels, the Anglo-American alliance makes its appearance through Bond's relationship with CIA agent Felix Leiter. Unlike the actual special relationship in which the United States called the shots, however, Leiter never rises above his role as Bond's affable but largely inconsequential subordinate. In Fleming's imaginary world, it could easily seem as though Britain's post-war decline as a great power, Suez, and Eden's convalescent visit to Goldeneye immediately afterwards had never happened.

James Bond's Jamaican interlude finds him ably assisted by Quarrel, a black Cayman Islander with whom he had worked and forged a friendship on a past assignment. 'You haven't changed, Quarrel', Bond greets him, and neither had the tenor of their relationship: that between a privileged Briton indisputably in charge and a poor, perennially faithful colonial appendage – a man fondly described as having 'the simple lusts and desires, the reverence for superstitions and instincts, the childish faults, the loyalty and even love' for Bond.<sup>136</sup> Unlike the Chinese and 'Chigro' ('Chinese Negro') minions in the pay of the nefarious

<sup>135</sup> Valuable analyses of *Doctor No* (the novel as well as the 1962 film it inspired) along with other James Bond stories and their author include Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow*, ch. 12; James Chapman, *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (New York, 2000), chs. 1 and 2; Cynthia Baron, 'Doctor No: Bonding Britishness to Racial Sovereignty', *Spectator: The University of Southern California Journal of Film and Television Criticism*, 14:2 (1994), 68–81.

<sup>136</sup> Ian Fleming, *Doctor No* (New York, 1971; originally published 1958), 31–2, 209.

Doctor No, black Jamaicans make few appearances in the novel. Readers encounter Jamaica and Jamaicans through the eyes of the colonial administrators Bond meets at King's House, the seat of British government in Kingston. 'All they think of nowadays . . . is their bloody self-importance', the colonial secretary complains. 'Self-determination indeed! They can't even run a bus service. And the colour problem! My dear chap, there's far more colour problem between the straight-haired and the crinkly-haired Jamaicans than there is between me and my black cook.' In response, 'Bond grinned at him . . . He had found an ally, and an intelligent one at that.'<sup>137</sup>

Their common outlook thus established, the pair proceed to lunch at Queen's Club where the clientele is seemingly limited to affluent whites served by black waiters and bartenders. 'It's like this', the colonial secretary tells Bond over his pipe. 'The Jamaican is a kindly lazy man with the virtues and vices of a child. He lives on a very rich island but he doesn't get rich from it. He doesn't know how to and he's too lazy. The British come and go and take the easy pickings, but for about two hundred years no Englishman has made a fortune out here' – an assessment imbued with implicit references to the era before the abolition of slavery when British planters grew rich from the proceeds of sugar plantations, anti-abolition tracts which insisted on blacks' incapacity for freedom and inability to maximize the island's abundant resources, and the long-term economic decline of Britain's Caribbean colonies in the wake of emancipation.<sup>138</sup> From the standpoint of 1958, further decline was soon to come:

Such stubborn retreats will not long survive in modern Jamaica. One day Queen's Club will have its windows smashed and perhaps be burned to the ground, but for the time being it is a useful place to find in a sub-tropical island – well run, well staffed and with the finest cuisine and cellar in the Caribbean.<sup>139</sup>

*Après* British rule, *le déluge* clearly lay eagerly in wait.

In *Doctor No*, long-standing racial stereotypes entangled with the fantasy of ongoing British world power coexist uneasily with explicit admissions that the old order verged on the brink of dissolution. Despite Fleming's portrayal of power relations in which Bond reigns supreme over both his white American CIA counterpart and black colonial assistant, by the novel's end the loyal Quarrel is dead, killed by Doctor No's henchmen. Colonial rule was on its

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–9.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 54. The colonial secretary conjured up by Fleming provides a racialized assessment of Jamaicans and the island that shares common ground with Thomas Carlyle's dismissive portrayal first published in 1849. See Thomas Carlyle, 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question' (later retitled 'Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question'), in Eugene R. August (ed.), *Thomas Carlyle, The Nigger Question, John Stuart Mill, The Negro Question* (New York, 1971), 1–37, alongside Catherine Hall's analysis in *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York, 1992), ch. 10.

<sup>139</sup> Fleming, *Doctor No*, 2.

way out, Jamaica becoming self-governing in 1959 and independent by 1962, when the film version of *Doctor No* was released. Through the character of Honeychile ('Honey') Rider, the beautiful blonde woman born and raised in Jamaica who becomes Bond's love interest, the vanished but lingering world of white-owned sugar plantations and palatial homes once serviced by slaves is presented in all its alluring decrepitude. (When Honey demands sexual favours from Bond, she revealingly insists that 'You owe me slave-time.')

After Bond conquers his enemies and secures Honey's affections, the story ends with his visit to her ancestral plantation home, the 'Great House' suggestively named 'Beau Desert'. Burnt to the ground long ago, Beau Desert survives as a romantic ruin overrun by sugar cane, its basement somehow kept habitable – barely – by Honey with the help of the few surviving relics of better days gone by: a chandelier together with nineteenth-century furniture, silver, and glassware.<sup>140</sup> Otherwise penniless, orphaned, and left to fend for herself, Honeychile's combination of tropical sexiness, assertiveness, and vulnerability makes her irresistible to Bond. Symbolic of a precariously positioned white colonial society in need of British support, the Jamaica depicted in *Doctor No* is nonetheless one in which British power has been compromised and its remaining authority lives on borrowed time.

As with any popular cultural artefact, it is impossible to know how Fleming's large readership responded to the ideologies and images of white Britishness and colonialism in decline made available in *Doctor No*, either in 1958 or over the ensuing decades when it remained widely sold in print and regularly recirculated on film. Many British readers and viewers may well have considered *Doctor No*'s Caribbean settings replete with beaches, palm trees, cocktails, and attractive women first and foremost as a touristic dreamscape rather than as a colony in its last stages before independence. But Fleming's text nonetheless offers a potent example of what Bill Schwarz describes as 'internal mental structures of colonial power [that] outlive their epoch', whereby 'putatively racial truths . . . hold their ground in the metropolitan civilizations, apparently immune to the fact that the historical conditions which originally gave them life have come to their end'.<sup>141</sup> The colonial mentalities expressed in *Doctor No* showed no sign of faltering even as incipient decolonization is openly admitted.

Caribbean decolonization, including the independence of Jamaica alongside Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, was not overtly controversial in the metropole. The region had long ceased to be viewed as economically or strategically significant to Britain, and nationalist movements on the islands had not

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 213–16.

<sup>141</sup> Bill Schwarz, 'Actually Existing Postcolonialism', *Radical Philosophy*, 104 (2000), 16; see also Howe, 'When (if ever) Did Empire End', 228, 233–4.

provoked the backlash in support of the status quo seen elsewhere. In *Doctor No*, Britain's white colonial kith and kin represented by Honeychile Rider are an important presence (Honey being a far more fully formed character than any non-white person in the novel barring Doctor No himself), but Jamaica's white community never assumed either the political or the cultural prominence of settlers in British Africa in mid-twentieth-century Britain. As a small minority of the resident population on an island neither envisioned nor promoted as a settler colony, white politics and society did not impede Jamaica's decolonization under majority rule or achieve notoriety, allowing Honey to emerge as a politically neutral figure with all her exoticized appeal intact.

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### **Imperial endgames, Commonwealth doubts, European discomforts**

Honey Rider's real-life counterparts in Central Africa, by contrast, grew ever more controversial from the late 1950s onwards. Once the Central African Federation broke up and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) became independent in 1964, Britain was left with only one remaining colony in the region, Rhodesia, where the most challenging nationalist threat it faced was white rather than black. Rhodesia's white minority not only clung to its privileges over blacks but sought to enhance them beyond what London would willingly countenance.<sup>142</sup> On 11 November 1965, its white government under Ian Smith proclaimed a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) that Britain refused to recognize, ushering in a stalemate that would take nearly fifteen years to resolve.

To its champions, Rhodesia became a key 'ideological space' – a last redoubt of imperial values where a white 'racial utopia' survived long after it had succumbed in other former colonies and within Britain itself.<sup>143</sup> 'The idea of Rhodesia evoked all that was most captivating in the imperial past', Schwarz proposes, offering 'living proof of the past in the present, and providing a necessary corrective for an England beset by disorder and subversion' – a significant cause of which was attributed to increased black immigration. 'To imagine the nation in this way – Rhodesia as England was – necessarily

<sup>142</sup> Europeans comprised less than 5 per cent of the territory's population, numbering roughly 228,000 in 1969 and increasing to 277,000 by 1977. Donal Lowry, 'Rhodesia 1890–1980: "The Lost Dominion"', in Robert Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series* (Oxford, 2010), 122.

<sup>143</sup> Anthony Chennells, 'Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War', in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (Oxford, 1996), 102; Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 399.

entailed disavowing, in the imagination, the presence of the black Africans', whether they be those who had recently settled in the metropole or those fighting for their rights as Rhodesia's (Zimbabwe's) oppressed majority.<sup>144</sup> Exemplified by the Monday Club established in 1961 by old-school Conservative imperialists, segments of the political right and far right in Britain supported both the Rhodesia settler cause alongside measures to curb non-white Commonwealth immigration to Britain.<sup>145</sup>

Labour's response to UDI, meanwhile, proved indecisive and inadequate. In the 1950s, Britain had proved itself willing to undertake protracted military interventions in colonies where rebels were African, Malayan, or Cypriot, but not in the mid-1960s when they were white beneficiaries of racial inequality. Britain's Harold Wilson-led Labour government elected in 1964 ruled out sending British troops either to avert or crush UDI, in large part due to long-standing fears of the domestic political implications of pitting British soldiers against 'kith and kin' whom they might refuse to see as the enemy.<sup>146</sup> Instead, starting with Wilson a succession of British governments opted for ineffectual economic sanctions that Rhodesia readily circumvented with the help of supportive neighbours, particularly Portuguese-controlled Mozambique and South Africa. Although Wilson proclaimed Britain would only agree to Rhodesia's independence under majority rule, by stepping back from taking effective measures against Smith's illegal regime Britain repeatedly failed in its stated objectives of taking responsibility to resolve the imbroglio within its own colony and to protect Africans' rights.<sup>147</sup> Britain's economic sanctions would never achieve anything, the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU) explained in 1969, because they were merely 'intended to serve as an umbrella to cover and facilitate . . . a racist-fascist settler minority rule' among 'kith and kinnery'. Powerful economic and business interests in Rhodesia rendered it impossible that Britain would 'enforce sanctions against herself'. Instead, she sought both to protect her investments and steer the international community 'into gradually rehabilitating her illegitimate child'.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 399, 406.

<sup>145</sup> Murphy, *Party Politics*, 203–7, 224–8; Daniel McNeil, "'The Rivers of Zimbabwe Will Run Red with Blood': Enoch Powell and the Post-Imperial Nostalgia of the Monday Club", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37:4 (2011), 731–45.

<sup>146</sup> Philip Murphy, "'An Intricate and Distasteful Subject": British Planning for the Use of Force Against the European Settlers of Central Africa, 1952–65', *English Historical Review*, CXXI:492 (2006), 746–77; Carl Watts, 'Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964–5', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16:4 (2005), 382–415.

<sup>147</sup> Whiting, 'Empire and British Politics', 194–205.

<sup>148</sup> ZAPU, 'The Sanctions That Will Never Work', *Zimbabwe Review* (ZAPU, Lusaka), 1:2 (June 1969), reprinted in Aquino de Bragança and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *The African Liberation Reader, Vol. 3: The Strategy of Liberation* (London, 1982), 74–8.

Scathing criticism did not emanate solely from African nationalist organizations like ZAPU or ZANU (the Zimbabwe African National Union). Opposition to Rhodesia under UDI and support for the colony's independence as Zimbabwe under majority rule rose among newly independent African and Asian nations of the Commonwealth and within Britain, where public opinion became increasingly sceptical.<sup>149</sup> White supremacist politics and policies in pre- and especially post-UDI Rhodesia were to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from apartheid South Africa, its critics insisted. As Donal Lowry summarizes, a sense of shared Englishness (or Britishness) with white Rhodesians increasingly fractured after UDI. '[E]mbarrassing relatives that the metropolitan British would rather forget': such did kith and kin in Rhodesia become to many within Britain, for whom they most decidedly did not symbolize 'Britain at its best'.<sup>150</sup> By the late 1960s, the Rhodesian cause, along with apartheid and the American war in Vietnam, became the focus of protests in London and the West Midlands staged by British students, leftists, liberals, and members of an increasingly politicized black and South Asian community. Public marches, demonstrations, and occupations were further evidence that awareness of empire was both considerable and often impassioned at home. White activists together with the Black People's Alliance (a Birmingham-based umbrella organization representing many immigrant groups) pitted themselves against a pro-Rhodesia, pro-apartheid, and anti-immigration right-wing minority most visibly represented by the National Front.<sup>151</sup> Diametrically opposed positions on white Rhodesia and South Africa came together with divergent verdicts on a multi-ethnic post-war Britain, a theme to which Chapter 8 will return.

Rhodesia only achieved independence as Zimbabwe under African majority rule in 1980 following seven years of guerrilla warfare waged by ZANU and ZAPU in a struggle to reverse UDI. White dominance long sustained by British impotence alongside South African and Portuguese support became ever more tenuous after Portugal's abrupt decolonization in 1974–1975, when independent Mozambique became a haven (and opened up a new war front) for guerrillas fighting for a free Zimbabwe. Even South Africa's support for

<sup>149</sup> Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 427. <sup>150</sup> Lowry, 'Rhodesia 1890–1980', 116–17.

<sup>151</sup> 'LSE Student Threat to Bar Governors', *The Times*, 11 January 1969; 'Battle of the Strand in South Africa and Rhodesia Protest' and 'Battle Outside Rhodesia House', *The Times*, 13 January 1969; 'Five Arrested after Apartheid Rally', *The Times*, 27 May 1969; '43 Charged After Rhodesia Protest March in London', *The Times*, 14 February 1972; Dewitt John, Jr., *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain* (London, 1969), 161. Some aspects of these protests are explored in Josiah Brownell, "'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand': Rhodesia House during the UDI Rebellion (1965–80)", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38:3 (2010), 471–99.

Rhodesia gradually faltered.<sup>152</sup> By independence, an estimated 27,500 Africans had been killed, 275,000 injured, and close to a million had become refugees and displaced persons; countless others suffered displacement, malnutrition, starvation, and harsh conditions imposed by martial law.<sup>153</sup>

‘Apart from the odd historical anomaly, Britain is no longer a colonial power’, *The Guardian* reflected upon Zimbabwe’s independence in April 1980. *The Observer* offered a damning verdict, arguing that the ‘fourteen years of UDI will surely figure as one of the more shameful periods in Britain’s colonial history’ on account of the failings of both Labour and Conservative governments to act decisively against a white supremacist settler order. For its part, *The Times* expressed relief that Britain was finally free of the embarrassing ‘albatross’ that had plagued British diplomacy and severely compromised Commonwealth relations (both Ghana and Tanzania, for example, had broken off diplomatic relations with Britain over the Rhodesia crisis). ‘This is not only Zimbabwe’s liberation day. It is also Britain’s. Foreign policy in the Third World, and the cohesion of the Commonwealth, have been dogged for 15 years’, concluded *The Guardian*.<sup>154</sup> This was an understatement. Not only had the long-standing Rhodesian ‘problem’ wreaked havoc on Commonwealth unity; it was a key reason why the Commonwealth ideal, once so politically powerful, underwent precipitous decline in 1960s Britain.

Perhaps the most resonant public denunciation of the Commonwealth came from Conservative MP Enoch Powell. In an anonymous contribution to *The Times* in 1964, Powell described how Britain’s decline as a world power since 1939 had ‘imposed a colossal revision of ideas’ in which ‘self-deception has been employed on the grand scale and has served a purpose. Now the wounds have almost healed and the skin formed again beneath the plaster and bandages, and they can come off’. Britain’s attachment to the Commonwealth project constituted not just ‘self-deception’ but a ‘farce’, ‘charade’, and a ‘pretence’ – and most importantly, one whose time had come and gone. Rather than ‘worshipping “the ghost of the British Empire”’, Britain needed to rethink its place in the world and recognize itself as ‘a power, but a European power’, and ‘base its patriotism on Britain’s reality, not her dreams’.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Elaine Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem: A Documentary Record 1923–1973* (London, 1975); Terence Ranger, ‘Zimbabwe and the Long Search for Independence’, in David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin (eds.), *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960* (London, 1998), 203–29.

<sup>153</sup> Dan van der Vat, ‘The Country in Chaos Mr Mugabe is About to Inherit’, *The Times*, 31 March 1980.

<sup>154</sup> ‘Born in Unwonted Tranquillity’, *Guardian*, 18 April 1980; ‘Zimbabwe Ends an Era’, *Observer*, 13 April 1980; ‘A New and Free Zimbabwe’, *The Times*, 18 April 1980.

<sup>155</sup> ‘A Conservative’, ‘Patriotism Based on Reality Not on Dreams’, *The Times*, 2 April 1964. On Powell and the Commonwealth, see especially Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), ch. 3.



That the much-lauded Commonwealth as an ideal and as a key plank in Britain's global policy might be nothing more than a 'farce' touched a nerve within official thinking, not least because Powell's intervention crystallized many reservations that had gradually taken root among many other politicians, officials, and the wider public. In 1967, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs circulated a report to Wilson's cabinet that took stock of the Commonwealth's value to Britain. Detractors not only labelled it a 'farce' but a 'wasting asset' with which British trade was in decline. Worse still, it was an organization over which Britain had lost leadership and authority. Among its twenty-six member states, the majority were developing countries in Africa and Asia that were 'emotionally involved in racial issues' and teamed together to subject Britain to 'pressure-group methods' over Rhodesia, South Africa, and development aid. Many considered Britain to be 'clutching vipers to her bosom', the report concluded:

Public opinion in this country is naturally affronted at the violent and blackguardly attacks made on Britain by some Commonwealth leaders in Africa or of African origin, and asks whether we are paying too high a price to maintain a Commonwealth association which includes such obnoxious critics.

What was more, Britain's Commonwealth connection was inseparable from the contentious issue of black and Asian immigration. Even though controls had already been implemented, the report stressed, the Commonwealth remained unpopular through its close association with an unwanted 'coloured' population.

All told, however, Britain had nonetheless reaped considerable advantages from the Commonwealth that could not be gainsaid. After all, the report concluded, 'the modern Commonwealth was a triumphant technique to cover the process of decolonialisation [sic], turning "Empire" into "Commonwealth". This both enabled us to extricate ourselves from colonial responsibilities with honour and psychologically cushioned the shock for the people of Britain in adjusting to a new era.' The Commonwealth remained a 'special asset which could give Britain a position . . . out of proportion to her comparative economic and military strength' – a matter of no small importance given that '[w]e no longer command the resources of a major world power'.<sup>156</sup> Contradictory assessments such as these were characteristic of an

<sup>156</sup> 'The Value of the Commonwealth to Britain': Cabinet Memorandum by Mr Bowden. Annex, 24 April 1967, NA, CAB 129/129, C(67)59, reprinted in S.R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *East of Suez and the Commonwealth 1964–1971*, Part II: *Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth (British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A Volume 4)* (London, 2004), 418–29 (quoted passages taken from 420, 422, 429, 423, 421). On broader issues, see especially S.R. Ashton, 'British Government Perspectives on the Commonwealth, 1964–71: An Asset or a Liability?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35:1 (2007), especially 85–8.

era of transition during the later Macmillan and then Wilson governments, when political enthusiasm for the Commonwealth waned (but did not disappear) and Britain gradually curtailed its military presence East of Suez by the early 1970s. But in openly alluding to the dawn of 'a new era', this evaluation revealed a changing set of strategic geopolitical orientations in which Britain increasingly looked away from its Commonwealth 'family' and focused new attention on its next-door neighbours: the six nations that had come together to forge the European Economic Community (EEC) formally inaugurated by the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

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Britain's growing interest in the EEC in the 1960s was not a clear-cut case of jettisoning old priorities for a wholly new foreign policy.<sup>157</sup> While acting as leader of the opposition during the Labour governments of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Churchill regularly spoke of Britain's unique international role as part of 'three circles': the British empire and Commonwealth, the 'English-speaking world' (within which the United States was paramount but which also included Canada and other dominions), and a 'united Europe' encompassing Western European nations outside the communist bloc. Great power status could be upheld via linking the spheres together in a way no other country could. Yet while he viewed engagements with all three as fully compatible rather than mutually exclusive, Churchill was nonetheless clear where Britain's priorities lay. Britain could 'draw far closer to Europe', he stressed, 'without abandoning the ties with our Dominions which to us are paramount and sacred, and comprise the ideal of the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations'.<sup>158</sup> After returning to office in 1951, he clarified in a note to his cabinet that although Britain should encourage European unity 'I never thought that Britain . . . should . . . become an integral part of a European Federation':

We help, we dedicate, we play a part, but we are not merged and do not forfeit our insular or Commonwealth-wide character. I should resist any American pressure to treat Britain as on the same footing as the European States, none of whom have the advantages of the Channel and who were consequently conquered. Our first object is the unity and the

<sup>157</sup> Alex May (ed.), *Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe: The Commonwealth and Britain's Applications to Join the European Communities* (Basingstoke, 2001).

<sup>158</sup> "'The Three Circles'" (Foreign Policy)', 20 April 1949, Economic Conference of the European Movement, in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897–1963, Vol. VII, 1943–1949* (London, 1974), 7810–11; see also 'European Unity', *The Times*, 9 October 1948. On the 'three circles', see Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, ch. 8; Anne Deighton, 'The Past in the Present: British Imperial Memories and the European Question', in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge, 2002), 104–5; Wolfram Kaiser, "'What Alternative Is Open to Us?': Britain", in Wolfram Kaiser and Jürgen Elvert (eds.), *European Union Enlargement: A Comparative History* (London, 2004), 9–10.

consolidation of the British Commonwealths [sic] and what is left of the former British Empire. Our second, the 'fraternal association' of the [English]-speaking world; and third, United Europe, to which we are a separate closely- and specially-related ally and friend.<sup>159</sup>

Churchill's interventions count among the many occasions when geographical and historical distinctions from other Western European nations came to the fore in political rhetoric. Not only did the English Channel separate the British Isles from the continent; Britain had avoided wartime invasion and occupation to emerge victorious alongside its American allies in 1945. Despite its weakened, impoverished, and subservient position vis-à-vis the United States outlined earlier, the war enhanced a sense of British difference and superiority over continental Europe that lasted long after 1945 and sowed a deep reluctance to partake in European integration.<sup>160</sup> Geopolitical priorities favouring empire and Commonwealth over European ties were broadly bipartisan in the early 1950s. As the Labour Party asserted in its *European Unity* manifesto in 1950, 'Britain is not just a small crowded island off the Western coast of Continental Europe. She is the nerve centre of a world-wide Commonwealth which extends into every continent. In every respect except distance we in Britain are closer to our kinsmen in Australia and New Zealand on the far side of the world, than we are to Europe.' Not only was Britain 'banker of the sterling area': 'We are closer in language and in origins, in social habits and institutions, in political outlook and economic interest.'<sup>161</sup>

Labour's resistance to Europe ultimately proved more resilient than was the case among most Conservatives. Little more than a decade later, Labour held fast to the Commonwealth ideal at a time when the Macmillan government launched Britain's first application to join the EEC in 1961. Propelled by shifts in British trade towards advanced industrial European markets and away from primary commodity-producing economies of the Commonwealth as well as by the very American pressure to which Churchill had alluded, the Conservative leadership feared that the only way to maintain Britain's influential standing with the United States was by assuming a position within Europe rather than remaining outside.<sup>162</sup> But as Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell countered in 1962, not only was the Commonwealth still a more important market than the EEC for British goods; it had provided essential aid to Britain in two world wars. Britain's entry into a European federation, he feared, would spell nothing less

<sup>159</sup> 'United Europe': Cabinet note by Mr Churchill, 29 November 1951, NA, CAB 129/48, C (51) 32, reprinted in Goldsworthy (ed.), *Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1951–1957*, Part I, 3–4.

<sup>160</sup> Antonio Varsori, 'Is Britain Part of Europe?: The Myth of British "Difference"', in Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Providence, RI, 1998), 135–56; Kaiser, "'What Alternative?'".

<sup>161</sup> Labour Party, *European Unity: A Statement by the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party* (London, 1950), 3, accessed via [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu), 11 July 2013.

<sup>162</sup> Deighton, 'Past in the Present', 114; Kaiser, "'What Alternative?'", 18.

than ‘the end of Britain as an independent European state’ (and thus ‘the end of a thousand years of history’). This in turn would signal ‘the end of the Commonwealth’, for ‘[h]ow can one really seriously suppose that if the mother country, the centre of the Commonwealth, is a province of Europe . . . it could continue to exist as the mother country of a series of independent nations?’<sup>163</sup>

Gaitskell and other Labour politicians were not alone in valuing the Commonwealth above Europe. In a 1961 Gallup poll asking which was most important to Britain, 48 per cent of the respondents chose ‘the Commonwealth’, 19 per cent ‘America’, and 18 per cent ‘Europe’ (with the remainder courageously opting for ‘don’t know’). But Britain’s EEC membership application gave rise to intense discussions that framed Britain’s Commonwealth and European commitments as necessitating a choice between the two.<sup>164</sup> If anything, Britain’s overture to the EEC was not simply ‘a tacit acknowledgement of the declining economic and political utility of the Commonwealth as a vehicle for British interests’, as Stuart Ward has written, but became yet another factor among the many centrifugal forces already undermining Commonwealth cohesion.<sup>165</sup> By the late 1960s, concerns that the Commonwealth connection impeded Britain’s superior prospects in Europe had joined the Rhodesian and immigration ‘problems’ as reasons for its waning political appeal, even among stalwart Labour supporters. Just six years after Harold Wilson argued that ‘we are not entitled to sell our friends and kinsmen down the river for a problematical and marginal advantage in selling washing machines in Dusseldorf’, his own government embarked on a second attempt to gain Britain entry into the EEC in 1967 after he became prime minister.<sup>166</sup>

Britain’s second membership application met the same fate as the first in 1963: rejection on account of France’s veto. The low priority accorded to the ‘third circle’ that was ‘United Europe’ since the late 1940s came back to haunt Britain and caused its exclusion from the EEC throughout the 1960s, with President de Gaulle invoking Britain’s much-vaunted insularity and ties with distant Commonwealth countries as reasons why it was insufficiently

<sup>163</sup> ‘Speech by Hugh Gaitskell (3 October 1962)’, 7, reproduced from *Britain and the Common Market, Texts of Speeches Made at the 1962 Labour Party Conference by the Rt. Hon. Hugh Gaitskell MP and the Rt. Hon. George Brown MP together with the policy statement accepted by Conference* (London, 1962), accessed via [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu), 11 July 2013.

<sup>164</sup> Alex May, ‘“Commonwealth or Europe?”: Macmillan’s Dilemma, 1961–63’, in May (ed.), *Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe*, 98, 103–4; Richard Toye, ‘Words of Change: The Rhetoric of Commonwealth, Common Market and Cold War, 1961–3’, in Butler and Stockwell (eds.), *Wind of Change*, 140–58.

<sup>165</sup> Stuart Ward, ‘A Matter of Preference: The EEC and the Erosion of the Old Commonwealth Relationship’, in May (ed.), *Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe*, 162; see also Wolfram Kaiser, *Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945–63* (Basingstoke, 1996), 120–2.

<sup>166</sup> Helen Parr, *Britain’s Policy Towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain’s World Role, 1964–1967* (Abingdon, 2006), 18.

'European' to deserve membership. In reality, however, de Gaulle was far more concerned with Britain's second circle: the Anglo-American 'special relationship' in which the United States was the overwhelmingly dominant partner. Western European nations had become 'no more than satellites of the United States' after the war, he explained in 1962, and none more so than Britain. Europe's urgent need to achieve independence from the United States, he insisted, was incompatible with the unwelcome prospect of Britain being the thin end of an American wedge inside the EEC.<sup>167</sup> If Hugh Gaitskell had considered membership to portend 'the end of Britain as an independent European state', in de Gaulle's eyes this was a *fait accompli* – an established fact that had nothing whatsoever to do with the prospect of being 'a province of Europe' as opposed to the Commonwealth's 'mother country', but rather submission to the United States.

Britain only succeeded in entering the EEC in 1973 upon its third attempt after de Gaulle left office. Over the course of the three applications spanning 1961 and 1973, the Commonwealth continually receded as a factor within domestic British EEC debates.<sup>168</sup> Although the Conservative Party under Edward Heath demonstrated strong pro-European tendencies in the 1970s, Euroscepticism remained well-represented on its back benches and ultimately became more pervasive after Margaret Thatcher assumed leadership. Concerns about defending Britain's sovereignty against European encroachment were commonly aired in the 1980s, with reservations about national subordination within Europe rising in tandem with the inauguration of a new chapter in the Anglo-American special relationship.<sup>169</sup> Under Thatcher's governments, Britain distanced itself from Europe and prioritized Atlanticism – not only through a pro-American foreign policy, but also in mounting an ardent defence of one of the 'odd historical anomalies' remaining of colonial power to which *The Guardian* had referred when Zimbabwe became independent in 1980: the Falkland Islands.

Situated in the South Atlantic off the coast of Argentina, the remote, sparsely populated Falklands had been a British possession since 1833, largely as a sleepy backwater attracting little attention until Argentina lodged new claims to the islands (the 'Malvinas') starting in the 1960s. Britain appeared willing to negotiate a transfer, or 'leaseback', but encountered staunch opposition from the Islanders who ardently wished to remain

<sup>167</sup> Charles de Gaulle, quoted in Jussi Hanhimäki and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts* (Oxford, 2003), 332 (see also 331–6); Varsori, 'Myth of British "Difference"', 151; Julian Jackson, *Charles de Gaulle* (London, 2003), 100.

<sup>168</sup> Alex May, 'The Commonwealth and Britain's Turn to Europe, 1945–73', *Round Table*, 102:1 (2013), 29–39.

<sup>169</sup> Andrew Gamble, 'Europe and America', in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge, 2012), 218–33.

British. Argentina's dictatorship finally forced the matter by initiating a military invasion in April 1982 – a move which provoked an eruption of jingoistic patriotic fervour within Britain in support of the Islanders' right to self-determination. Together with the mainstream media, much of Britain's political class supported recapturing the Falklands by force to protect their population of c. 1,400 who were 'British in stock and tradition', as Thatcher phrased it. Once again, Britain rallied around distant kith and kin – on this occasion those residing in a British colony (or 'dependent territory') rather than those within the 'Old Commonwealth'.<sup>170</sup>

Britain launched a naval task force that liberated the Falklands by mid-June, killing 255 British soldiers, 746 Argentine soldiers, and wounding over 2,000 in an operation costing over £3 billion. Back home, Thatcher and the Conservatives reaped the rewards of military success in a war fought on behalf of one of Britain's few remaining colonial possessions, which played a role in the party winning re-election with a substantially increased majority the following year. '[W]e fought for our own people and for our own sovereign territory', Thatcher proclaimed in a speech at a Conservative rally in July 1982. To all who had 'secret fears . . . that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world', she replied:

Well, they were wrong. The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history . . . now, once again, Britain is not prepared to be pushed around. We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new-found confidence – born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8,000 miles away. This confidence comes from the rediscovery of ourselves, and grows with the recovery of our self-respect.<sup>171</sup>

Historians provide differing assessments of the Falklands War of 1982, some calling it 'obviously imperial' while others rank it as a post-imperial conflict that, if anything, harkened back to Second World War Churchillism more than empire *per se*.<sup>172</sup> Ashley Jackson persuasively argues that the imperial past is closely linked to an ongoing imperial present, with the Falklands conflict signalling 'the resurgence of an interventionist Britain' that illustrates a high degree of continuity in 'Britain's deep involvement with the world beyond

<sup>170</sup> Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 185. The Falklands/Malvinas War also provoked critical opposition from the Left. See essays by Eric Hobsbawm, Robert Gray, and Tom Nairn in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds.), *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 1983); Anthony Barnett, 'Iron Britannia', *New Left Review*, 134 (1982), 1–96; James Aulich (ed.), *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture, and Identity* (Milton Keynes, 1992).

<sup>171</sup> Margaret Thatcher, 'To Conservative Rally, Cheltenham, 3 July 1982', in *The Revival of Britain: Speeches on Home and European Affairs 1975–1988* (London, 1989), 160–4.

<sup>172</sup> Compare, for example, Stephen Howe, 'Decolonisation and Imperial Aftershocks: The Thatcher Years', in Jackson and Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain*, 242–3; Whiting, 'Empire and British Politics', 205–6.

Europe'.<sup>173</sup> The handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 is often invoked as marking the end of an extended decolonization era that India and Pakistan's independence heralded fifty years earlier, but Britain today nonetheless retains a handful of small islands alongside a number of military bases scattered across the world. Not only had Britain never completely lost its empire; despite its relative decline in global power and reach 'it certainly never lost the appetite and capacity to perform a world role, despite the turn towards Europe', Jackson notes – a point borne out by early twenty-first-century British military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq undertaken alongside the United States.<sup>174</sup>

Britain's 'turn towards Europe', moreover, remains a partial and often reluctant one punctuated by recurrent eruptions of hostility directed at the European Union. In 2013, the political successes of the Europhobic UK Independence Party (UKIP) spurred on Conservative Party demands for a referendum to determine whether Britain should even remain part of the EU, thereby adding yet another chapter to the long history of grumblings and doubts about the merits and meanings of the European connection. Long after the Commonwealth ceased to compete as an alternative source of British loyalties and attachments after the era of widescale decolonization, '[r]esistance to "Europe", an unhappy alternative to great powerdom, remained a powerful force in British politics', Anne Deighton aptly concludes.<sup>175</sup> While British Euroscepticism has many roots, its trajectory demands to be firmly embedded within domestic responses to decolonization and perceptions of the nation's postcolonial condition.

As the following chapters demonstrate, decolonization produced very different domestic responses among newly ex-colonial powers to the long-term process of European integration, along with much else besides. Not only were British and French experiences of the decolonization process and the evolving European project distinct; so too were those of smaller European colonizing nations long reliant on overseas territories to augment their status on the world stage and whose national identities owed an immeasurable debt to their imperial dimensions. It is the first of the latter, the Netherlands, that we will now consider.

<sup>173</sup> Ashley Jackson, 'Empire and Beyond: The Pursuit of Overseas National Interests in the Late Twentieth Century', *English Historical Review*, 122:499 (2007), 1352, 1365.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 1366.

<sup>175</sup> Deighton, 'Past in the Present', 109. See also Menno Spiering, *A Cultural History of British Euroscepticism* (Basingstoke, 2014).