

The Luce-Celler Act of 1946: White Nationalism, Indian Nationalism and the Cosmopolitan Elite

In the Luce-Celler Act of 1946, J.J. Singh and Clare Boothe Luce articulated their distinct visions of the post-war world order. During World War II and the post-war era, Clare Boothe Luce—playwright, journalist, congresswoman, world traveler and cosmopolitan celebrity—feared the world’s rising anti-imperial non-white nationalisms. She used the bill to create a social hierarchy for non-white individuals that reified whiteness as the legitimate source of authority. In creating such a hierarchy, Luce hoped to direct non-white nationalism away from becoming anti-white nationalism. J.J. Singh—a successful merchant, Manhattan socialite, Indian nationalist and the President of the Indian League of America—used the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 to secure early international recognition of a secular, united and independent “India.” While the British Government obstinately refused to transfer power to the Indian nationalists and refused to recognize the Indian National Congress as a secular political body representative of Indians across religious, caste and ethnic communities, J.J. Singh pulled the levers of the United States Congress to get such a recognition written into the U.S. legal code. Clare Boothe Luce and J.J. Singh were both globally mobile cosmopolitan elites. While they had distinct visions of the post-war world order, they also shared a sense of entitlement to determine its fate. Over cocktails at the Waldorf-Astoria and games of tennis in Greenwich, Clare Boothe Luce and J.J. Singh worked out global politics.

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Introduction

On June 27, 1946, the United States Congress passed the Luce-Celler Act, granting 100 “persons of races indigenous to India” the right to immigrate to and become naturalized citizens of the United States of America per annum. Until that point, non-white “Indians”—that is, non-white peoples born in the subcontinent—had been barred from immigration by the Immigration Act of 1917 and from naturalization by the *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh* Third Supreme Court ruling in 1923, which found that “Indians” were neither white nor black, and were, therefore, not eligible for naturalization. By June 27, 1946, there were fewer than 4,000 people of Indian origin permanently residing in the United States, most of whom were Panjabi farmers living in agricultural communities in California and Oregon. There was also a small but growing number of “Indian” students and businesspeople entering major cities like New York and Philadelphia, some of whom had become prominent advocates for Indian Independence by the 1940s.¹ Regardless, the Luce-Celler Act addressed a segment of America’s population so miniscule that, as a *Time* magazine article joked, some Congress members thought the bill was about Native Americans.²

Considering that this minority group was miniscule in size and could not vote, it seems odd that the U.S. Congress would pass a bill overturning thirty years of racially grounded legal precedent for the sake of 100 “Indians” in 1946. After all, 1944 to 1946 were busy years for Congress, which faced a backlog of wartime and post-war reconstruction legislation including bills related to asylum seekers and refugees, the Lend-Lease and War Appropriations programs, the Marshall Aid plan, and the United Nations and Bretton Woods projects. Furthermore, when the Luce-Celler Bills were first introduced in 1944, Great Britain was still officially denying the

¹ B.O. Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy: 1850-1990* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 294-295.

² "100 Indians," *Time*, June 17, 1946, 18-19.

possibility of an independent “Indian” nation and the notion that “Indians” could somehow be politically distinct from British subjects.³ The Luce-Celler Act, then, also tread dangerous waters with America’s greatest military ally. Why was this bill written and pushed through Congress between 1944 and 1946?

State of the Literature

The existing literature on the Luce-Celler Act only provides limited perspective on this question. To begin with, the literature is still quite meager—when it does appear in histories, the Luce-Celler Act generally receives, at most, a page or two of discussion, either as a prelude to U.S.-Indian Cold War relations, the postscript to Indian immigrants’ struggle to define themselves as legally “white” American residents, or as a footnote to the more massive Indian immigration that would begin after the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. Invariably, however, each history recognizes that the Luce-Celler Act grew out of the efforts of Indian nationalists in America.

Despite this recognition, the literature still fails to seriously explicate the Indian nationalists’ interests in pushing for the Luce-Celler Act, instead treating the bill as the nationalists’ side-project to secure the welfare of stateless non-white people of Indian origin living in the United States. The Luce-Celler Act emerges in the literature as the necessary result of exclusion: obviously, the tacit rationale goes, Indians wanted the right to immigrate to America, to become American citizens, and to be treated as racially equal to whites before the law. While scholars like Gary

³ The Cripps Mission had failed in 1942 and negotiations would not be resumed until The Wavell Plan talks in 1945, which still revolved around maintaining a British Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief. From Sept. 9-27, 1944, Jinnah and Gandhi resumed communications, but Sir Stafford Cripps denied “any possibility of change in the existing constitution during war-time.” See B.N. Pandey, *The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885-1947: Select Documents* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 178-182; V.P.S. Raghuvanshi, *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1959), 246.

Hess⁴, M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava⁵, Sandhya Shukla⁶, Paromita Biswas⁷, Gerald Horne⁸ and Nico Slate⁹ have, in great detail, explicated the various political machinations of Indian nationalists in the United States during the World War II era, none has seriously questioned what would draw Indian nationalists into the struggle for Indian immigration rights at the same time as they were demanding Indian independence from Britain and asserting their right, as nationals distinct from the British Empire and its government in India, to representation in international planning conferences like the San Francisco Conference and the Bretton Woods Conference. The existing literature conspicuously lacks a detailed analysis of the bill from the perspective of the Indian nationalists' anti-imperial political project.

⁴ Gary Hess, "The 'Hindu' in America: Immigration and Naturalization Policies and India, 1917-1946," *Pacific Historical Review* 38, no. 1 (February 1969): 71-75. Hess's twenty-one page article was the first thorough account of pre-1946 Indian immigration to America. He recognizes the efforts of J.J. Singh and the India League of America, and also suggests that Congress passed the bill because "it was obvious that independence was only a matter of time and India was making a substantial contribution to the war effort." He also recognizes that the India Welfare League's and India League of America's competing naturalization bills symbolized the split between the Muslim League and Indian National Congress in India.

⁵ M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Quit India: the American Response to the 1942 Movement* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979); M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Roosevelt-Gandhi-Churchill* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1983). Both of these books are exhaustive accounts of the many avenues through which Indian nationalists tinkered with the American state and its institutions to win Roosevelt's, the State Department's, and American public's support for Indian independence.

⁶ Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4, 41-46. Shukla is interested in understanding the Indian Diaspora and its relationship with national identity. She highlights that Indian nationalists demanded both the right to be American nationals and the right to be nationals of an independent India at the same time, but she argues that these contemporaneous efforts symbolize the diaspora's transcendence of strict national identity into a more fluid realm defined by the "complementarity between the developing epistemologies of national identity."

⁷ Paromita Biswas, "Colonial Displacements: Nationalist Longing and Identity Among Early Indian Intellectuals in the United States" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2008), 103-150. Biswas has written an intellectual history of the Indian nationalists in the U.S. She does not focus on the Luce-Celler Act, but suggests that it was one avenue through which nationalist intellectuals attempted to combat the racial hierarchy of imperialism by making non-white Indians equal to whites in the US Code.

⁸ Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 179-181. Horne's book explores how Indian nationalists worked with Civil Rights activists in the US. He briefly discusses the NAACP's decision to support the Luce-Celler Act and suggests that the NAACP was torn because Indian naturalization had usually revolved around declaring Indians white, and, therefore, racially superior to other peoples of color.

⁹ Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 171. Slate covers similar territory as Horne, discussing the challenges and successes of the union of the Indian nationalist movement and American civil rights movement.

As a result, the literature fails to differentiate the Luce-Celler Act and its political project from the contemporary Indian naturalization bills it had been competing with and from the history of Indians pursuing U.S. citizenship through proving themselves to be Aryan. Thus far, the literature treats the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 as the culmination of multiple and diverse efforts, waged by politically and historically diverse Indians, some nationalists and some not, from the turn of the century onwards to gain the right to naturalize and be treated as racially equal before the American legal code. The literature fails to distinguish the Luce-Celler Act, a bill that recognizes the racial diversity of India, from the project that drove Indian immigrants to declare themselves “white” before the American justice system in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the bill did not follow from the project that propelled the India Welfare League, a group of Indian nationalists in America politically distinct from the ones who designed the Luce-Celler Act, to advocate only for the naturalization of the 3,000 people of Indian origin *already in America* instead of for immigration and naturalization rights for “Indians” in general. The literature largely fails to identify the Luce-Celler Act’s unique political significance to Indian nationalism and its competing parties.

Just as the literature has inadequately considered the unique interests of the Indian nationalists who pushed this bill through Congress, so too has it neglected to explicate the specific interests of the particular American internationalists who were behind this bill. The two prevailing assumptions in the literature are as follows: First, the Luce-Celler Act gained traction in Congress because “America” had developed an “economic and military interest” in opening markets and bases in India. Second, “America” passed this bill because it needed to present itself as post-racist in response to Japanese, and later Soviet, propaganda in the third-world, which posited that postcolonial nations would not fair well in a world dominated by an American

political and economic system, given America's blatantly racist legal system at home. Besides Vinay Lal's *The Other Indians: A Political and Cultural History of South Asians in America* (2008), and Marco Mariano's "Fear of a Non-White Planet: Clare Boothe Luce, Race and American Foreign Policy" (2012), the literature has not considered how the Luce-Celler Act might have grown out of and articulated the particular ideologies, anxieties, and ambitions of Clare Boothe Luce and Emanuel Celler, the bill's two sponsoring and leading Congress members.¹⁰ Scholars including Kenton Clymer, Ronald Takaki, Sripati Chandrasekhar, H. Brett Melendy, M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, Joan Jensen, I.M. Muthanna, Tripta Desai, Sanjeev Khagram, Manish Desai and Jason Varughese, Bill Ong Hing, and Roger Daniels,¹¹ each of whom explores the complex avenues through which Indian nationalists engaged the American state, still fail to treat "America" as more than a monolithic institution with a singular interest in the Luce-Celler Act. The literature's imprecise language around "American interests" has prevented scholars from articulating the particular anxieties and ambitions that formed the Luce-Celler Act.

The literature's current assumptions about the presence of American Cold War geopolitical interests in the Luce-Celler Act not only obfuscate the more

¹⁰ Vinay Lal, *The Other Indians: A Political and Cultural History of South Asians in America* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2008), 51-52; Marco Mariano, "Fear of a Nonwhite Planet: Clare Boothe Luce, Race, and American Foreign Policy," *Prospects* 29, (2005).

¹¹ Kenton Clymer, *Quest for Freedom: The United States and India's Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 206-209; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1998), 367-368, 416-417; Sripati Chandrasekhar, *From India to America* (La Jolla, CA: Population Review Publications, 1982), 15; H. Brett Melendy, *Asians in America: Filipinos, Koreans, and East Indians* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 214, 225; Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, 8-9, and Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Roosevelt-Gandhi-Churchill*, 332; Joan Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 278-279; I.M. Muthanna, *People of India in North America: Immigration History of East-Indians Up To 1960*, (Bangalore: Lotus Printers, 1982), 736-737; Tripta Desai, *Indo-American Relations between 1940-1974* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), c.1 p.32; Sanjeev Khagram, Manish Desai, Jason Varughese, "Seen, Rich, but Unheard? The Politics of Asian Indians in the United States," in *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, Prospects*, ed. Gordon Chang (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 265; Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy*, 36-37; Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 95-96.

complex political implications of this bill, but also align poorly with the details of the archive. To begin with, assuming that the Luce-Celler Act was an early manifestation of the containment policy does not consider the specificity of India. As historian Roger Daniels points out, in the same year the Luce-Celler Act passed, “bills calling for admitting Koreans and Thais failed to pass, and, of course, in 1946 few spoke of doing anything positive for Japanese.”¹² If the Luce-Celler Act rode “American interest” in making its immigration code less racist, then why did similar bills concerning Koreans and Thais fail to pass? There was something particular about India that made Indian immigration salient to Congress and the bill’s proponents even after World War II had concluded.

Furthermore, if the Luce-Celler Act embodied some general notion of “American interests,” it certainly was not obvious to contemporary observers. On June 8, 1944, four months after submitting her first version of the bill, Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce warned J.J. Singh, President of the India League of America (ILA) and the main proponent of the bill, that “there [was] mild criticism” in Washington “concerning the activities of the India League of America itself in attempting to lobby on the bill.” Congress members felt that the ILA was pushing this bill through unilaterally, rather than finding “Americans whom [the bill] does interest...[to] carry the cause to the Hill.” Furthermore, the State Department initially refused to take a position on the Luce-Celler Act because it did not see how the bill fit into FDR’s foreign policy program.¹³ When the bills were first submitted, it seems clear that they did not embody “American interests” in any self-evident way. The bill’s proponents certainly constructed a rationale that was couched in America’s economic, political, and military interests, but we cannot assume the bill was

¹² Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 95.

¹³ Clare Boothe Luce to J.J. Singh, June 8, 1944, Letter, Clare Boothe Luce Papers 1862-1988, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (hereafter CBL Papers).

naturally so expressive of these general “American interests.” The proponents of the bill had to work to create this rhetoric around it—we must consider what drove them to do this work.

In neglecting to recognize the particular way in which the Luce-Celler Act treats India, the literature has also failed to appreciate how the Luce-Celler Act created a particular role for Indians to play in American race politics. Vinay Lal, Marco Mariano and biographer Sylvia Jukes Morris have provided some groundwork for this analysis by demonstrating that Clare Boothe Luce had a complex relationship with the third world and people of color. Their work reminds us that Clare Boothe Luce’s involvement in the Luce-Celler Act cannot be simply explained as an attempt to attract emerging postcolonial nations of color to the U.S.’s sphere of influence, considering that she professed in a private letter to her husband that she firmly believed the “white world [stands] against the inevitable Asiatic Revolt, and the also inevitable Mohammedan and India Revolts that will follow [World War II]...we...are the European contestants unaware of the fact that we are...destroying ourselves for the benefit of the Mongoloid Russians and Asiatics.”¹⁴ Clare Boothe Luce clearly recognized the nations of color rising from colonial subjection, but she did not see them as a political opportunity for America’s sphere of influence—instead, she saw them as a threat to white racial dominance. To whatever “American” economic, political and military interests were embodied in the Luce-Celler Act, “the white world’s” interest in maintaining racial dominance must be added.

The existing literature on the Luce-Celler Act retrospectively explains the State Department’s interest in this bill, but it does not address the underlying interests that produced and drove the bill, nor does it explain the stakes of the Luce-

¹⁴ Clare Boothe Luce to Henry Luce, January 1, 1942, Memorandum, “A Luce Forecast for a Luce Century,” Box 305, CBL Papers, 11.

Celler Act as they were imagined by its proponents: Emanuel Celler, Clare Boothe Luce and J.J. Singh. After all, this bill was effectively written and sustained by J.J. Singh and the India League of America, who would not have pushed this bill out of concern for American geopolitical interests. J.J. Singh, who returned to India after 1959 to raise his sons as Indian citizens, was an Indian independence agitator and President of the India League of America.¹⁵ The ILA itself was a collection of prominent, anti-oppression, internationally minded thinkers like Walter White, Norman Thomas, Pearl Buck and multiple scholars of Indian origin. We can even suspect that Clare Boothe Luce and Emanuel Celler were not simply inspired by American geopolitical interests, considering that Clare Boothe Luce had an idiosyncratic, racialized dream of the post-war world order and that Emanuel Celler had been an outspoken critic of racist immigration policy since 1924, well before what is generally considered to be the age of “American internationalism.” To understand the interests that were embedded in this bill, then, we cannot look to the State Department’s foreign policy calculations—we must look to the ambitions of the bill’s proponents as they stood out against the backdrop of developments in World War II and the Indian nationalists’ campaigns for independence.

In exploring the ambitions of the bill’s proponents, my thesis will place the Luce-Celler Act at the intersection of British imperialism, Indian nationalism and the white nationalism of American internationalism as they were imagined by American and Indian cosmopolitan elites like J.J. Singh and Clare Boothe Luce in the 1940s. While a detailed account of Emanuel Celler’s role and interest in the bill would help to more thoroughly explicate the bill’s political significance, I will limit my discussion to J.J. Singh and Clare Boothe Luce so that I may focus on the ways in which the

¹⁵ Robert Shaffer, “J.J. Singh and the India League of America, 1945-1959: Pressing at the Margins of the Cold War Consensus,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 90.

cosmopolitan elitism and global mobility of these figures inflect in the bill. My thesis argues that the Luce-Celler Act not only articulated Clare Boothe Luce's desire to create a new comprador class out of elite Indians that could serve to buffer the "white world" against "mongoloid" Russia and rising non-white nationalisms both within and without America, but also implicitly recognized a postcolonial India as J.J. Singh and the Indian National Congress imagined it could be.

Historical Preface: Legal and Political Precedents up to 1946

Until the Page Act of 1875 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the United States did not have any restrictive immigration policy at the federal level, and until 1917, Indians were not specifically barred from immigration.¹⁶ Prior to 1917, however, only a small number of "East Indians" had immigrated to the United States. As early as December 29, 1790, at least one Madrasi had visited America, traveling on board a British trading ship. It is also known that at least six Indians participated in the 1851 Fourth of July festivities in Salem, Massachusetts, representing their East India Marine Society.¹⁷

The first group of Indians to engage the American state in considering a move to the United States was the Baroda Parsis, a wealthy religious and ethnic community of merchants who had early established themselves as compradors to British commercial imperialism. Despite George Washington's interest in opening an American consular office in India, the British Government prevented the U.S. from opening a consular office in any of its ports until 1838 as a punishment for seceding from the Empire. While the British local governments in India refused to

¹⁶ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 17. The Page Act prohibited the immigration of Asian subjects who had committed non-political crimes and of Asian women who would become prostitutes. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited Chinese laborers from immigrating to the United States in general.

¹⁷ Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, 12-18.

acknowledge the American consular office for another two decades thereafter, the Parsis were quick to establish friendly relations. On August 30, 1876, representatives of the Baroda Parsi community wrote a letter to the American Consul in Bombay with an interesting proposition; they were strongly considering establishing a colony in the Americas.¹⁸

Representatives of the community wrote the American Consul declaring their intention “to found a separate Colony of Parsees” in the New World, “a land which has been from times immemorial the fostering nurse of many an enterprising and needy adventurer and well-to-do Capitalist.” They reminded the Consul that they, not as British subjects but as “the Parsees of Western India...do not fall even a whit behind their immediate neighbors the Englishmen and their distant fellow-men the Europeans wherever the Spirit of noble enterprise and great undertakings is concerned,” and requested that the Consul promptly respond with information as to the New World’s climate and resources, so that they may proceed with their plans.¹⁹ They were cosmopolitan elite, after all, proficient in and enriched by the art of commerce and so globally mobile that the wide distance between London and Bombay did not prevent them from feeling spatially near to their “immediate neighbors the Englishmen.” Naturally, they were entitled to compete for colonial territory on equal footing with America and Europe. Their predisposition to present themselves not as British subjects, but as a community that transcended the British Empire, their nonchalance in circumnavigating the political hierarchies of the British government, their willingness to engage American state’s infrastructure, and their air of entitlement in assuming their right to colonize lands within the territory covered by America’s Monroe Doctrine and manifest destiny, all serve as interesting

¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁹ Ibid.

precedents to the ways in which Indian elite would engage the American state in the decades to follow.

Until the early twentieth century, however, British and American migration policies combined to limit Indian immigration to a small number of merchants and students. The British Government of India began to tightly regulate the emigration of Indian laborers in the Emigration Act of 1883, after a slew of controversies in which Indian laborers were tricked or coerced into signing indentures to labor in the Caribbean. The United States enacted a complimentary law in 1885, the U.S. Contract Labor Law, which forbade any company or individual from bringing foreigners into the country in order to contract them for labor. As a result, the majority of Indians early to arrive in the United States were “merchants, students, and unassisted immigrants” who were wealthy enough to afford their own passage and maintenance.²⁰

Working class Indians did not begin arriving to the U.S. in regular or sizable numbers until the early twentieth century, when mostly Sikh Panjabi farmers began immigrating to the United States via Canada.²¹ These immigrants had followed the trains and transpacific shipping routes of the British Empire from the granaries of the Punjab to the imperial capital of Delhi, onwards to the port city of Calcutta and off through Britain’s Straights Settlements to the trade ports of South East Asia, from whence they finally departed for the boomtown of Vancouver, British Columbia. Along the route, these migrants would often stay in Gurdwaras, Sikh temples, until they could secure further passage. By 1909, Sikh immigrants were arriving in Vancouver at a rate of near 2,000 per annum. Facing pressure from well-organized white labor groups, the Canadian government outlawed Indian immigration, which

²⁰ Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 193.

²¹ Jensen, *Passage from India*, 24.

drove many Panjabi immigrants southwards down the Pacific Coast into the United States. These Panjabis settled in agricultural communities along the Pacific Coast, especially in northern California.²² By 1910, there were no more than 6,000 Indians in the Pacific States. The boom period had ended, and only about 200 new Panjabi immigrants arrived per year thereafter.

While small in volume, Indian immigration remained legal until 1917. In 1917, xenophobic activist groups pushed the Immigration Act of 1917 through Congress, which created an “Asiatic Barred Zone,” also referred to as the “Pacific Barred Zone,” that covered a wide expanse from China to Afghanistan and included all of India. The bill explicitly prohibited any emigrant from this zone from immigrating to and taking up permanent residence in the United States. It is still unclear what rationale guided the drawing of the “Asiatic Barred Zone.” Historian Sripati Chandrasekhar argues that the U.S. “Congress and the immigration authorities often sought the advice of the British about nationals of the British Colonial empire,” and that the British government guided American policy makers to bar Britain’s Asian colonial subjects from immigration. Chandrasekhar posits, “the view of the British Government was simple enough: any national of their colonial empire in Asia, and particularly the educated and articulate Indians, if admitted to the U.S. would certainly carry on propaganda against British rule.”²³ We cannot be certain that Congress drew up the “Asiatic Barred Zone” to appease Britain. We do know, however, that the British Government had repeatedly requested that the United States take measures to repress the Indian nationalists that had found domicile within its borders since 1915. The Ghadar Movement, which plotted to raise an army of Indian nationalists abroad in order to overthrow the British Government of India, had formed in the United

²² Hess, “The ‘Hindu’ in America,” 59-60; Jensen, *Passage from India*, 24-30.

²³ Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, 18.

States in 1913.²⁴ In 1917, seven months after the bill was passed, leaders of the Ghadar Movement in America were arrested, tried and found guilty of violating America's neutrality treaty with Great Britain by conspiring with the German government to overthrow the British government in India. Whether British anxieties over the Indian diaspora's ability to raise nationalist revolutionary forces abroad drove the U.S. Congress to draw up the "Asiatic Barred Zone" is uncertain, but it is clear that such anxieties were validated shortly after Congress passed the bill. Regardless, from 1917 onward, Indians were officially prohibited from immigrating to the United States.²⁵

Until 1923, however, it was still unclear whether Indians who were already in the United States could legally become naturalized citizens. The Naturalization Law of 1790 had only made "free white persons" eligible for naturalization. Subsequently, the law was amended in 1870 to extend naturalization rights to "aliens of African nativity or persons of African descent" to accommodate the persons newly eligible for citizenship following the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Accordingly, only "white" and "black" individuals were eligible for naturalization. Indians did not fit comfortably into either of these groups, but many attempted to naturalize anyway. Between 1908 and 1923, while some were unsuccessful, sixty-seven Indians acquired citizenship across seventeen different states. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigrants who were not obviously white petitioned to the courts that they were either "Aryan" in their "linguistic and physical anthropology," or "white" in their "assimilation to Christian belief...acquisition of the English

²⁴ For an exhaustive account of the methods through which Ghadar nationalists used the United States and its territories to organize an anti-imperial movement, see Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

²⁵ Hess, "The 'Hindu' in America," 65.

language, educational attainment” or adoption of “American social custom.”²⁶ Indians in particular tended to argue that they “belonged to the same racial classification as ‘Europeans’ and to ‘the Mediterranean branch of the Caucasian family.’”²⁷ In proving themselves to be at least culturally and socially, if not racially, “white,” some Indians received the right to become naturalized citizens of the U.S.

Even as some won the opportunity to naturalize, institutional momentum was growing against Indian naturalization. On August 14, 1907, Charles Bonaparte, U.S. Attorney General, determined that “under no construction of the law can natives of British India be regarded as white persons.” A year later, on November 3, 1908, “the chief of the bureau of naturalization asked all United States attorneys to oppose actively the granting of naturalization to ‘Hindoes or East Indians,’ and also asked attorneys to file motions to redact naturalization rights from Indians who had already received them. The Attorney General could not fully convince all the courts to accept his determination, though, and many courts continued to grant naturalization rights to Indians.”²⁸ The courts remained divided over the definition of “whiteness”—some claimed it to be equivalent to the anthropological and geographical category of Caucasian, while others saw it as a socially defined term that referred to people of European descent. The conflict over the meaning of “whiteness” with regard to people of Indian origin came to its conclusion in *Bhagat Singh Thind Case* of 1923.

In *The United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923), the United States’ Supreme Court conclusively determined that “white” referred to the “common man’s” understanding, which definitely did not include Indians. In 1923, the Immigration and Naturalization Service appealed the Oregon District Court’s decision to grant *Bhagat Singh Thind*, a Sikh immigrant who had arrived in America

²⁶ Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 235.

²⁷ Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, 19.

²⁸ Jensen, *Passage from India*, 250.

in 1913, the right to naturalize.²⁹ Singh argued that he was part of the Caucasian race “based on the sole fact that he is of high-caste Hindu stock, born in Punjab.” Justice Sutherland admitted that, in North India, “invaders seem to have met with more success in the effort to preserve their racial purity,” and that “the rules of caste” were “calculated to prevent this [racial] intermixture,” but ultimately held that even North Indians could not be “white.” By Justice Sutherland’s verdict, “white” referred to the “popular meaning.” Justice Sutherland found that the common man understood “white” to mean of European descent, and determined that Indians could not share the category because, unlike the children of “English, French, German, Italian, Scandinavian, and other European parentage [who] quickly merge into the mass of our population and lose the distinctive hallmarks of their European origin...the children born in this country of Hindu parents would retain indefinitely the clear evidence of their ancestry.”³⁰ After 1923, it was clear that Indians could not be legally “white” in America.

The status of Indian immigration, for its part, was solidified in the Immigration Act of 1924. In 1921, two years after the conclusion of World War I, Congress “enacted a provisional emergency measure” to guard America “against an influx of starving Europeans.” This measure set immigration quotas for the first time in the United States’ history. Three years later, this emergency measure was reified in the Immigration Act of 1924, which allotted each nation an immigration quota of 2 percent of the number of its emigrants who had been resident in the United States as of the 1890 Census. On this basis, the bill allocated India an annual immigration quota of 100, but specified that the quota only applied to “persons born within those countries, who belong to races eligible to citizenship of the United States. For

²⁹ Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, 20.

³⁰ U.S. vs. Bhagat Singh Thind 261 S. Ct. 204 (1923).

example: a person born in India of English parentage may be admitted, but a Hindu may not.”³¹ From 1924 to 1946, it was completely clear from a legal perspective that non-white Indians could neither immigrate permanently to the United States, nor become naturalized citizens.

J.J. Singh, a non-white subject of the British Empire, arrived to the United States from London in 1926. Over the next twenty years, while he was forced to exit and re-enter the country periodically due to the limitations on his traveler’s visa, he would establish a lucrative import-export business and take up the company of Manhattan’s social elite. Until July 2, 1946, however, he would remain ineligible for permanent residence and naturalization in the United States.

³¹ Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, 21.

Chapter 1: Imagining Nations and Empires

August 15, 1941: News of the “Atlantic Charter” reaches New York City.

J.J. Singh’s Store and Headquarters,

14 E. 56th Street,

New York, NY.

In August, 1941, on any given afternoon in New York City, just around the corner from Tiffany’s jewelers and three blocks south of the recently revitalized and aggressively gentrified Central Park, we could expect to find J.J. Singh thumbing through *The New York Times*. He would be sitting behind the hand-carved wooden screen that separated his office from his showroom full of silks, saris, and fine crewels “made of wool from the aristocratic Himalayan sheep” that would certainly catch the interest of any casual Upper-East-Side orientalist.³² From this homey headquarters, Singh made a point of staying abreast of the world’s latest developments—while finishing his breakfast of buns, eggs on toast, and several cups of coffee, he would most likely have also skimmed through some combination of *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Los Angeles Times*, the *Hindustan Times*, the *Times of India* or any other newspaper that had come across his table.³³

Singh did not maintain much of a filing system in his office—he simply let his work pile up and across his desk. This muddle contained memoranda, bulletins, telegrams, articles and letters, each in varying stages of conveyance between Singh and his influential contacts across the world’s metropolises. On any given day, it would not be surprising to find in this pile a letter to Walter White, President of the

³² “MACYSALE!,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 1939, 10.

³³ Robert Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” *New Yorker*, March 24, 1951, 35. Shaplen’s piece makes it clear that Singh stayed on top of the latest news, and Singh had referenced each of these specific newspapers at various points in his correspondence with Clare Boothe Luce.

NAACP, concerning talking points for Singh's next speech, an invitation to dinner from Henry and Clare Boothe Luce, a telegram from Swaraj Bhavan, Allahabad, detailing the Indian National Congress's latest activities, or a copy of Singh's most recently published op-ed for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or otherwise.³⁴ Likely, we would find a copy of Jawaharlal Nehru's autobiography, *Toward Freedom*, which had "so moved Singh that he...sent a copy to President Roosevelt," perched serenely and steadfastly as ever at the edge of this clutter. At age fifty-three, Singh was a busy man with a singular mission; he did not have time for filing paperwork.³⁵

After becoming the treasurer of the India League of America in 1939 and rising to president one year thereafter, Singh had committed himself fully to rallying support in America for Indian nationalism. He had pursued a strategy of "[influencing] the influencers," and as a debonair, "handsome, six-foot Sikh" who had established himself as a cosmopolitan personage in Manhattan's high society, Singh certainly held the ears and imaginations of some of America's most powerful and wealthy. Singh claimed not to be "avaricious where money is concerned," having given up "the idea of becoming rich when [he] decided to devote [himself] entirely to public life."³⁶ In spite of his stated ambitions, though, Singh had established himself as "the sole owner and President of three corporations engaged in the import and export business with special emphasis on Indian textiles" and had moved into one of the most expensive apartments in the gradually gentrifying Queensboro Bridge

³⁴ Shaffer, "J.J. Singh and the India League of America, 1945-1959," 68-103.

³⁵ Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," 35, 40. Contents of pile inferred from the Shaffer's article, J.J. Singh's editorials in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and Singh's correspondences with Clare Boothe Luce (throughout CBL Papers) and with Walter White, Box II: A378-A379, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records, 1842-1999, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

³⁶ Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," 41, 35.

neighborhood.³⁷ Avaricious or not, Singh had certainly achieved a comfortable financial security for himself.³⁸ Well established, he could leave the day-to-day management of his textiles business to his assistant. Singh needed to focus his energies on “selling Indian nationalism” to America.³⁹

If Singh had read the *The New York Times* on Friday, August 15, 1941, he certainly would have recognized an exciting development in his “tête-à-tête with the world.”⁴⁰ “ROOSEVELT, CHURCHILL DRAFT 8 PEACE AIMS,” blared the front-page headline, above a picture of FDR and Winston Churchill sitting together aboard H.M.S. *Prince of Wales*. Below the picture, the *Times* reported these eight peace aims, which would later be described as the “Atlantic Charter” and be taken to represent America’s and Great Britain’s joint vision for the post-war world. These aims expressed a vision of global peace achieved through the defeat and disarmament of Nazi tyranny and sustained through international political and economic cooperation. The third aim in particular, however, must have caught Singh’s attention: “[America and Britain] respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.” Just a year earlier, the Viceroy of India had terminated his negotiations with the Indian nationalists by dismissing their demands for an immediate transfer power and by refusing to leave the constitution framing process to Indians in its entirety

³⁷ *New York City Market Analysis*, compiled by News Syndicate, The New York Times, Daily Mirror, and Hearst Consolidated Publications, 1943, 24. Accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.1940snewyork.com/>.

³⁸ Gopal Singh, “Messages of Greetings on the 70th Birthday of J.J. Singh,” Oct. 5, 1967, Emanuel Celler Papers 1924-1973, Box 48, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (hereafter Emanuel Celler Papers), 2.

³⁹ Election to ILA leadership: Singh, “Messages of Greetings on the 70th Birthday of J.J. Singh,” 2; Quotation: Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 35.

⁴⁰ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 35.

once, if ever, it did begin.⁴¹ In the third point, Singh must have seen an opportunity to reopen the conversation.

By the end of August, the India League of America had published its take on the eight points in its monthly bulletin, *India To-day*:

[The eight points] postulate a world worth having even at the cost of present suffering, but will the lofty ideals embodied in the declaration be realized? Some misgivings have already arisen in the minds of even those who are in general sympathy with the spirit of the declaration, particularly with reference to point three: “they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.” Does that include India and also other colonies held by Britain? That they were not referred to specifically in the declaration has not escaped the notice of many critics of the declaration...”

Whether or not Churchill had intended it to, the ILA had decided that the Atlantic Charter must be brought to bear upon Britain’s colonial possessions and upon India in particular. The exigencies of war had driven Britain to make grand promises of future self-determination to India before, but after experiencing Britain’s protraction of that promise in the tepid Montagu-Chelmsford reforms following WWI, Indian nationalists were well warranted in their skepticism. This time, though, might be different. This time, the ILA saw an opportunity to coopt a new ally in its struggle for Indian independence:

Roosevelt, whose signature in the declaration appeared above that of Churchill, has in our opinion assumed a direct responsibility for the aspirations of India and others under Britain.⁴²

Having taken the power of Roosevelt’s pen as a pawn into his arsenal, J.J. Singh would continue his campaign to checkmate the British Empire into recognizing his vision of Indian independence.

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<sup>41</sup> Raghuvanshi, *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, 215-221.

<sup>42</sup> “As We See It,” *India To-day*, August, 1941.

*April 13, 1942: Two days after the failure of the Cripps Mission to India.*

*Henry Luce's Office,*

*Time-Life Building,*

*New York, NY.*

Henry Luce's office was on the 40<sup>th</sup> floor of 9 Rockefeller Center, better known as the "Time-Life building." The Rockefeller Center was the world's largest private building project ever to be completed, and one of its towers bore Luce's brand.<sup>43</sup> Looking out from his office, Luce would have seen modern marvels built of glass, steel, and concrete upon the foundations of liberty, commerce, and engineering know-how towering around him. If he had looked across the plaza towards Fifth Avenue, he would have seen into the headquarters of the British Security Coordination (BSC), Winston Churchill's covert military operation formed to disseminate propaganda through American newspapers and tabloids to swing American public opinion into the war on the side of the British Empire.<sup>44</sup> On the next block, just across Fifth Avenue from the BSC, sat the headquarters of the India League of America, which sought to swing American public opinion into support of India's struggle for independence from the British Empire. In April 1942, Henry, too, was busy deciding how his own magazines would present the British Empire to the American public.

Time was marching on, and Henry Luce held the drum. The founder and editor-in-chief of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, three of America's most popular magazines, Luce had well established himself as a central figure in the nation's media by 1942. *Time* circulated over one-million copies per week, *Life* well over two-million, and with their prominent, glossy, page-filling photographs, each of Luce's

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<sup>43</sup> Christine Roussell, *The Art of Rockefeller Center* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 11.

<sup>44</sup> William Stephenson, *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-1945* (New York: Fromm International, 1999), ix.



magazines stood out boldly on newsstands across the nation.<sup>45</sup> Luce attempted to maintain autocratic control over the content of his publications—he believed his publications represented “journalism of information *with a purpose*,” and held it as his responsibility to steer them accordingly.<sup>46</sup>

In the previous year, Luce had published an electrifying polemic on American isolationism titled “The American Century” in his *Life* magazine. In the following months, the op-ed became ubiquitous, becoming the rallying cry for American internationalists. Seven months later, President Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill to sign the Atlantic Charter, further confirming America’s support for the Allied war effort. Four months thereafter, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, violently stamping an end upon what most Americans had considered their age of isolationism. The world was at war, and now America was too—finally, the stage had been set for America to “accept wholeheartedly [its] duty and [its] opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world...to exert upon the world the full impact of [its] influence for such purposes as [it sees] fit and by such means as [it sees] fit,” just as Luce had urged it to in his “American Century.”<sup>47</sup> Two months after the Attack on Pearl Harbor, the British government invited Luce to tour its offices and meet its officials in London, believing that the influential publisher and outspoken internationalist could be a valuable asset to the British propaganda machine.

Luce reached London in February 1942, just in time to see the British Empire’s darkest hour. Just a few days before his arrival, Britain lost Singapore to Japan. Luce observed the atmosphere in the city over the next few weeks, as the Japanese made their gradual and persistent advance into and across Burma towards

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce, Time, and the American Crusade in Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 285, 243. Emphasis added by Brinkley.

<sup>47</sup> Henry Luce, “The American Century,” *Life*, Feb. 17, 1941, reprinted in *The American Century* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1941), 23. “[its]” and “[it]” replacing “our” and “we.”

the doorstep of India. Luce felt that the fate of the British Empire depended upon its ability to manage the India problem, for what would the Empire be without the crown jewel of its civilizing mission? Keenly aware of the significance of Japan's advance towards India, Luce was repulsed by the British government's failure to communicate the gravity of the situation to the public. He felt the British had grown uninterested in their Empire and would soon lose it entirely. Luce left London nearly certain that Britain's days in India were numbered.<sup>48</sup>

After returning to New York from London, Luce ruminated over how his "American Century" would weigh upon the British Empire. "[England's] supremacy is over," Luce wrote in a memorandum to his editors, transcribing what he had just observed in London, "but she may largely determine what and who comes after...just as it was at the beginning of England's triumphal centuries, so it is at the end—England holds the balance of power."<sup>49</sup> Luce was certain that the British Empire had begun its fall from grace. To supplant it as the bearer of Western Civilization, however, America would have to intervene in and manage the Empire's dissolution, for the fate of the Empire alone would determine the "balance of power" in the world to come.

This realization could only have become clearer in the three weeks following Luce's return from London. In those three weeks, Sir Stafford Cripps's attempt to negotiate with Indian nationalists had ended in failure, costing Britain its last opportunity to keep India within the Empire's domain. Even after signing the Atlantic Charter, Churchill had remained resolutely opposed to granting India further autonomy and had testified before the House of Commons in September 1941

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce, A Political Portrait of the Man Who Created the American Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 270-272.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Luce to Editors, March 1942, as reproduced in Mariano, "Fear of a Nonwhite Planet," 377.

to make clear that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India.<sup>50</sup> Facing the growing threat of Japan's invasion of India, though, Churchill ultimately recognized the importance of reaching some agreement with Indian nationalists so as to marshal Indian support for the Allied war effort. Towards this end, Churchill sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to negotiate with the Indian nationalists. While Indian nationalists and the Allied forces both entered the negotiations with high hopes, the mission quickly sank into an embarrassing impasse. On April 13, 1942, Cripps left Delhi empty-handed, and Indian nationalists left completely disillusioned with the British Empire.<sup>51</sup>

As a preface to its coverage of the Cripps Mission's failure, Luce's *Time* magazine published a eulogy lamenting the British Empire's denouement. In particular, *Time* drew attention to the metropole's relationship with its colonies:

The English people themselves are principally to blame for the weakness of their Empire...the average Englishman has for a decade or two exhibited an almost total lack of interest—even a lack of ordinary curiosity—in great affairs of Empire. He and his countrymen had an Empire—and they were just plain not interested.<sup>52</sup>

During his time in London, Luce had sensed that the British had begun to neglect their duties to their domain and, as a result, were losing their empire all together. What Luce had not seen for himself in London, his wife had confirmed from the frontlines. Since February 1942, Clare Boothe Luce had been exploring the British Empire's contested territories, sending back reports when she could. Just two weeks prior, on March 29, Clare Boothe Luce had sent Henry Luce a terse telegram declaring India the “most vital fascinating spot in world [sic].”<sup>53</sup> Her stay in India

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<sup>50</sup> Auriol Weigold, *Churchill, Roosevelt and India: Propaganda During World War II* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 158.

<sup>51</sup> *The New York Times*, April 12, 1942, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *TIME*, “As England Feels...,” April 13, 1942, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Clare Boothe Luce to Henry Robinson Luce, Telegram, March 29, 1942, Box 39, Papers of Henry Robinson Luce, Manuscript Division, Washington D.C. (hereafter HRL Papers), 2.

had overlapped opportunely with the Cripps Mission. In fact, J.J. Singh, President of the India League of America, had arranged for her to meet Jawaharlal Nehru during her time in Delhi—perhaps she had even met him while the Cripps Mission was under way.<sup>54</sup>

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August 9, 1942: The Indian National Congress initiates the Quit India Movement.

The Luce Estate,

King Street,

Greenwich, CT.

“As we crossed from Today into Tomorrow,” Luce remembered thinking while suspended in flight over the Pacific Ocean, “so perhaps the whole revolutionary world [had] really crossed into Tomorrow.”⁵⁵ Over the preceding days, Clare Boothe Luce had hopped along the islands that strung together America’s empire across the Pacific en route to the Philippines and China. The world and its revolutions had stayed on her mind.

By August 9, 1942, Clare Boothe Luce had ridden the currents of the sea and sky around the world and back. In February 1940, she had set sail from New York for Western Europe, which she toured and reported on until she was forced home from Paris by the Nazi invasion in May.⁵⁶ In April 1941, only a month after returning from Europe, Luce flew across the Pacific to the Philippines, and then on to Chungking to meet Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. She returned from China to San Francisco in June 1941, but, just two months later, Luce set out again for the Philippines to

⁵⁴ Stephen Shadegg, *Clare Boothe Luce: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 137-148; Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 35. We know that J.J. Singh organized Clare Boothe Luce’s trip to India. Considering that he had organized meetings between Indian National Congress members and influential Americans before, and considering his consistent contact with Nehru and the party, it seems fair to conclude that he also at least put Clare Boothe Luce in touch with Nehru.

⁵⁵ Clare Boothe Luce, “Destiny Crosses the Dateline,” *Life*, November 3, 1941, 104.

⁵⁶ Shadegg, *Clare Boothe Luce*, 113; Sylvia Jukes Morris, *Rage for Fame: The Ascent of Clare Boothe Luce* (New York: Random House, 1997), 385.

interview General Douglas MacArthur. She returned from that trip in October 1941. In February 1942, Luce took to the sky again, but this time flew across the Atlantic to tour the North African and Asian battlefronts. She had returned from this whirlwind of a tour in May 1942.⁵⁷ Luce had set out to report on the war, and her adventures had taken her from New York City to Honolulu, Manila, Hong Kong, Chungking, Natal, Lagos, Cairo, Karachi, Delhi, Mandalay, and Benghazi. She had seen more of the world in two years than most civilians could hope to see in a lifetime. Back in the U.S. only two months, she was already feeling restless—she considered departing from the U.S. again, this time, perhaps, to tour Australia.⁵⁸

While her feet were set in Greenwich, Connecticut, Luce's mind was still swimming through the observations and encounters she had just made continents away.⁵⁹ The British were losing their empire—that much was clear. But, what was to follow? On her trip, she had observed an alarming degree of carelessness dressed up in a debonair self-confidence—even as Rommel had just won a shattering territorial victory for the Germans over the British in Benghazi, British officers in Alexandria seemed more concerned with their floating night clubs than with winning the war. It seemed the British had resigned to “just hanging on by their fingernails waiting for the promised American equipment.”⁶⁰ What would happen to the British Empire and the world it had created if its progenitors had given up the fight?

From Luce's trip across the Allied front, Pandit Nehru glimmered as a ray of hope for the Allied cause in the world.⁶¹ By the age of forty, over the course of her accomplished and varied careers as a playwright, journalist and editor, Luce had met, entertained, supped with and often confounded an astounding number of

⁵⁷ Shadegg, *Clare Boothe Luce*, 125-126, 137-148; Morris, *Rage for Fame*, 385.

⁵⁸ Clare Boothe Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, June 4, 1942, Box 205, Folder 16, CBL Papers.

⁵⁹ Shadegg, *Clare Boothe Luce*, 125-148.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁶¹ Clare Boothe Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, August 25, 1942, Box 113, Folder 5, CBL Papers.

individuals whom most ordinary citizens would fear even approaching. She possessed the “uncanny ability to remain unruffled in the presence of dignitaries,” which “enabled her to earn their confidence and dispense with the formalities observed by the awestricken.”⁶² The celebrated personages she had met ranged from Gertrude Stein to Winston Churchill, Bernard Shaw to Albert Einstein. Among these laurelled individuals, however, Jawaharlal Nehru stood out in her memory. Not only had she found “Nehru ‘beautiful’ and...fallen ‘a bit in love’ with him,” but she had also become certain that Nehru was “the greatest mind, along with that of Buckminster Fuller, she had yet encountered.” Like Fuller, Nehru envisioned a radically different future for the world. Unlike Fuller, Nehru stood before 390 million colored British subjects, leading them rapidly into nationhood.⁶³

Luce had been introduced to Nehru through J.J. Singh, President of the India League of America, and Luce had remained in contact with Singh after she returned from her tour. He was an affable, debonair gentleman who had seen a good deal of the world—and he was a good hand at tennis too.⁶⁴ In fact, Singh had been over for dinner just the other night. Judging from the news he had most recently received from India, Singh had suggested, in his typical grandiosity, “Nehru’s imprisonment was imminent.”⁶⁵ On August 9, 1942, if Luce had so much as seen a copy of *The New York Times*, she would have found his validation.

On Sunday, August 9, 1942, the front page of *The New York Times* bore the following three headlines: “NAVY ATTACKING SOLOMON ISLANDS, SHELLS ENEMY IN THE ALEUTIANS; 6 NAZI SPIES DIE; GANDHI ARRESTED.” Below the headlines ran a column that stretched past mid-page:

⁶² Joseph Lyons, *American Woman of Achievement: Clare Boothe Luce* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), 48

⁶³ Morris, *Rage for Fame*, 457.

⁶⁴ Clare Boothe Luce to J.J. Singh, Letter, June 16, 1944, Box 402, CBL Papers.

⁶⁵ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 36, 42.

21 SEIZED IN INDIA—Leaders Taken Quickly After Congress Gives Chief Power to Fight:

Bombay, India, Sunday, Aug. 9: Mohandas K. Gandhi and other Indian Nationalist leaders were arrested today within a few hours after the All-India Congress party had approved a resolution authorizing a mass campaign of civil disobedience to support its demands for immediate Indian independence. Among those taken into custody were Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, president of the Congress party, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mr. Gandhi's secretary, Miss Madeline Slade.⁶⁶

With their resolution, the Indian nationalists had carried the “revolutionary world” back from “Tomorrow” into “Today.” The British, in their complacency, had already missed many opportunities to assuage the Indian nationalists and to win their support for the Allied cause. Now, the British had locked-up their last hope, Jawaharlal Nehru, whom Luce believed to be “the greatest and truest friend that the cause of democracy and the cause of the United Nations has in all of Asia.”⁶⁷ Just a month or two ago, Luce had sent Nehru a letter suggesting he come to the U.S. so that President Roosevelt could work with him to guide the British government towards a solution to the “India question”—had it reached him before his arrest?⁶⁸ Regardless, it was probably of little consequence to him now.

That same day, Luce received a telegram from J.J. Singh. It read:

“I WON’T SAY I TOLD YOU SO, BUT NOW I NEED YOUR HELP.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “NAVY ATTACKING SOLOMON ISLANDS, SHELLS ENEMY IN THE ALEUTIANS; 6 NAZI SPIES DIE; GANDHI ARRESTED,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 1942, 1. Emphasis added.

⁶⁷ Clare Boothe Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, August 25, Box 113, Folder 5, 1942.

⁶⁸ Clare Boothe Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, June 4, 1942, Box 205, Folder 16, CBL Papers; it is made clear that Nehru received Luce’s letter and accidentally carried it into jail in Clare Boothe Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, April 16, 1948, Box 158, Folder 5, CBL Papers.

⁶⁹ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 42.

Chapter 2: Clare Boothe Luce, Fear of Anti-White Nationalism, and Indian***Immigration***

The Luces had a way of distilling the world and its politics into an exchange of epigrams over their dinner table. As Wilfrid Sheed explains in his intimate biography of the Luces, the Luces' dinner conversations often assumed the aspect of national and, therefore, global importance, regardless of the subject matter. "Over dinner, Harry would bark out his latest excitements...He had always just discovered some red-hot theologian or a new theory about the American Proposition (which Clare christened Amprop)," recalls Sheed. "It was jarring at first...if we talked about, say, crabgrass it was always the National Problem of crabgrass."⁷⁰ It should come as no surprise, then, that by January 1942, with America decidedly in the war and on the retreat across the Pacific, that the Luces' intimate conversations recurrently returned to America's future in the shifting global landscape.

Henry Luce had made his vision of America's role in the future of global geopolitics clear when he published "The American Century" the year before. Luce imagined America would emerge from World War II as the world's eminent super power, responsible for creating and maintaining peace in the world. Accordingly, he believed it was America's responsibility to bring the rest of the world into its way of life. As he explained in a private memo to his colleagues Mr. Bailey and Mr. Grover, Luce was in "favor of Freedom...The Declaration of Independence and the whole American Creed," to which he added "Yes, really!!," in case there were any doubt as to his sincerity.⁷¹ He believed America would carry its freedoms, and its freedom of

⁷⁰ Wilfrid Sheed, *Clare Boothe Luce* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Books, 1984), 14, 6.

⁷¹ Henry Luce to Mr. Grover and Mr. Bailey, Letter, January 5, 1945, Box 39, HRL Papers.

commerce, to the emerging nations of the world, offering them the support and safety of America's tutelage in "modernity."

Luce was also quite clear about how America's relationship with the British Empire would change during the "American Century." "In any sort of partnership with the British Empire, Great Britain is perfectly willing that the United States of America should assume the role of senior partner," Luce confidently proclaimed in "The American Century."⁷² He envisioned a world in which Britain would yield to the political and economic decisions and policies of its former colony, the United States. Importantly, Luce also realized the difference between "the British Empire" and "Great Britain." Luce's America intended to partner with, and assume stewardship of, the disparate peoples under the dominion of the British Crown, regardless of sentiment in London. While Britain might nominally remain the metropole of its Empire, America would become the Empire's chief executive.

India and the British Empire also played a part in Luce's imagination of the "American Century." As historian Marco Mariano explains, "Henry Luce admired the British Empire...but blamed the 'Englishmen' for not being proud of its achievements: [Luce wrote] 'In particular they are not proud of India as they ought to be...if there has been dishonor in India, so also there has been honor—great honor; none greater in the dealings of one triumphant civilization with a civilization decayed and rotten.'"⁷³ As Luce saw it, the British Empire had brought the political, economic and social forms of "triumphant civilization" to India, remaking a "decayed and rotten" civilization in its own image. In Luce's mind, the British Empire had done successfully to India what America would soon do to the world.

⁷² Luce, "The American Century," 18.

⁷³ Mariano, "Fear of a Nonwhite Planet," 377.

Clare Boothe Luce, however, had her own vision for the “American Century,” which was largely informed by the geopolitical writings of a military strategist named Homer Lea. Lea wrote geopolitical theories grounded in a Social Darwinist perspective between 1908 and 1912. His geopolitical analyses revolved around the notion that the nation and its state were simply machines through which a race could expand to dominate new territories and peoples. In one such analysis, Lea predicted that Japan would expand across the Pacific up to the West Coast of the United States. By the time he died in 1912 of poor health at the young age of thirty-five, his writings had not received much acclaim or attention in America.

Luce first heard about Lea from Colonel Charles Willoughby on May 1941, but did not think about him seriously until Japan began its invasion of the Philippines on December 7, 1941. Over dinner, Colonel Charles Willoughby, an American officer who admired Francisco Franco and would serve as MacArthur’s Chief of Intelligence during WWII, told Luce how he predicted the Japanese would invade the Philippines. Willoughby attributed the details of his prediction to “military gospel—according to Homer Lea.” He gave Luce a brief bio on Homer Lea, explaining that he had been a hunch-backed military strategist who died in 1912. Due to his handicap, Lea had never been able to join the military, but he had produced a considerable number of treatises on military strategy. As Willoughby described Lea to Luce, another officer at the table chirped in to agree that Lea was “damned convincing militarily...that our democracy wouldn’t get ready in time to lick the Japs.” Luce had been impressed by Lea’s record, and kept his name in mind. After December 7, 1941, as Luce inspected a map that detailed Japan’s invasion of the Philippines, she realized that Lea’s prediction as to the Japanese attack strategy had been correct.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Clare Boothe Luce, “Introduction,” in *The Day of the Saxon*, au. Homer Lea (New York, Harper and Brothers Publishing: 1942), 1-31.

She spent the next “several weeks in the New York Public Library” researching and writing a “thirty-page outline” for a biography of Lea, which she later had published in *The Saturday Evening Post*.⁷⁵ Soon thereafter, Luce also wrote a laudatory introduction to a reissue of Homer Lea’s *The Day of the Saxon*. It is clear that, by the end of 1941, Lea’s writings had made a profound impact on Luce’s imagination.⁷⁶

Homer Lea’s influence on Luce’s thinking is palpably evident in the vision she shared with her husband of America’s position in the world. In January 1942, Luce wrote a thirty-two-page memorandum to her husband, which she titled, “A Luce Forecast for a Luce Lifetime.” In this memorandum, she set out to say her final word on their “debilitating arguments...about the shape of things to come.” She promised her husband, “I’ve taken a New Year’s vow, never to discuss the war with you again...but, first of all, for your sake as well as mine...I must once have my full uninterrupted say.”⁷⁷ She believed “the physical survival of the U.S.A.” was of primary importance, which led her to believe “that this will be The American Century.” Clare Boothe Luce disagreed with her husband, however, on “the means and methods by which ‘The American Century’ can be assured for the next hundred years.” Over the next thirty-two pages, Clare detailed her perspective on geopolitics, civilization and the imperial imperatives facing the United States and, with graver consequence, the white race.

Clare Boothe Luce believed America was defined not by the values of democracy, free commerce, or the “American Creed,” but by the Anglo-Saxon race. As she saw it, “a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals. Insofar as the individuals of a nation are unified in their cultural, national ambitions, and racial

⁷⁵ Morris, *Rage for Fame*, 430, 441.

⁷⁶ Luce, “Introduction” in *The Day of the Saxon*, 1-31.

⁷⁷ Clare Boothe Luce to Henry Luce, “A Luce Forecast for a Luce Lifetime,” 1. All underlines, misspellings and grammar mistakes are presented here as they are in the original document, unless otherwise noted. In the original document, “the shape” had the capitalization “The Shape.”

aims—they are ‘united’ people.”⁷⁸ Under this rationale, Luce held that “America” was defined by its “racial and cultural homogeneity” which was “predominately ‘Anglo-Saxon’...until 1850, anyway.”⁷⁹ Since then, Luce was convinced, America’s population had swollen with “black brown, yellow and Nordic” peoples and “the dregs of Europe” to the point that a nation “which was 100 years ago 90% Anglo-Saxon is now 51% so.” She further believed it was “axiomatic” that “there could be no cohesion in such a heterogeneous mass,” and blamed America’s racial diversity for preventing the nation from developing “true racial and national aims.”⁸⁰ To Luce, race and nation were inextricably related—it was not social, economic, or political ideology, but racial homogeneity that determined a nation’s identity. America’s “racial interests” were its national interests.

Accordingly, Clare Boothe Luce believed America shared national interests with Britain since she considered both to be historically Anglo-Saxon nations. “In order to ‘keep the peace’ for the next 25 years of our life,” Clare Boothe Luce wrote to her husband, “Great Britain’s and our combined navies and our land armies must remain superior to those of any other possible combination of powers.” Clare Boothe Luce saw the American and British armies and navies as part of the same arsenal pursuing the same national interest. That national interest was “above all,” Luce felt, to “maintain a white race solidarity” in the world.⁸¹ Luce was not confident that America would win the war, but she was certain that Great Britain and America would have to work together if they hoped to protect white racial interests in the world.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 13-14.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3. Original had misspelled “homogeneity” as “homogeniety.”

⁸⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁸¹ Ibid., 19.

Luce believed America's and Great Britain's racial interest was in maintaining the security of the white race against the constant threat of the expansion of other nations, many of which were racially non-white nations. Luce understood nations to be human organisms faced with the biological imperative to grow. Nations, Luce posited, "[want] to kill and then devour" other nations and peoples "in order quickly to grow fat, sleek, healthy, rich, and strong." After all, Luce argued, "nations are the most cannibalistic of human organisms." To illustrate her notion of the national, and, therefore, racial imperative to cannibalize and absorb alien peoples and nations, Luce invoked the example of the British Empire, suggesting that a nation grows "by the same process that Great Britain if not ourselves, had grown." Just as "Great Britain" and America "had generally preferred to eat black, brown and yellow meat," Luce was sure that the non-white nations of the world now wanted to eat "white meat."⁸² To Luce, "imperialism" and "colonialism" were not uniquely European or American phenomena, but were the necessary manifestation of every nation's biological imperative to grow. Just as America had consumed peoples in its imperial expansion, it too could be consumed by another nation's expansion. To Clare Boothe Luce, "the American Century" was about protracting that possibility.

Luce realized the paradox of national growth through consumption: the national impulse to absorb new peoples and territories necessarily sows the seeds of a nation's denouement, as absorption generates racial heterogeneity, which evolves new racial nationalisms within the empire. Fearfully, Luce reflected upon how this principle was quickly proving true in the American and British colonies, remarking, "the Indian people, the Filipinos, the Malaysians and the Arabs—to take huge populations from under our flags, feel the stirrings of racial solidarity which inevitably demand nationhood, and inevitably (the force to prevent the contrary

⁸² Ibid., 4.

lacking in us) will achieve it at our expense.” Luce believed that the racial subjugation inherent in British and American imperial expansion had caused colonized races to develop racial solidarities, which were becoming nationalisms, as exemplified “above all” in the case of the “Indian people.”⁸³ These nationalisms, following their biological imperative to grow, would seek to grow and claim territory from the nation presently dominant over them. To Luce, national growth was a zero-sum game, and if the Anglo-Saxon Empire’s non-white subjects were to develop their own nationalisms, those nations would emerge at the expense of the white Empire. Unless somehow repressed, Luce feared, these nationalisms would soon lead non-white nationalists to revolt against and reclaim territory from white nations, which would lead to the dissolution and contraction of the white British and American Empire.

Further diverging from her husband’s perspective, Clare Boothe Luce rejected the notion that non-white nationalisms could be kept under white American and British dominance through economic, cultural, or political imperialism. Through surveying the growth of nationalist political movements in non-white European colonies, Luce came to believe the movements shared specific racial aims:

India, Malaysia, the N.E.I., the Philippines, with their teeming millions want to be free. Of whom? The white man. The white man’s Four Freedoms are not theirs. They have Four Freedoms of their own. 1) Freedom from the white man’s culture...2) Freedom from the white man’s economic domination...3) Freedom from the white man’s political domination...4) Freedom from the white man’s military domination.⁸⁴

Luce believed that some non-white nationalists in American, British and even Dutch colonies were determined to combat European and American cultural, economic,

⁸³ Ibid., 17. The original document had a closing parenthesis at end of sentence, but the sentence makes more sense when the closing parenthesis is where I have placed it.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 25.

political, and militaristic imperialism and were driven specifically by *anti-white* nationalist sentiment. Accordingly, she rejected Henry Luce's vision of the "American Century," which held that, given independence, postcolonial nations would willingly subject themselves to American political and economic interests in democracy and free trade. Clare Boothe Luce was certain that the spread of democracy and free trade could not prevent anti-white nationalists from acting in their own racial self-interest to rise up against a world order that prioritized white American and European interests. Clare Boothe Luce recognized economic and moral imperialism in Henry's "American Century" and was confident that the anti-white nationalists would reject these methods of domination.

To demonstrate the fallacy of his reasoning, Clare Boothe Luce sketched for her husband a short and imprecise history that conflated American, British, and European economic and moral imperialism in Asia. The white man, Clare Boothe Luce said, had first "allowed himself, not the luxury, but the profitable past time, of reaching out, ever and always to proselyte his 'democratic' and commercial faith, while he busied himself with engines of enterprise, by cornering the trade of great sections of the world."⁸⁵ Even as new nations industrialized and began to grow and fight to unlock the cornered markets, white Americans "in the State Department, and in the streets," much like Henry Luce, had continued to

cherish a very quaint conceit: that Japan would never go to all the bother – and bloodshed – of grabbing the oil of the N.E.I., the gold and sugar of the Philippines, the rubber, the tin of Malaysia, the iron of Borneo, and the trade of all China, because we were always so willing to sell them oil, gold, tin, sugar, rubber, tin [sic], iron (at a reasonable profit of course) and we certainly would 'cut them in' on the trade of Asia, if only they promised not to undercut us in prices, too drastically.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.

Clare Boothe Luce implied that the fanciful notion that economic imperialism could maintain the white world's power failed to appreciate that all nations aspire to dominance, and that no nation can remain satisfied with accepting deals and bargains. Clare Boothe Luce felt history had proven her point "now that [Japan and Germany] have us on the ground, their teeth sunk into our jugular veins, at Singapore and Suez."⁸⁷ To Clare Boothe Luce, it seemed history had already demonstrated that economic and moral imperialism like the kinds imagined in Henry's "American Century" could not maintain a nation's racial domination and could not continue to repress anti-white nationalism for much longer.

In a speech she delivered to the India League of America's Mass Meeting at New York City's Town Hall on August 9, 1943, Clare Boothe Luce further posited that anti-white nationalism would not recede even if subjection under Anglo-Saxon Empire were economically beneficial, rather than exploitative, for its non-white subjects. To illustrate her point, Luce drew an analog between the Bronx Zoo and its restrained animals and a hypothetical "great national park zoo" that would be filled with the American, British and European Empires' non-white subjects. This zoo, Luce suggested, would be full of "specimen pairs of Eskimos, of Borneans, of Malaysians, of Balinese, of Ethiopians, Indians, Egyptians, Palestinian Jews, and of Hottentots from all over the world."⁸⁸ These subjects would be given every amenity, from "houses, homes, huts, igloos, or set-tos" to "a quart of milk a day for the Hottentots." Most important, the "national park zoo" would guarantee "the brown skin, black skin, and yellow skin occupants perfect...physical and economic security and permanent full time employment in agreeable native occupations." Still, Luce maintained, even this hypothetical zoo that provided complete "economic security"

⁸⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

⁸⁸ Clare Boothe Luce, "India League Mass Meeting At Town Hall," Speech, August 9, 1943, Box 673, Folder 4, CBL Papers, 1.

to its subjects could not prevent non-white subjects from “[tearing] at the bars of their great cage, with bloody fingers, weeping bloody tears, shouting, shouting in a hundred dialects, but in one voice, ‘Give us Liberty or Give us Death.’”⁸⁹

Even if white racial dominance promised its non-white subjects perfect economic security, Clare Boothe Luce did not believe non-white subjects would willingly accept such domination. In her racial, gory and violent word choice, it is clear that Luce viewed imperialism as a racially defined, bloody conflict upon which promises of economic security had no bearing. Clare Boothe Luce feared deeply the inevitable violence that would follow the rise of anti-white nationalism in American, British, and European colonies and was certain that a shift from military occupation and political imposition to economic imperialism would not save the white nations from this violence.

While her husband was sure that America would be the preeminent power of the post-war world, Clare Boothe Luce believed America’s national interest in maintaining white racial security was severely endangered by both external and internal nationalisms. Seeing the developments of World War II around her, Luce was convinced that America’s greatest external enemies were “Germany, Japan, Russia and China,” which were “racially and, therefore, spiritually united as no other countries in the world are.”⁹⁰ While Luce admitted that the “Teutonic Germans” were essentially white, she believed that their nation had unique racial aims, and would expand at the territorial expense of the American nation, just as Japan, Russia and China would.⁹¹ Instead, Clare Boothe Luce believed America’s greatest racial ally was Great Britain. Luce also recognized, however, that America and Britain faced internal threats from their non-white colonial subjects and citizens of color. Clare Boothe

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Clare Boothe Luce to Henry Luce, “A Luce Forecast for a Luce Lifetime,” 17.

⁹¹ Ibid., 6.

Luce's vision of "The American Century" was complex, if not convoluted. It is clear, however, that in 1942, Luce thought of the world, its nations, and its conflicts in racial terms, and believed that Anglo-Saxon America's greatest challenge in the coming years would be combating the expansion of Japan, Russia, Germany and China while repressing the rise of anti-white nationalisms within the territories of the Anglo-Saxon alliance. Interestingly, Homer Lea wrote about this very problem at length, and prescribed a specific set of solutions, which centered on keeping India within the Anglo-Saxon Empire's sphere of influence, if not under its direct domination.

To begin with, Lea believed that India was geographically the most important territory to defending the Anglo-Saxon Empires. "Next to a direct attack and seizure of the British Islands," Lea succinctly declared in *The Day of the Saxon*, "the loss of India is the most vital blow that can be given to the Saxon Empire." Lea believed India was so valuable to "Saxon Empire" not for its "wealth," but because "its loss means...that there has been made in the circle of British dominion a gap so vast that all the blood and fire and iron of the Saxon race cannot again bring together its broken ends."⁹² In Homer Lea's geopolitical strategy, India was the single most important territory in defending the Saxon Empire from invasion. To illustrate the geographic importance of India to preserving the Saxon Empire, Lea filled a page of *The Day of the Saxon* with a map, which placed India at the center of the Eastern Hemisphere:

⁹² Homer Lea, *The Day of the Saxon* (New York, Harper and Brothers Publishing: 1942), 48.

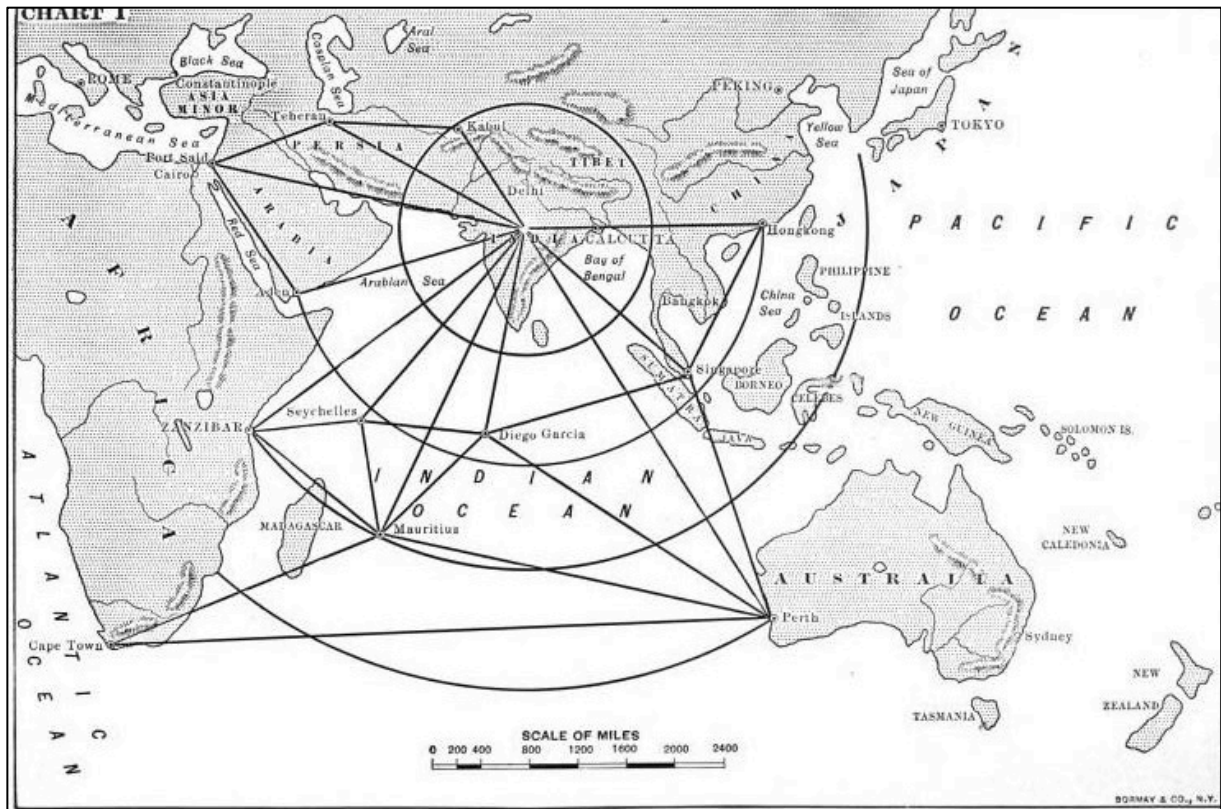


Figure 1: Homer Lea's Map of India's Geographic Importance to Maintaining the Saxon Empire, from *The Day of the Saxon*.

In describing the map's significance, Lea posited, "The correlation and interdependence of these centers on India show clearly the truth of the statement that India constitutes the principal strategic center of this portion of the world and that with its loss there must fall away simultaneously all this vast region over which the Saxon now rules." Lea saw India as the center from which the Saxon Empire could maintain dominance over the Eastern Hemisphere. If the Saxon Empire were to lose its dominion over India, either to an invading nation or to anti-white Indian nationalism, Lea believed it would necessarily lose "all this vast region over which the Saxon now rules."⁹³

It is likely that this map had some influence over both Clare Boothe Luce's vision of the post-war world order and her strategy to maintain white security in the

⁹³ Ibid., 64-65.

world. It at least seems clear that she studied this chapter carefully and internalized it. In the beginning of the chapter that contains this map, titled “The Saxon and India,” Homer Lea posits, “we have heretofore stated as an axiom that in an empire made up of heterogeneous racial elements it can only endure so long as the military power and government remain in the hands of a homogenous people.”⁹⁴ Clare Boothe Luce nearly parroted this line in her memorandum to Henry Luce, stating, “it may be stated (also as axiomatic) that facially and culturally there could be no cohesion in such a heterogenous mass. Therefore, it is not surprising we have no true racial and national aims.”⁹⁵ In *The Day of the Saxon*, Homer Lea only uses the word “axiom” twice, once as above, and again seven pages later in the same chapter. That Luce would use the same word choice in reference to the relationship between racial homogeneity and national coherence seems to suggest that Clare Boothe Luce had paid particular attention in reading this chapter of *The Day of the Saxon*. Perhaps Luce had this map in mind when she agreed to submit H.R. 4479, which would evolve through revision into the Luce-Celler Act of 1946.

While Lea maintained that, to preserve Saxon racial dominance, the Saxon Empire must repel any invasions of India from without, he also emphasized that the Saxon Empire must find a way to prevent non-white Indian nationalism from becoming anti-white Indian nationalism. Lea, like Luce, believed that the rise of non-white nationalism in colonized territories was inevitable. “The renaissance of Indian nationalism,” Lea held, followed naturally from “the development of India under British rule.” As more non-white Indians received British cultural and political “education,” Lea believed, they would begin adopting “the salient characteristics of

⁹⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁹⁵ Clare Boothe Luce to Henry Luce, “A Luce Forecast for a Luce Lifetime,” 14.

the sovereign race.”⁹⁶ As non-white Indians internalized the cultural and political markers of whiteness, they would begin to demand racial equity with whites. In a “modern nation sovereign over alien states,” Lea concluded, “the difference that exists in the political status and civil rights of individuals” of the “sovereign and dependent states” respectively “must continue to grow less and less until they are imperceptibly merged into one common standard. To contend blindly against this natural progression is impossible.” Inevitably, Lea believed, colonized subjects would demand political and civil equity as they assimilated the characteristics of the colonizing race. To resist the extension of equity would be “impossible,” as such resistance would only drive colonized subjects into anti-white nationalism. As Lea maintained, “nothing is more portentous to Saxon power than to inspire the contempt of India.” India had too many subjects well educated in British politics and British culture—to deny them access to the privileges of whiteness would only drive them more quickly to rise against that very white privilege.⁹⁷

Lea felt the Saxon Empire could prevent the rise of anti-white nationalism and maintain white racial dominance by providing elite non-white nationalists their own social hierarchy to climb that runs parallel to the racial hierarchy that holds whiteness as the legitimate source of authority. By presenting elite colonized subjects an avenue to social advancement that requires them to adopt the political and cultural customs of whiteness, the Saxon Empire could align this non-white elite’s class interest with the white elite’s racial interest in maintaining whiteness as the cultural and political source of authority. Only “granting this” opportunity for

⁹⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 51.

“personal equality” to colonized subjects, Lea contended, could “maintain the integrity of the Empire and the dominion of race.”⁹⁸

Extending social equity to a non-white colonial elite would neither assimilate them into whiteness, nor expand whiteness to encompass non-white customs or institutions, however. After all, Lea believed that “racial amalgamation is impossible” among racially distinct subjects of a spatially diffuse modern Empire. Instead, extending civil equity to a non-white elite would create a parallel but separate social hierarchy for non-white subjects to climb. “Without” the possibility of “amalgam, unity” in the Empire “can only be found in segregation,” Lea concluded.⁹⁹ Lea believed the Empire could only maintain unity by providing its non-white subjects a separate but equal hierarchy to climb. Non-white subjects, he thought, would compete to climb the non-white social hierarchy through studying and performing whiteness. In doing so, non-white subjects would not only fail to displace, but would also participate in and reify the racial hierarchy that empowered those who could claim “whiteness,” either through education or birth, over non-white subjects. In competing with other non-white subjects to climb this parallel social ladder, non-white subjects would be distracted from their racial interests to resist a social and political system that privileged whiteness and to pursue their own national expansion.

In Lea’s analysis, the British Empire had failed to provide its non-white Indians sufficient avenues through which they could sublimate their non-white nationalism. In particular, Lea believed the British Empire had failed to provide non-white Indians equal mobility throughout the Empire as its white subjects, which had pushed them towards anti-white nationalism. “While India is as much a part of the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 57.

British Empire as South Africa, Australia, or Canada,” Lea observed, “British Indian subjects are prohibited from domicile in these dominions, though part of a common Empire.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, Indian merchants could migrate, and Indian labor was often forced to migrate, among the British colonies that contained non-white subjects, like the British possessions in the Caribbean, East Africa, and South East Asia.¹⁰¹ They could not, however, move freely among the Empire’s white dominions. By racially prohibiting Indians from spreading across the Empire with the same fluidity as white subjects, Lea felt, the British Empire had driven Indian nationalism to take the form of an anti-white nationalism that threatened the integrity of the Empire. The fact that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi would begin his campaign against the British Empire by protesting against racial discrimination in South Africa, one of the Empire’s white dominions that contained a disproportionately large and highly repressed non-white population, might not have surprised Lea at all.¹⁰²

On March 6, 1944, when J.J. Singh officially requested of Clare Boothe Luce that she submit a bill to make the “citizens of India” racially equal to white immigrants in the United States’ immigration and naturalization codes, perhaps Luce remembered Lea’s lessons on the importance of India to preserving the Saxon Empire, and on the methods through which anti-white nationalism could be diffused. The Luce-Celler Act, in its final form, made Indians “racially eligible for naturalization” in the United States and permitted 100 “persons of races indigenous to India” to migrate from anywhere in the world to the United States per annum.¹⁰³ In accommodating non-white nationalism, the bill fit Lea’s prescriptions for

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 56.

¹⁰¹ Medha Kudaisya, “Free Migration,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, ed. Brij Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawai’I Press, 2006), 57-65.

¹⁰² Paul Power, “Gandhi in South Africa,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (October 1969): 441–55.

¹⁰³ U.S. Senate, *Order to Be Printed, H.R. 3517* (S. Rpt. 1440), Washington: Government Printing Office, June 10, 1946.

diffusing anti-white nationalism, for preserving whiteness as the source of authority, and for retaining India within the Saxon Empire.

The Luce-Celler Act accommodated the rise of non-white Indian nationalism without disrupting white dominance in the legal code, thereby preserving the preeminence of whiteness. The Luce-Celler Act granted non-white Indians a degree of racial equity with white members of the Anglo-Saxon Empire, both in granting them the right to naturalize and in permitting them to move more freely about the Anglo-Saxon Empire. This bill did not, however, assimilate non-white Indians into whiteness—Justice Sutherland’s decision in the *Bhagat Singh Thind Case* still stood, and Indians were still not legally white in America, even if they could now naturalize. Nor did this bill end racial restrictions on naturalization and immigration—it simply extended these rights to the “races indigenous to India.” While non-white Indians had formed a racial identity and demanded to be treated as racially equal to whites in the Luce-Celler Act, they did not demand for the dismantling of a race-based system of power that intrinsically privileged whiteness. The legal code had simply been expanded to accommodate the distinct category of non-white Indians alongside whites.

The Luce-Celler Act also diffused anti-white nationalism by providing non-white subjects of the Anglo-Saxon Empire a hierarchy through which an elite could rise to a social and political status equal with whites through adopting the cultural and political customs of whiteness. The Luce-Celler Act created a hierarchy for non-white subjects by providing a quota of only 100. Not just anyone would enter under this quota—only those sufficiently wealthy, educated and mobile enough to consider migrating would. As historian Sudipta Das points out, “the largest number of the post World War II arrivees were professional men and their families, who came mostly from the larger cities of Bombay and Calcutta. This second wave of

immigrants represented the professional, urban bourgeoisie class who settled down in the San Francisco and New York areas.”¹⁰⁴ It was not the rural peasant or urban poor of India that migrated to the United States, but the British Empire’s favored non-white subjects—the urbane, economically useful and well educated professionals. After all, only these subjects who had benefited enough economically from membership in the British Empire could afford to immigrate to the United States with their families intact. The Luce-Celler Act’s quota granted only 100 of these bourgeois non-white Indians the opportunity to achieve equity with the white members of the Anglo-Saxon Empire.

Indeed, Clare Boothe Luce did not intend for the Luce-Celler Act to admit working class Indians under its quota. During the House of Representatives’ debate on the bill, Luce argued,

I hope I made it clear that I would be the first to protest against people from any nation, of any color, coming here in such numbers as to lower our living standards and weaken our culture...and it does so happen that the peoples of the Orient can under-live us. They can live cheaper than our people will, or than the people of Germany or France or Italy will live....we are utterly justified in controlling and keeping low oriental immigration in terms of numbers, because of the fact that they in too great numbers may undermine our way of life, our living standards.¹⁰⁵

Luce did not design the Luce-Celler Act to attract India’s poor. While these poor might enter the United States as non-quota immigrants as the relatives of newly naturalized citizens, as indeed some did in the years following the passage of the bill,

¹⁰⁴ Sudipta Das, “Loss or Gain? A Saga of Asian Indian Immigration and Experiences in America’s Multi-Ethnic Mosaic,” *Gender & Class* 9, no. 2, (2000): 134.

¹⁰⁵ *Congressional Record* 91, 79th Cong., 1st Sess. (October 10, 1945): 9529-9530.

they would not enter under the Luce-Celler Act's quota.¹⁰⁶ Luce's quota was intended for the bourgeois, socially elite non-white subject.

Luce's attention was not focused on working class Indians. On June 1, 1942, *Life* magazine published an article written by Clare Boothe Luce titled "Brereton," in which Luce presented a brief biography of American General Lewis Brereton and his involvement in the Indian theatre of war, reporting what she had learned when she went to meet Brereton in New Delhi three months earlier in March. The article included fifteen pictures, only two of which contained non-white Indian subjects. One of these two pictures presented the American "crews of the first flying fortress raid on the Andaman Islands" receiving "silver stars." Two non-white Indian subjects, seemingly servants, stand anonymously beside American officers with their backs turned to the camera.¹⁰⁷ In the other picture, a non-white Indian subject sits between General Brereton and his American Secretary, Mrs. Doris Jepson. He faces the camera and, as one of three subjects in the photo, his presence is quite obvious visually, but he is completely unmentioned in the picture's caption.¹⁰⁸ In Luce's eight-page article, the only non-white Indian subjects that enter her description of India and New Delhi are "Indian nabobs" and "jeweled and turbaned maharajas."¹⁰⁹ To Luce, non-upper class Indians were silent and invisible, as suggested by the photographs that accompanied her article, and were not important to her political project. Luce was more interested in India's non-white upper class, like J.J. Singh and Jawaharlal Nehru, who were India's political and social elite.

The Luce-Celler Act sought to dissuade the non-white Indian elite, who had already become well educated in the culture and politics of Anglo-Saxon Empire,

¹⁰⁶ Das, "A Saga of Asian and Indian Immigration," 134. Actually, non-quota Indian immigration exceeded quota Indian immigration in the years after 1946. Some of these non-quota immigrants were the relatives of the Panjabi farmers who had recently become naturalized citizens.

¹⁰⁷ Clare Boothe Luce, "Brereton," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 67.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

from leveraging their resources to mobilize non-white subjects against a political system that preferred such an education in whiteness. To understand what anti-white nationalism could look like as compared to non-white nationalism in the context of India, consider the difference between Mohandas Gandhi's and Jawaharlal Nehru's professed political ideologies. Gandhi and Nehru were politically complex and pragmatic individuals—it would be impossible and misleading to draw a sharp line of distinction between their political projects and between their visions for Indian independence. It is clear, however, that the two adopted different rhetorical stances and vocabularies when discoursing on Indian independence publicly. To the foreign observer, like Clare Boothe Luce, unfamiliar with the complex ways in which caste, religion, and class complicate Indian politics, these rhetorics would have sounded very different. It is from this foreigner's perspective that we can see the difference between non-white and anti-white nationalism.

While non-violent, Gandhi's nationalism was anti-white in that it declaredly rejected Anglo-Saxon institutions. In 1914, Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj*, which defined the ideological foundation for his vision of Indian Independence. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi described his notion of “*swaraj*,” or “self-rule.” Gandhi declared himself “an uncompromising enemy of the present day civilization in Europe,” and defined “*swaraj*” as liberation from the “violence embedded in modern [European] civilization.”¹¹⁰ According to historian Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Gandhi's “*swaraj*” was not just directed at British imperialists—Gandhi rejected all European “science, history, political and social institutions,” and averred that maintaining English economic, political and social institutions would produce “English rule without the Englishman.” While Gandhi's nationalism was non-violent, it still threatened the

¹¹⁰ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, “Gandhi's Swaraj,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 50 (December 12, 2009): 35; Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 227.

integrity and security of the Anglo-Saxon Empire. An India as described by Gandhi could not be made economically or militarily useful to the Saxon Empire, neither through trade nor treaty, as such an India would reject the fundamental tenets of international politics, diplomacy, and commerce that would allow the Saxon Empire to utilize its territories' resources for the benefit of the white race.

Jawaharlal Nehru, while still a non-white nationalist, presented a nationalism that was far less anti-white. Mukherjee points out that, as early as 1936, Nehru had “written in his autobiography that the ideas of *Hind Swaraj* represented an ‘utterly wrong and harmful doctrine.’” He was skeptical of Gandhi’s nationalism, and did not believe “praise of poverty and suffering...nor...the ascetic life as a social ideal” could provide the foundation for self-government and national development. Instead, he proclaimed his intention to “drag out even the peasantry from it, not to urbanization, but to the spread of urban cultural facilities to rural areas.” Nehru was “convinced that the rapid industrialization of India” would be necessary “to combat poverty and raise the standards of living,” and seemed to believe British political and economic institutions could be useful in achieving that end.¹¹¹ Bombay, New Delhi, Calcutta, Madras: the urban centers of India were all British imperial cities. Unlike Gandhi, Nehru at least professed to believe that India’s political, economic, and even cultural institutions should be shaped in the form of British “urban cultural facilities”—while a non-white nationalist, Nehru promised to preserve many British institutions. Through these institutions, the Saxon Empire could continue to exercise at least influence, if not dominance.

The Luce-Celler Act not only discouraged Indian non-white nationalism from becoming anti-white nationalism, but also prevented the radicalization of non-white

¹¹¹ Mukherjee, “Gandhi’s Swaraj,” 36.

nationalisms in the United States. During the House's debate over H.R. 3517, Luce argued that the bill served America's "political" self-interest much more than it served America's economic self-interest insofar as it maintained the moral legitimacy of white America's authority. Just as Clare Boothe Luce had rejected the economic basis of Henry Luce's "American Century," she expressed indifference toward the Luce-Celler Act's economic implications. While Luce agreed that the "reasons of economic expediency" that supported this bill—that America would develop friendlier trade relations with India by removing anti-Indian racial prejudice from its legal code—were "still valid," she admitted that they were "non-conclusive" at best. These arguments, she explained, rested upon India becoming economically independent of the British Empire, and could still be achieved through trade-negotiations without the bill anyway.

To Luce, the more compelling argument in favor of this bill was that of "political expediency." Luce suggested two interpretations of the "political expediency" of the Luce-Celler Act. On the one hand, she recognized that "the peoples of Asia are awake and on the march" and would soon "be shopping around...for political ideologies" as they had begun "to think in political idioms." These "political idioms" could continue to preference, or at least tolerate, whiteness, or they could become anti-white. Luce hoped the Luce-Celler Act would ensure the former. Furthermore, Luce averred, "if we fail to pass this bill, we shall further damage our claim to moral leadership not only throughout the Asiatic world but here at home among our own colored people."¹¹² The "we" Luce refers to does not include the non-white, "colored people" of the United States—it refers to America's white nationals. Luce believed the Luce-Celler Act could reinforce white moral dominance by discrediting non-white subjects' anti-white claim that the United States social and

¹¹² *Congressional Record* 91, 79th Cong., 1st Sess. (October 10, 1945): 9527-9528. Emphasis added.

political system and legal code were racially discriminatory. By creating an avenue through which elite non-white subjects could become racially equal to whites through studying and internalizing the culture and norms of whiteness, the Luce-Celler Act subverted anti-white nationalism and reinforced whiteness as the legitimate source of national authority.

Clare Boothe Luce feared anti-white black nationalism in America just as she did anti-white nationalism in general, and believed both could be quelled through similar means. In a draft of the address she would deliver at the Tuskegee Institute—a historically black institution founded to train black educators who would prepare black Americans for participation and advancement in a society still dominated by whiteness—on May 16, 1946, Luce implicitly admitted her fear of anti-white black nationalism.

These are revolutionary times for men of all classes and creeds and colors. The white man's culture has for several hundreds of years excluded the Negro from its prizes and benefits. Today that culture is no longer in equilibrium. Indeed, our Western civilization is in such an uproar and confusion that what we may all be witnessing is its death agonies.¹¹³

Luce feared that anti-black racism had created “revolutionary,” anti-white nationalism in America's black subjects, which would ultimately lead the “white man's culture” and “Western civilization” to its “death agonies.” Furthermore, Luce described anti-black racism not as a problem for black Americans, but as a problem for the preservation of “Western civilization” and “the white man's soul.” Luce believed that the white man's “attitude towards the black man's skin” represented the “moral quality” of the white man's soul, and was certain that if white nationals “fail to see that the essential problem of our times is the crisis in and about the white man's soul, it is certain that our culture, now in turmoil and fervent, must perish in

¹¹³ Clare Boothe Luce, “Saving the White Man's Soul,” Essay, Box 316, Folder 4, CBL Papers, 10.

some vast social catastrophe.”¹¹⁴ Luce was certain that white culture, the medium of white authority, would “perish” if white nationals could not find a way to reimagine the racial hierarchy. To Luce, white empire’s failure to redesign its racial hierarchy would lead to “social catastrophe,” the destruction of the racial hierarchy that prioritized whiteness.

Luce believed anti-white black nationalism could only be diffused through providing black Americans a separate avenue to racial equality that revolved around their performing whiteness. Just as she had rejected the notion that economic security could prevent anti-white nationalism, Luce observed, “in times like these no man, least of all the Negro, however fortified by money, education, or mechanical skills, dares look with complete confidence into his own or his nation’s future.”¹¹⁵ Luce saw that the black American and “his nation” could not be satisfied with economic security achieved under complete racial subjugation. Luce was confident that if the “white man” were “to survive,” he would have to offer “Negro-Americans the chance to be leaders in a very wide sense: the chance to be leaders, not only in their ethnic group, but in all of our society.”¹¹⁶ Just as she had diffused non-white Indian nationalism, Luce intended to diffuse non-white black nationalism by creating an avenue for black Americans to become racially equal to whites in a society that inherently prioritized white interests. After all, the “Negro-Americans” that would become leaders in “all of our society” would include, ostensibly, those that studied trades and professions at the Tuskegee Institute that would make them economically useful subjects of the Anglo-Saxon Empire. The Tuskegee Institute’s first principal was Booker T. Washington, whom more radical black activists like W.E.B. DuBois and William Monroe Trotter criticized for his conciliatory approach

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

to black nationalism. Rather than advocate immediate and total equality with whites, Washington consistently advocated black cooperation with white dominance and discrimination as a pragmatic means to increasing the opportunities afforded to and to elevating the living standards experienced by black Americans.¹¹⁷ In describing the “Negro-Americans” who would “establish themselves as the vanguard of the future,” perhaps Luce had such a “Negro-American” in mind.

With regard to both non-white Indian nationalism and non-white black nationalism, Luce recognized that white nationals would have to reimagine and recreate social hierarchies in order to preserve their dominance. Of course, Clare Boothe Luce did not believe recreating social hierarchies was a new mandate to maintaining empire. She recognized that empires of old, like Napoleon’s French Empire, had attempted to maintain domination by creating an elite class out of its servile subjects. Luce mused on this phenomenon in an article she wrote on General Joseph Stilwell’s command in Burma. Stilwell, four-star general of the United States’ Army, was charged with the responsibility of commanding Chinese, American and British troops in the Burma campaign of World War II. Reporting on Stilwell’s decision to “decorate a gallant young Chinese lieutenant with the D.S.C. [Distinguished Service Cross],” which would be the “first time a Chinese has received an American decoration,” Luce was reminded of the method through which Napoleon maintained his empire by rewarding his servile subjects. Stilwell’s decision reminded Luce of “Napoleon’s remark to one of his generals when he created the Legion d’Honneur: ‘With these bits of ribbon a man can build an empire.’”¹¹⁸ Through rewarding servile subjects for sacrificing themselves to an empire that prioritized the interests of a colonial elite, Napoleon had attempted to create and

¹¹⁷ Clayborne Carson, Emma Lapsansky-Werner, and Gary Nash, *The Struggle For Freedom: A History of African Americans* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 316-318, 331-334, 346-347.

¹¹⁸ Clare Boothe Luce, “U.S. General Stilwell Commands Chinese on Burma Front,” *Life*, April 27, 1942, 16.

preserve his empire. Considering the challenges that presently faced Anglo-Saxon Empire, though, Luce noted, “it’s going to take more than bits of ribbon to hold our empires together now.”¹¹⁹ Luce recognized that the Anglo-Saxon Empire could not stave off anti-white nationalisms by rewarding servile non-whites for sacrificing themselves to the advancement and preservation of white empire. Rewarding servile non-white subjects while preventing them from becoming commanders provided only a limited avenue through which non-white nationalism could sublimate. Luce saw that white empire could not quell anti-white nationalism by promoting its non-white subjects to the highest tier of a racially second-class hierarchy—white empire would have to provide its non-white subjects their own social hierarchy racially equal to, but distinct from, the white social hierarchy.

Considering Luce’s belief in the intersection of racial and national interests and her fear of anti-white nationalism, we can see that her seemingly progressive politics not only sought to repudiate Japanese and Soviet propaganda, but also sought to diffuse anti-white nationalisms among the non-white subjects of the Anglo-Saxon Empire. Luce’s egalitarian race politics, her support of anti-lynching bills, progressive immigration bills and postcolonial independence did not emerge simply from her desire to prevent the spread of the Soviet Union’s political and economic ideology.¹²⁰ They emerged at least equally from her white racial anxiety, and from her fear that the Anglo-Saxon Empire that had thereto protected white racial interests in the world was under threat from external and internal nationalisms, particularly non-white nationalisms. With this in mind, we cannot explain Luce’s decision to address Indian immigration in particular simply by claiming that America wanted to appease the postcolonial third-world by elevating India, an avatar

¹¹⁹ Clare Boothe Luce, "Burma Mission: Part I," *Life*, June 15, 1942, 96.

¹²⁰ *Congressional Record*, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. 187.

for the third-world, in its legal code. We must also consider that Luce chose to support Indian non-white nationalism after studying Homer Lea's geopolitical treatises, which posited India as the key to maintaining the Anglo-Saxon Empire's racial dominance in the Eastern Hemisphere. Within this context, we can see that the Luce-Celler Act sought to divert non-white Indian nationalism from becoming anti-white nationalism in order to preserve the Anglo-Saxon Empire's political and social system that privileged whiteness as the legitimate source of power.

*Interlude: The Cosmopolitan Elite, Global Politics, and the Making of J.J. Singh***The Cosmopolitan Elite and Their Global Politics**

Clare Boothe Luce believed the world's politics would be best worked out through the intimate conversations of its cosmopolitan elite. In June 1942, a few months after meeting him in Delhi, Luce sent a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru asking him to consider coming to America to discuss the "India question" with President Roosevelt:

I believe that there are several men in India, in England, and in America, who, if ever they could be brought together in a room, would find those solutions – or near solutions for the Indian question which would make it easier for you, and for Great Britain and for ourselves to "get on" with the business of decent living in the years to come. Two of those men are beyond any shadow of doubt, [you] and President Roosevelt.

Luce was not sure if Nehru and Roosevelt would "like one another," for "liking needs knowing." She was confident, though, that they would "be able to talk together in a language which is not of the 19th century" and "could not fail to charm one another." Through this charm, Nehru and Roosevelt would at least be able to "meet with [their] minds on fundamental issues" that were "really essential."¹²¹ While Luce realized that Nehru and Roosevelt had different perspectives on Indian independence and the post-war order it represented, Luce was sure that, through their "language" of the twentieth century, they could at least come to some gentleman's agreement.

In the 1940s, as the war and revolution raged across the globe, Luce believed that a new world order could be arrived at through pleasant conversation. This conversation would neither be mediated through an international organization nor

¹²¹ Clare Booth Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, June 4, 1942, Box 205, Folder 16, CBL Papers. All underlines are reproduced here as they appear in the original document.

be democratically determined. It would be private, its outcome determined by each interlocutor's ability to charm, convince and compel the other into agreement. The interlocutors in this conversation would not be diplomats or dignitaries, like those that would attend the San Francisco Conference and the United Nations, who represented states and spoke the languages of official political and economic policy. The interlocutors would be individuals like Luce, who had appointed themselves the capacity to represent nations but who believed themselves to transcend national identification—individuals who could speak and perform twentieth century nationalist and imperial politics through the language of global cosmopolitanism.

At least in the American imagination, Jawaharlal Nehru was one such interlocutor. As Richard Walsh, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the ILA and editor at John Day Publishers, wrote in the forward to the American edition of Nehru's autobiography, *Toward Freedom*, "to understand India we must understand Nehru and his attitude to the world. For Nehru thinks in world terms." Walsh, himself a prominent supporter of the Indian nationalism, portrayed Nehru as an avatar for India with a vision that reached well beyond the boundaries of the subcontinent. Furthermore, Walsh asserted that Nehru was "the synthesis of East and West. In him the best of both cultures are fused into the coming world type, the man of the future."¹²² Nehru transcended regional culture. He was the best of both worlds and embodied the promise of cosmopolitan politics.

Luce recognized Nehru as a fellow cosmopolitan elite when she first met him. In March 1942, Nehru had invited Luce to meet him at his residence in New Delhi. Nehru had invited some friends and colleagues over as well and entertained the company over dinner and drinks. Luce was struck by the ease with which he could, at once, embody Indian nationalism and perform the trappings of white elite culture.

¹²² Richard Walsh, "Forward," in *Toward Freedom*, au. Jawaharlal Nehru (John Day Publishers: 1940), vii-viii.

The two “sipped sherry” and laughed as Nehru shared his stories of smoking “rose-petal-tipped cigarettes [sic]” in his “Oxford twenties.” Casually drawing attention to his Oxford education and his bourgeois smoking and drinking preferences, Nehru performed his worldliness, therein signaling his cosmopolitanism to Luce and their company. Through exchanging their stories of adventures had and insights gleaned in distant places, Luce and Nehru subtly began to explain the complexities of their cultural, social, and political identities to each other. After exchanging anecdotes, Luce recalled, the company’s conversation moved toward “Cripps, Jinnah and the Viceroy, which didn’t make [them] laugh.” After all their guests had bid their farewells, Luce and Nehru continued to discuss “the everlasting things: of human love and divine; of good and evil, of Eros and Agape,” which eventually led Nehru to explain “But I am an atheist,” and to question, “but was the West ever Christian?”¹²³ Six years later, when Luce thought of “that happy night which began in [Nehru’s] garden” she remembered fondly the “nightingale” who “sang most appropriately in the hot night to the cold moon.” As cosmopolitan elite who thought and spoke “in world terms,” Luce and Nehru were able to form an intimacy that carried their conversation late into the night and deep into each other’s thoughts upon their very first meeting.

This conversation, eased by the intimacy engendered by their silent, mutual acknowledgment of each other’s cosmopolitan elitism, led Luce to consider, accept and support Nehru’s political project. Luce and Nehru spoke of Indian nationalism and the British Empire, articulating, either explicitly or implicitly, their ambitions and visions for the world orders that could be. They not only exchanged their political ideologies, however, but also discussed the bases of their social and political identities. To explain his worldview, Nehru had to explain his notions of “human love

¹²³ Clare Boothe Luce to Jawaharlal Nehru, Letter, April 16, 1948, Box 158, Folder 5, CBL Papers.

and [the] divine; of good and evil” and had to declare himself “an atheist.” In this conversation, uninhibited by the procedural formalities of official international diplomacy, Luce and Nehru forged an intimacy that would prove political meaningful. After her intimate night with Nehru, Clare Boothe Luce remained an outspoken supporter of Indian independence; even if Luce had her own reasons to support Indian independence, her conversation with Nehru certainly helped her to form her rationale. Perhaps J.J. Singh had hoped Luce would form an intimate relationship with Indian independence through Nehru when he arranged for them to meet.

J.J. Singh, too, was a cosmopolitan elite steeped in the art of enacting politics through engendering intimacy. Singh was a debonair socialite who fit in comfortably among Manhattan’s cosmopolitan elite. As his friend had described him, Singh was “like a fabric dipped into a dye” that had “taken the coloration extremely well, especially the New York coloration.” While certainly an Indian nationalist whose work revolved around advancing the interests of the subcontinent’s non-white inhabitants, Singh had also thoroughly internalized the culture and customs of whiteness, at least as they existed among Manhattan’s socialites. Singh transcended nationality and embodied at least one possibility for Indian nationalism.

Indeed, J.J. Singh engaged Luce to support his brand of Indian nationalism by facilitating the very dinners and cocktail parties she considered to be the cosmopolitan’s negotiating tables. On September 2, 1943, soon after he had met with her to introduce her to Nehru’s nieces, Singh sent Luce a message requesting that he and she meet again soon:

Dear Clare,

Please accept belated thanks for a delightful and most enjoyable afternoon and evening. The girls fell in love with you. I am not saying a word about myself—that is an old story.

-JJ

P.S.: Girls have left your coat with me. I would like to hold it and give it to you only if you would have breakfast-lunch-cocktails-dinner or supper with me.

-JJ¹²⁴

In his handwritten letter, Singh did not request a “meeting,” but “breakfast-lunch-cocktails-dinner or supper,” undoubtedly at one of Manhattan’s finer establishments. Singh made good fun of international politics. He would not convince Luce to support Indian nationalism simply by sending her memoranda. Instead, he would first arrange for her to develop an intimate relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru and then preserve that intimacy by inviting her to a “delightful and most enjoyable afternoon” with Nehru’s nieces.

The next month, Luce responded to Singh’s note remarking, “it was great fun seeing you,” but reminded Singh not to “forget that you promised to send me note, suggestions, facts or fancies on a case from America’s own self-interested point of view for why we should urge Indian freedom.”¹²⁵ Luce had her own interest in “Indian freedom.” Through their intimate conversations, she had also come to recognize that Singh too had his own unique interest in Indian independence. She reminded Singh, though, that they would have to construct a “case from America’s own self-interest” to pitch Indian independence to the American public successfully. As cosmopolitan elite, they took it as their prerogative to translate to the world the conclusions they had arrived at through their intimate conversation. J.J. Singh began his work on the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 neither simply as a merchant nor just as an Indian nationalist, but also as a cosmopolitan elite.

¹²⁴ J.J. Singh to Clare Boothe Luce, Letter, September 2, 1943, Box 402, CBL Papers.

¹²⁵ Clare Boothe Luce to J.J. Singh, Letter, October 18, 1943, Box 402, CBL Papers.

From Jagjit to J.J.: The Making of a Cosmopolitan Nationalist

Singh began to develop his identity, ambition and capability as a cosmopolitan elite long before he arrived in Manhattan, before he was “J.J.,” the successful businessman and enchanting socialite. The process had begun when he was still Sirdar Jagjit Singh, the Indian independence fighter. Jagjit, or “Conqueror of the World,” was born in Rawalpindi, Punjab Province, in 1897 to a well-established civil-service family. Jagjit’s father, Rup Singh, was the “Extra Assistant Commissioner acting as itinerant judicial and executive officer in the North-West Frontier Province,” which was among the highest posts an Indian could achieve within the British government at the time.¹²⁶ Rup Singh’s post required him to travel across the cities and hill-stations of British India frequently. Jagjit, an only child, often joined his father on these trips and sat beside his father as he presided over local courts. Rup Singh’s post entitled him to travel with all the pomp and flare of the British imperial government—from the center of these spectacular processions, young Jagjit watched the India woven together under the British Empire unfold itself before him. This expansive India, not delimited by religion, language, or ethnicity, was his country, his father’s charge, but, ultimately, Britain’s domain.

Jagjit’s experience as a youth was, in many ways, an education in British imperialism. Undoubtedly, his family’s position within the civil service entitled him to the best education available to Indians at the time. Considering that he intended to attend the Inner Temple in London to become a barrister, it is likely that he not only studied in English, but also studied the history and canons of Western Civilization. His family’s social position also gave Jagjit an insider’s perspective on the mechanics of imperial rule. Reflecting on his childhood, J.J. recalled having a personal “red-

¹²⁶ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 46.

liveried flunky,” appointed by the state to travel with his family as a babysitter. “I can remember going into bazaars at the age of ten and having rich, influential businessmen salute me—me, a little kid,” Singh recollected. While such forthcoming displays of submission must have perplexed the young Jagjit, he would later make sense of it:

They had to, but it wasn't me they were saluting. It was the British...[looking] back on it, I see how cleverly the British maintained their power. The wider the chasm they could create between their chosen native officials and the populace, the easier it was for them to rule through us.¹²⁷

By the age of ten, Jagjit had already intimately experienced the politics of “divide and rule.” He realized that his father’s employment and his family’s social class entitled him to an enormous amount of power, but he also saw that he was a tool through which Britain could maintain dominion. Jagjit had learned to see himself among the ruling class of empire but realized he was constrained to the bottom, subservient tier of it.

After studying British imperialism till the age of twenty, Jagjit began his studies in Indian nationalism. In 1917, Jagjit traveled to Lahore to enroll at the Lahore Commercial College. The move would prove propitious, as it put Jagjit in the right place at the right time to get swept up into the resurgence of the Indian nationalist movement. On March 10, 1919, the British Government of India passed the Rowlatt Act, which extended martial law in India even after the conclusion of World War I. As a result, Gandhi led a faction of the Indian National Congress to begin the Non-Cooperation Movement, calling for a nation-wide *hartal*, or general strike, as a demonstration of civil disobedience. As the Government of India moved to repress this resurgence of nationalist agitation, tensions between the Government

¹²⁷ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 46.

and its subjects increased, finally exploding into riots in some cities, particularly in Lahore.¹²⁸ Amidst this confused violence, Jagjit “suddenly found [himself] leading a mob” through the city of Lahore. Inspired by his participation in the riots and convinced by the British government’s ruthless massacre of non-violent protestors in Amritsar three days later, Jagjit officially joined the struggle for Indian independence in the April of 1919.¹²⁹

Jagjit’s tenure with the independence struggle taught him to enjoy the limelight of leading national politics. In 1920, Jagjit organized the first Congress committee to represent the North-West Frontier Province, and became the youngest individual ever to become a member of the All-India Congress Committee. Soon thereafter, Jagjit organized some truck drivers in the North-West Frontier Province to strike for a day and was held in jail overnight as a consequence. Subsequently, Jagjit led a “twenty-one-day campaign of civil disobedience...to wrest...Sikh temples from the British,” during which unarmed Indian protestors marched in waves to face beatings at the hands of Indian sergeants who were employed by the British government. The British eventually capitulated and relinquished control over the Sikh temples.¹³⁰ Riding these successes, Jagjit must have felt himself a rising star coming into his own as a leader among men. He must have felt a sense of pride standing in front of scores of protestors, each now looking to *him*, not the British, with deference and respect. Jagjit’s career organizing for the Indian National Congress, however, came to an abrupt end in 1922.

On February 4, 1922, a demonstration of civil disobedience in the town of Chauri Chaura quickly turned violent after British policemen arrested the protest’s leaders and fired warning shots into the air. The demonstrators backed the twenty-

¹²⁸ Raghuvanshi, *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, 146-167.

¹²⁹ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 47.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

two policemen into their station and set the building ablaze, murdering all twenty-two police. Distraught over the incident, Gandhi rebuked the Indian National Congress for allowing its constituents to devolve into violence and called an end to the civil disobedience campaigns.¹³¹ As Singh remembered it in 1951,

[Gandhi] told us we weren't fit for civil disobedience...go back to your homes and cleanse your souls, he said. I didn't know how to cleanse my soul. I didn't have one. I was like a pricked balloon, with nothing left. I had given up my studies, and I didn't feel like spinning and praying and being really Gandhi-like.¹³²

Jagjit left Lahore "depressed and confused." His tryst with the nationalist movement, his days of commanding admiration, had been cut short prematurely by his unwillingness to be "Gandhi-like." Jagjit "revered Gandhi like a saint," and he had found a sense of purpose in the Indian nationalist movement, but he could not accept the movement on Gandhi's ascetic and retrogressive terms.¹³³

After quitting the nationalist movement, Jagjit began following his wanderlust, which would lead him out of Lahore and eventually to New York City. After briefly returning home to Rawalpindi, Jagjit set out for an adventure through Southeast Asia, visiting friends and family wherever he could.¹³⁴ Assumedly, Jagjit toured the Sikh merchant diaspora in British Asia, which could have led him to stop off in Malacca and the Malaya Straights Settlements, Shanghai, and Hong Kong to visit commercially successful and influential friends and relatives.¹³⁵ Jagjit returned to Lahore after a few months, and then decided to go to London to study Law at the Inner Temple, the same barristers association that Gandhi and Nehru had studied in previously. Upon arriving in London, though, Jagjit was immediately swept up into

¹³¹ Raghuvanshi, *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, 162-163.

¹³² Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," 48.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³⁵ For further discussion of the Sikh merchant diaspora throughout British Asia, with particular emphasis on Singapore, see Gerard McCann, "Sikhs and the City: Sikh History and Diasporatic Practice in Singapore," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 6 (November 2011): 1465-1498.

the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley Park. Receiving supplies from his cousin back in Lahore, Jagjit opened a booth at the exhibition and sold with great success. Business boomed, and within six months, Jagjit realized that imperial commerce was more exciting and lucrative than imperial legislating. After his success in the British Empire Exhibition, Jagjit followed the currents of commerce across the Atlantic to sell India, by way of textiles and semiprecious stones, at the Philadelphia's Sesqui-Centennial Exhibition. Jagjit was far less successful at the Sesqui-Centennial than he had been in London—of the eighty thousand dollars he had made in London, only thirty thousand remained after the Sesqui-Centennial. In 1927, Jagjit decided to take his chances and moved his venture to New York City.¹³⁶ In New York, the Sikh, Indian nationalist turned concessionaire Jagjit evolved into J.J., the cosmopolitan bachelor-cum-businessman.

Aged 33 by 1930, Jagjit would spend the next eight years of his life learning how to embody and sell “Indianness” to Americans across the country. At first, Jagjit found success in New York City, but that the Great Depression cut that success short. During the workweek, Jagjit “was reduced to acting as his own travelling salesman,” traveling “through New England, out across the Midwest, and into the South” with his suitcase full of textile samples.¹³⁷ Considering that Jagjit emerged from the decade hugely successful and with a storefront on the same block as Tiffany's, it seems he was at least sufficiently successful at selling his Indian textiles to the sundry buyers he found across the country. In traversing the country, Jagjit learned how influence worked in the country's various regions. Perhaps J.J. took a lesson from this period when he compelled a Southern Senator to vote for the Luce-Celler Act by contacting “all the church groups down in his native state” to convince them

¹³⁶ Shaplen, “One-Man Lobby,” 49.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

to write letters to the Senator in support of the bill on the basis of their moral belief in equality.¹³⁸

As J.J. came to understand how different Americans thought, he also learned to see himself among the nation's cosmopolitan elite. When he would return to New York, Jagjit would find himself in "the social circles of Mrs. George Washington Kavanaugh and the Rhinelanders." He "acquired a reputation as a personable bachelor who dressed well, could talk easily on most subjects, and was a good fourth at bridge or tennis." In the glitz and glamor of New York's high society, Jagjit was reminded that he was welcome among the elite. "I found myself quite in demand, and I enjoyed it, because I enjoyed chic people," Singh reminisced about his thirties.¹³⁹ By the end of his thirties, J.J. had realized his place among the cosmopolitan elite.

Even as he began to blend into this cosmopolitan social milieu, however, he would not compromise on the politics of his racial identity. He would not play the Oriental subject to his party-going companions and pander to their condescension. He refused to "produce a couple of snakes from [his] pockets or do the rope trick," regardless of how consistently his obduracy made him a "social flop" at parties.¹⁴⁰ He did decide, however, to "have his hair cut and [to] dispose of his comb, beard and turban." In explaining his rationale, he posited that, "after travelling around and learning a lot more than I used to know, I came to the conclusion that religion was a good thing but that it had nothing to do with having a beard and turban."¹⁴¹ Whereas

¹³⁸ Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," 46; J.J. Singh to Clare Boothe Luce, April 30, 1946, Box 392, CBL Papers. Shaplen mentions that Singh contacted church groups to compel a particularly intransigent Senator from the South to vote for "a particular piece of legislation". On April 30, 1946, while the Luce-Celler Act sat before a subcommittee of the Senate's Committee on Immigration, J.J. wrote a letter to Clare Boothe Luce informing her that the ILA had approached "church circles and women's clubs" in Senator Richard B. Russell's home state of Georgia to pressure him into supporting the bill.

¹³⁹ Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," 49-50.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴¹ Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," 50.

the bearded and turbaned Jagjit stuck out as “unusual” and stopped “traffic at every corner,” the cosmopolitan J.J. would adapt pragmatically to his surroundings, at least outwardly. Neither J.J. nor Jagjit, however, would inure himself to the racist condescension and discrimination.

Through his membership in Manhattan’s cosmopolitan elite, J.J. learned to carry himself as an avatar for Indianness in America and to enact his politics through embodying an Indianness that could sit comfortably and confidently among America’s elite. Singh must have begun to recognize his power and responsibility to represent India to America through his interactions with fellow cosmopolitan elite. To his cosmopolitan companions, Singh was constantly marked by his Indianness and his character and actions were taken to represent that Indianness. By the end of the 1930s, Singh had recognized both his opportunity to perform Indianness as he desired it to be understood and his capacity to make the presence of that Indianness comfortable among America’s elite.

It is no surprise, then, that when Singh resumed participation in the Indian nationalist movement, he quickly rejected the route of bureaucratic policy negotiation, and refused to submit himself to asceticism of Gandhi’s *swaraj*. In 1937, nationalist leaders had suggested that Singh establish an Indian Chamber of Commerce in the United States in order “to interest Washington in a bilateral trade agreement with India.” Singh completed this task, but “found that the dull commercial dickering involved failed to satisfy his now resurgent revolutionary spirit.”¹⁴² Singh had already established himself as the eminent representative of “Indianness” to America’s cosmopolitan elite and now desired to become the representative of Indian nationalism to America—he would not be satisfied operating within the bureaucratic confines that accompany official diplomacy and treaty

¹⁴² Ibid., 40.

negotiation. He also refused to fast, spin, or pray, in humble *swaraj*, but focused on influencing the influencers.¹⁴³ Singh saw himself as a cosmopolitan elite; “self-rule” to him meant achieving the mobility and power for himself that his white companions held in their passports. Much as the Baroda Parsis had in 1876, Singh felt himself entitled to more than bilateral trade treaties—he felt himself entitled to racial, and national, equality white whites. While others could liberate themselves through ascetic living and self-discipline, Singh would liberate nations through manipulating the political machineries of states—and he would enjoy fine cocktails and dinners while at it.

¹⁴³ “Swaraj,” which means “self-rule” in Hindi, was Gandhi’s political and spiritual philosophy. Gandhi argued that India could only achieve ‘self-rule’ once Indians learned to rule over themselves through self-discipline and ascetic, moral living.

Chapter 3: J.J. Singh, Indian Nationalism and the Luce-Celler Act of 1946

The United States Congress took final action on the Luce-Celler Act on June 27, 1946, and President Harry Truman signed it into the United States Code on July 2, 1946, just in time for America's Independence Day celebrations.¹⁴⁴ Six months later, J.J. Singh departed New York for India. With his work completed on the Luce-Celler Act, he now intended to spend four months touring the subcontinent, meeting "all the leaders of the various political parties" involved in the negotiations over and the planning of India's post-colonial government. During his stay in India, Singh also had the opportunity to attend the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, which brought together the leaders of the various independence movements that were progressing across Asia. On May 5, Singh returned from his trip to transmit, with grave concern, his most pressing observation: "The people of India, as well as the peoples of other Asian Countries have begun to fear the United States."¹⁴⁵

In the year between the Luce-Celler Act's passage and Singh's return to New York, the United States' vision for the post-war world order had become much clearer to the world. On March 12, 1947, while Asian independence leaders were convening in New Delhi, U.S. President Harry Truman announced America's intention to provide economic aid to Greece and Turkey in order to prevent them from falling into the U.S.S.R.'s sphere of influence. This speech would later be referred to as the "Truman Doctrine," and would be considered the beginning of the U.S.'s anti-Soviet "containment policy." The United Nations had not approved such economic aid, but the U.S. had opted to circumvent the U.N. To some observers, this

¹⁴⁴ *Congressional Record* 91, 79th Cong., 1st Sess. (July 2, 1946): 8299.

¹⁴⁵ "J.J. Singh Returns from India," *India To-day*, June 1946.

decision marked the beginning of the Cold War.¹⁴⁶ To Singh and many independence fighters, this decision portended the beginning of post-war American imperialism.

In the press conference he held upon returning from India, Singh explained that Indian leaders and those of other emerging Asian nations were growing apprehensive about “economic penetration by the United States in the backward Asian countries.” Beyond economic imperialism, these leaders were further concerned that the U.S.’s willingness to act unilaterally in “by-passing...the United Nations in the case of proposed loans to Greece and Turkey...may have set a dangerous precedent.” Despite the Atlantic Charter and other wartime promises, it now seemed clear to Singh that the United States would not prioritize international cooperation in forming its post-war foreign policy.

The possibility of American economic imperialism did not come to Singh as any surprise in 1947, though. In May, 1944, Singh wrote a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* criticizing an editorial the newspaper had published a week earlier. The editorial in question had rebuked Indian independence leaders for emboldening the Japanese forces by demanding independence from the British during wartime. Prior to World War II, the editorial suggested, it had become popular “to [guess] as to who would inherit the pieces” of the soon-to-collapse British Empire. After the British had successfully mounted a counterattack against the Japanese in Burma, though, it had become clear that “the British Empire stands firmer than before.” Singh responded to this article by pointing out its implicit approval of exploitation and economic imperialism. “This editorial,” Singh explained, creates

an impression in India that the United States approves of the ‘British Empire’ system, including the subjugation and exploitation of the people of India, and that the United States itself [is] slowly and gradually leaning toward economic imperialism.

¹⁴⁶ Fraser Harbutt, *The Cold War Era* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 19–20.

Singh made clear that “the Grady mission, and even some aspects of the lend-lease” had given the people of India “the impression that these were the opening wedges of American economic exploitation” and that “the United States will collaborate with the British to control world markets in the post-war era.”¹⁴⁷ In an American’s celebration of the British Empire’s wartime strength, J.J. Singh vigilantly identified an incipient American post-war economic imperialism.

Despite the fact that Singh had been hostile to American economic imperialism as early as May 1944, he still sold the Luce-Celler Act to Congress by presenting it as an opportunity for economic imperialism. Before the House of Representatives’ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Singh entreated, “[India] will need so many technicians, we will need capital too, we will need machinery, machine tools, and *you are the only people* who can sell them to us.” Singh suggested that the Luce-Celler Act would not only open Indian markets to American loans and skilled labor, but also provide Americans with a monopoly’s share of those investment and trade opportunities. Singh pushed further, suggesting, “many of your machines have become obsolete or will have become obsolete soon after the war is over, because you are progressive, a very progressive Nation...but even some of your obsolete machines will be very good for us. So you have a beautiful market, an excellent market, for unloading a lot of your machinery soon after the war.”¹⁴⁸ As Singh described it, the Luce-Celler Act would further allow American industries to dump their excess supply upon Indian markets. Only nine months after

¹⁴⁷ *The New York Times*, May 7, 1944, E8. In March, 1942, while Sir Stafford Cripps was in India negotiating a political compromise with the nationalists, the United States sent a “Technical Mission” led by diplomat Henry F. Grady to establish a “war production board” in India that would industrialize the country and coordinate its production with the U.S. Indian nationalists were highly suspicious of U.S. intentions Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 77-79.

¹⁴⁸ House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Hearings on H.R. 173, H.R. 1584, H.R. 1624, H.R. 1746, H.R. 2256, H.R. 2609: Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians and to Make Them Racially Eligible for Naturalization*, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, 89-90, emphasis added.

sharply rebuking American economic imperialism, Singh gushingly described the Luce-Celler Act as a perfect opportunity for America to expand its economic empire.

In elucidating America's post-war economic interests in India, however, Singh guided Congress to speculate on Indian independence. Singh suggested that the Luce-Celler Act would increase America's trade with India. The Luce-Celler Act, however, only gratified non-white Indians, as white residents of the subcontinent could already legally immigrate to the United States and become naturalized citizens. The Luce-Celler Act, therefore, would only increase trade between India and the U.S. if non-white Indians, as opposed to British or European residents of the subcontinent, determined the course of Indian trade. Probing this logic, Congressman Edward McCowen, a conservative Republican Representative from Ohio, asked Singh, "are the Indians going to be large majority owners of these new industries that will be established?" Poised and prepared, Singh answered,

It all depends upon what kind of a world order you are going to have. If British imperialism still holds sway in India, then perhaps we will have difficulties in that respect, but we are hoping that there is going to be a different kind of world in which India will be able to have her industries mainly financed and run by the Indians.¹⁴⁹

Singh made it clear that America would only get its money's worth out of this bill if it also supported Indian independence. The Luce-Celler Act would ingratiate America with non-white Indians. If those non-white Indians came to control India's industries and trade policies in a postcolonial "world order," they would return the favor by extending America more favorable trade opportunities. If India remained under British control, however, trade would continue much the same as it had, regardless of the Luce-Celler Act. Singh presented the Luce-Celler Act as an easy means to increasing America's trade, so long as America decided to support a "world

¹⁴⁹ House Committee, *Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians*, 89.

order” in which India were independent of the British Empire. By appealing to America’s economic interest through the Luce-Celler Act, Singh effectively aligned the commercial interests of Congress with the political interests of Indian nationalism, and impelled Congress to work towards Indian independence.

From the moment he took the stand, Singh used the Luce-Celler Act as an opportunity to pitch Indian independence to the Committee. After introducing himself, Singh opened his statement with, “I would like to mention, sir, that unfortunately, at the present moment India is under the subjugation and rule of the British and therefore all of her foreign relations and dealings with foreigners are controlled by them.”¹⁵⁰ For the entirety of the following three pages of his testimony (and again frequently through the remaining seven pages), Singh proceeded to describe the injustices Indians suffer daily under British imperial rule and the degree to which the British Government of India had prevented Indian nationalists from accommodating American military and economic interests.

In particular, he posited that American military and economic interests and the interests of “British imperialists” were diametrically opposed. Insofar as the war was concerned, the British imperialists had subverted the Allied war effort by not arming more Indians, Singh argued, since it did “not suit the British to have more Indians in the armed forces. They are afraid that these Indians who...might learn the art of killing, may not be quite such nice kind of people to deal with, you see, later on.” Singh emphasized the fact that Indian nationalists like Nehru had wanted to support the war, but could not rally popular support for a war to defend liberty and freedom when they were denied freedom at home. Singh’s line of reasoning led Congressman Leonard Allen, a Democratic Representative from Alabama and the most vociferous opponent of the bill, to ask, “in other words, if Nehru had had the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 84.

proper backing and encouragement on the part of the British imperialists, he probably would have organized with ease an army of ten or fifteen million men?" In response, Singh summarized, "Yes sir...if you are finding any fault with our lack of war effort, then the blame lies at the door of the British imperialists and not on the Indians."¹⁵¹ In broaching the economic merits of the Luce-Celler Act, Singh also led the Committee to realize that America's economic interests were "in competition with Great Britain in India." In his testimony, Singh painted an alluring picture of India for American economic and military interests, and posited that only the British imperialists stood in America's way.

Singh also suggested to the Committee that America had the power to determine Britain's ability to maintain dominion over India. When Congressman Allen asked Singh if America could "get Great Britain to remove some of the barriers so we could sell some of these things" in India, Singh assured, "I have full confidence in American businessmen and the American Congress, that when it comes to asserting your rights you will assert your rights...Britain or no Britain, British imperialists or no British imperialists."¹⁵² Singh not only incentivized the U.S. Congress to support Indian independence, but also convinced them of their ability to "assert their right" to an independent India against the claim of British imperialists to a colonized India.

Singh further convinced the Committee that Indians were much more interested in joining the American side of this dispute. "Perhaps you are already aware," Singh offered, "that people in India have great feeling toward the people of America." Indians had even invoked America's "past history," its "great men like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln" and America's "struggles for...liberty" in its

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁵² Ibid., 91.

own drive for independence. Through this logic, Singh assured the Committee that America had more to gain from an independent India than from British imperialism, promising “that when India becomes free we will be able to accord you even a heartier welcome and greater courtesies.”¹⁵³ Tacitly, Singh implied to the Committee that Indian independence was inevitable. Subtly, Singh suggested to the Committee that their best interest lay with an independent India, not with British imperialism. Explicitly, Singh told the Committee that an independent India led by nationalists like himself would accommodate American interests with “heartier welcome and greater courtesy” than the British Imperialists ever could. Singh invited the Committee to consider the benefits America could realize from establishing an intimate political relationship with India and its nationalists by supporting their struggle for independence.

After explaining America’s interest in an independent India, convincing the Committee of America’s power to determine the British Empire’s future in India, and suggesting that Indians desired to align themselves with America, Singh posited the Luce-Celler Act as an opportunity for Congress to pick its side in India’s struggle for independence. “If this bill is passed,” Singh promised, “it is front-page news. I have seen some of the recent papers from India...they are watching this as a test case” for “the Yalta Conference and the San Francisco Conference, and the new world order.” Singh made it clear to the Committee that this bill was about much more than domestic immigration policy; it was America’s opportunity to declare its stance on decolonization, but in particular, on Indian independence.

Singh’s testimony clearly resonated with the Committee members. Singh delivered his testimony with such conviction and fluency that Congressman Noah Mason of the Committee, a conservative Republican Representative from Illinois,

¹⁵³ Ibid., 84.

remarked, “I think this witness, Mr. Chairman, has proven to be not only the most spectacular but the best witness we have had, not even excepting Mr. Celler himself...Personally, this witness has had more effect upon me, to incline me to be favorable to this bill, than all the other witnesses put together, including Mr. Celler.”¹⁵⁴ The “effect” of Singh’s testimony, however, was not to sell the idea of American economic imperialism but to tie it inextricably to the Indian independence movement.

In the House of Representatives’ debate, which commenced six months after the Committee hearings were concluded, Congress members recurrently considered the merit of this bill in light of the prospects for Indian independence. Critics of the bill, like Congressman Allen, suggested that it was economically moot, seeing as “India is nothing in the world but a province of Great Britain. It does not even have dominion status. Whatever India does has to be approved by Great Britain...The British will not give the Indians or Hindus what they want...If England would give the people of India some liberty, then we might be able to get some trade from them. In that case there would certainly be more argument for the passage of this bill.”¹⁵⁵ Congressman John Robsion, a progressive Republican Representative from Kentucky, agreed with Allen, asking, “How are you going to expect Great Britain to permit us to get anything much out of India,” considering that Great Britain had refused to “loosen up her sterling bloc” during the Bretton Woods Conference so that India could spend more of her dollar reserves on American trade.¹⁵⁶ Robsion and Allen both saw that the Luce-Celler Act was economically futile unless India became independent of the British Empire and its Sterling bloc.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵⁵ *Congressional Record* 91, 79th Cong., 1st Sess. (October 10, 1945): 9525.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 9522.

To these critics, though, supporters of the bill responded that India would become free, and that America should get in on good footing while it could. Congressman Everett Dirksen, a Democratic Representative from Illinois, who had also submitted a less comprehensive version of the Luce-Celler Act, offered his strong conviction in the inevitability of Indian independence in support of this bill,

India is going to have her freedom some day. There is a ferment there. It was described in two words to me by a man from this country who said, "If I were to describe India, I would say that it was in a state of suspended revolution." Freedom's ferment is at work. For years and years they have been reaching out for freedom, and it will not be denied any more than it will be denied in other sections of the world. So that day will come, and when it comes, the important controls, the blocked exchange, and some of the other restrictions upon trade will finally be lifted, and it will expand enormously the market for the goods that are manufactured and that are the products of the soil of this, our own Republic.¹⁵⁷

Dirksen was certain that "the day would come" for India's independence and believed the Luce-Celler Act would align the two Republics' commercial interests early on. While the bill never explicitly mentioned Indian independence, it clearly inspired Dirksen to sermonize on its inevitability.

Congressman Emanuel Celler, Democratic Representative from New York and co-sponsor of the bill, was less willing to tie the success of this bill to the likelihood of Indian independence, but even he could not avoid entangling the issues during debate:

Mr. Celler: England cannot keep its hands on those dollars much longer. She must let go her grasp. When she lets go that grasp and the dollars are restored to India, India will want to buy our goods....

Mr. Robsion: The gentleman says that England will have to take her hands off these dollars in the bank that are supposed to belong to the business people of India. That would suggest that she would first have to take her hands off the people of India, would it not?

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 9522.

Mr. Celler: That may be. One has naught to do with the other, as far as the bill is concerned.

Mr. Robsion: If she can keep her hands on the people, can she not keep her hands on the dollars?

Mr. Celler: That is quite beside the argument on this bill.¹⁵⁸

Try as he might have, Celler could not escape the trap Singh had set: to discuss the Luce-Celler Act was to speculate on Indian independence, and to support the Luce-Celler Act was to bet on Indian independence. In pushing the Luce-Celler Act through Congress, Singh not only won non-white Indians the right to immigrate to and become naturalized citizens of the United States, but also forced the U.S. Congress to take a position on Indian independence.

Singh had solicited Congress to consider more, however, than just the prospect of Indian independence—Singh had forced Congress to define “India” as a national entity distinct from the British Empire. Congressman Jenkins identified this existential question underlying the Luce-Celler Act during the House debate over the bill:

If you wanted to do the same thing by India as you have done by China, why did you not say [in the bill’s text] “persons of Indian descent”? Why did you not just add to the words “Chinese descent” the words “Indian persons and persons of Indian descent”? But you do not do that, because India is not well defined nationally or racially. India is a sprawling indefinable province...they have a salvation to work out. But England owes them that salvation, England owes it to them to point to them the way out. We do not owe them that obligation, and besides, we cannot pay them that obligation.¹⁵⁹

As Jenkins realized, the Luce-Celler Act forced Congress to define, at least implicitly, an “India” and recognize it as politically separate from the British Empire. Jenkins saw that the Luce-Celler Act would write Indian nationhood into the US Code even before the British had granted the territory dominion status. In particular, the Luce-

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 9531.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 9535.

Celler Act recognized Indian nationhood specifically as the British government denied it could exist: as a political state not divided by racial, religious or ethnic differences.

We can see how the bill came to recognize this particular postcolonial vision of India by observing how the early drafts of the bill changed over time. When the early bills first came before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization on March 7, 1945, the Luce, Dirksen and Celler Acts each addressed “[persons] who [are] as much as one-half of *the Eastern Hemisphere Indian race*.”¹⁶⁰ On the final day of the hearings, Celler submitted a revised version of the bill, numbered H.R. 2609. He revised and resubmitted the bill again as H.R. 3517 three months later on June 20, 1945. By the time Congress took final action on the revised bill, H.R. 3517, it addressed “persons of *races indigenous to India*.”¹⁶¹ The difference between the two bills is clear: while the first treats “Indians” as a race, the second treats “India” as a political territory that contains a diversity of races, or peoples, within it. The full text of H.R. 2609 is not available, so it is unclear exactly when Celler shifted the language of the bill from recognizing racial Indians to recognizing an Indian nation. It is clear, however, that the shift occurred after J.J. Singh had testified before the Committee. Indeed, the revised bill agreed well with Singh’s explanation of what constituted an “Indian” during the House Committee hearing.

When he testified before the House Immigration and Naturalization Committee, Singh submitted a memorandum to answer the question: “*Who are the nationals of India?*” In this memorandum, Singh first posited, “There are 390,000,000 nationals of India, most of whom anthropologically are of Caucasian race.” In attributing “most” Indian nationals to the Caucasian race, Singh implied

¹⁶⁰ House Committee, *Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians*, 2. Emphasis added.

¹⁶¹ “India Citizenship Bill Passes” *India To-day*, June 1946.

that while *some* Indians were non-Caucasian, they were still equally Indian nationals. Singh further explained that “In [the U.S.] the nationals of India are sometimes mistakenly called Hindus,” even though Hinduism is only one of the many religions of India. “There are almost 260,000,000 Hindus in India. The other 130,000,000 follow other religions, such as Moslems, 90,000,000, Christians, 7,000,000, Sikhs, 6,000,000 and Parsees, 120,000.”¹⁶² Singh wanted to make clear that “Indian” was not a religious or racial category—instead, it was a secular political category defined by its nationhood.

This inclusive, secular description of the “nationals of India” matched the Indian National Congress’s nationalist ideology. As historian Gary Hess points out, the India League of America represented the Indian National Congress in America, whereas the India Welfare League (IWL), another group of Indian nationalists located primarily on America’s pacific coast, represented the All-India Muslim League. Hess suggests that the division between these two political parties in India can be seen in the fact that their counterparts in the U.S. did not cooperate with each other’s efforts to win Indians in America the right to naturalize. The IWL had been soliciting Congressional support for Indian naturalization since 1939. Initially, the IWL had asked Congress to pass a bill recognizing Indians as racially white, but this bill failed to pass the House. In 1943, the IWL resumed its efforts and pushed forth a bill that would permit all Indians who had entered the United States prior to 1924 to become naturalized citizens.¹⁶³ This bill was considered in a subcommittee of the Senate’s Committee on Immigration on April 26, 1945, two weeks before the India League of America’s bills were considered before the House Committee. Neither J.J. Singh nor any representative from the India League of America appeared at this

¹⁶² House Committee, *Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians*, 94.

¹⁶³ Hess, “The ‘Hindu’ in America,” 71-74.

hearing to support the India Welfare League's bill.¹⁶⁴ Mubarek Ali Khan, President of the India Welfare League, who was already in D.C. to support the IWL's Indian naturalization bill, did appear to support the ILA's bills, but only to submit a general letter of support after curtly requesting the Committee to show Indians some "human justice." His letter briefly declared the IWL's support for the ILA's bill, but predominately described the merits of the IWL's bill and the urgency of granting Indians the right to naturalize.¹⁶⁵ Hess believed the lack of cooperation between these two Indian nationalist groups in America signaled "growing communal tensions" in India. Indeed, in his discussion of the Luce-Celler Act, J.J. Singh embedded a sharp repudiation of the All-India Muslim League's political legitimacy.

J.J. Singh's decision to describe the 90,000,000 Muslims as "nationals of India" legitimated the Indian National Congress's political claim to be the secular representative of all the peoples and religions of India against the All-India Muslim League's claim to be the sole representatives of Indian Muslims. The history of communalism in Indian politics is long and complex and contains both moments of unity and moments of acrimony.¹⁶⁶ From 1937 onwards, the politics of communalism became increasingly divisive on the national level, culminating in the formation of two states from the territory of British India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the secular Republic of India. Over this period, the Muslim League grew from being a significant but decidedly minority party, even among Muslim voters, to being the preeminent representative political body for Indian Muslims. While tensions between the All-India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress had always existed, the Muslim League only began seriously considering the idea of a separate

¹⁶⁴ Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration, *Hearing on S. 236, A Bill to Permit All People from India Residing in the United States to be Naturalized*, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945.

¹⁶⁵ House Committee, *Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians*, 146-148.

¹⁶⁶ In the context of Indian politics, "communal" and "communalism" refer to the division of political parties along ethnic, religious or caste lines. "Communal" politics, "communal" violence, etc., refer to ethnicity, religion, or caste based conflict.

Muslim state after its failure to form a government in any of the provinces, even those with large Muslim majorities, in the provincial elections of 1937. In October 1938, at the Sindh Provincial Muslim League conference, which was presided over by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, preeminent leader of the All-India Muslim League, the Muslim League resolved to demand the division of India.¹⁶⁷ Two years later, at the All-India Muslim League's session in Lahore in 1940, Jinnah declared the Muslim League to be "the only authoritative and representative political organisation of the Mussalmans of India," and suggested that "the Congress is a Hindu organisation and that it represents [nothing] but a solid body of Hindus," even as the Indian National Congress continued to profess a secular ideology.¹⁶⁸

After 1937, the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress began to pursue different, and often countervailing, political aims. Historian V.P.S. Raghuvanshi claims that, when the Indian National Congress called for complete Indian independence in the "Quit India" movement of 1942, Jinnah "repudiated in strong language the 'Quit India' declaration," because he wanted "the British to stay rather than hand India over to the Congress," offering "the slogan 'Divide and Quit'" as an indictment of the prospect of British departure.¹⁶⁹ From 1937 to 1947, the Muslim League sought to discredit the Indian National Congress's claim to represent Indian Muslims by denouncing the Indian National Congress as a Hindu nationalist party, while the Indian National Congress attempted to project itself as a secular party that could facilitate inclusive and equitably representative politics throughout the Indian provinces. Through defining the "Indian national" as a secular category in the Luce-Celler Act, Singh led the U.S. Congress into validating the Indian National Congress's political claim over the Muslim League's.

¹⁶⁷ Raghuvanshi, *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, 292.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 295.

J.J. Singh's decision to expand the Indian National Congress's representative capacity had a particular significance in the 1940s, as the British continued to withhold independence on the grounds that Indians were too religiously and ethnically divided for self-rule.¹⁷⁰ In 1939, Viceroy Linlithgow declared India a belligerent in WWII without consulting the central legislature. Upset that the Viceroy had circumvented the Provincial Legislatures, which Indian nationalists had just gained access to after the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act of 1935, the Indian Nationalist Congress resolved to quit the central legislature. Ultimately, the exigencies of war drove the Viceroy to negotiate with the Indian National Congress. Linlithgow sought to trade some promise of future freedom for Indian support of the present war effort, as the British Empire could not afford to fight a domestic battle while fighting for survival against German invasion. The Indian National Congress called for India's "absolute freedom, her right to form her own constitution and immediate transfer of responsibility," but Linlithgow insisted that "the seriousness of the communal situation," and "the disagreements of political parties" made independence presently impossible. After Germany rapidly progressed across Northern Europe and into France, however, the British government returned to the bargaining table.¹⁷¹

On August 8, 1940, Linlithgow attempted to cajole the Indian National Congress out of its non-cooperation with lukewarm reforms. Linlithgow promised

¹⁷⁰ While it is true that Indian nationalists did, at times, fracture into political parties along religious, ethnic, and caste lines, it is also true that creating political division by reifying ethnic, religious, and caste difference among Indian subjects had long been part of the British Empire's imperial project of "divide and rule." For histories of the British Empire's construction and use of ethnic, religious, and caste difference in maintaining authority over its Indian subjects, see Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1990), Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Delhi, 1990), Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, 1993). The Indian National Congress and Muslim League did have political differences, but the British Government of India also exacerbated those differences to stall negotiations. Regardless of whether communal political differences existed, it is at least clear that the British Government of India invariably highlighted these differences in justification of postponing the transfer of power, which explains why J.J. Singh would attempt to discredit such rhetoric.

¹⁷¹ Raghuvanshi, *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, 225.

Indians a large degree of autonomy in drafting a new constitution, but insisted that the drafting process would only begin after the war, and further affirmed that Great Britain “could not contemplate transfer of [its] present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life.” By “large and powerful elements in India’s national life,” the British government meant the Muslim League, which claimed to represent the entire Muslim minority and stood determinedly against the Indian National Congress.¹⁷²

When Sir Stafford Cripps failed to strike a deal in April 1942, he too blamed political communalism for preventing Indians from agreeing upon a plan for independence. The Cripps Mission failed for a variety of reasons, including the Muslim League’s unbending demand for a separate Muslim state and the Indian National Congress’s protest against the policy of non-accession (the right of each state not to join the union following independence), which it considered “a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity.” The Mission also failed, however, because of Britain’s unwillingness to set a timeline for independence. Regardless of the diversity of impediments that halted the Cripps Mission, Sir Stafford Cripps focused on only one in his “broadcast to the American people” on July 27. According to historian V.P.S. Raghuvanshi, Cripps had “dwelt on communalism in Indian politics” and characterized the Indian National Congress’s “demand as Hindu domination over Muslims and the Depressed Classes.” Unwilling to cede independence, the British government again pointed to Indian political communalism to legitimate their continued presence in India.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Ibid., 226.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 234-236.

As the British government recurrently returned to communalism to justify its continued presence in India, it is no surprise that Singh and the ILA were determined to challenge the notion that Indian nationalists could not achieve a unified and peaceful India without the British. We can see this determination clearly in the issues of *India To-day*, a monthly bulletin on the latest news concerning the Indian nationalist movement. The India League of America began publishing the bulletin in April of 1940 after J.J. Singh became President of the organization and assumed the large share of its management and stewardship.¹⁷⁴ If *India To-day* served as a mouthpiece for Singh's mission to "influence the influencers," then it is clear that Singh and the ILA were keen to refute the myth that Indian political communalism was an insurmountable challenge to Indian nationhood.

The entire first issue of *India To-day* contests the notion that Indian politics were irreconcilably religiously divided. The first article, "Latest News from India," opened with the sentence "Muslim heads India National Congress," and goes on to suggest that the new President was a "symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity."¹⁷⁵ In opening with this line, the ILA recognized that religious difference was a reality in India and an impediment to nationalism but suggested that the Indian National Congress was a party of "unity," not division. In another article in the first issue titled "British Position Criticised," the ILA highlighted the Viceroy's position that "consultation with representatives of the several communal parties" would be necessary before

¹⁷⁴ Both Shaplen's biography in *The New Yorker* and Shaffer's article on J.J. Singh and the ILA describe Singh as scrupulously involved in all of the ILA's endeavors during this period. Shaffer's article on Singh also suggests that he frequently wrote articles and op-eds for other newspapers, and we know from Gopal Singh's biography that Singh reported on the San Francisco Conference for the *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), the *Tribune* (Lahore), and the *Hindustan Standard* (Calcutta). Singh did often byline in *India To-day*, maybe once per two issues. Also, the first issue of *India To-day* was published soon after J.J. Singh took charge of and revolutionized the organization, so it seems likely that it was started under his directive. On this evidence, I assume Singh played some role, alongside editor Anup Singh, in determining the content of *India To-day*. Even if not, Shaplen's biography also describes Singh as obsessed with staying abreast of the latest news, so it is very likely that Singh at least read the issues as they came out. Accordingly, I read *India To-day* as representative of Singh's thoughts and concerns.

¹⁷⁵ "Latest News from India," *India To-day*, April 1940.

considering “dominion status” to criticize the British government for mythologizing communalism in order to maintain “the old policy to divide and rule.” The ILA concluded the article by firmly positing, “the Nationalists...recognize the existence of Hindu-Moslem differences but firmly believe that the differences are highly exaggerated and exploited by the British government to perpetuate the regime.”¹⁷⁶ From the beginning, it is clear that Singh’s mission to sell the idea of nationalism was equally a mission to dispel the myth of communalism.

Communalism remained constantly in the pages of *India To-day* over the next two years, resurging around negotiations over the transfer of governance from the British to Indians. As previously discussed, these negotiations invariably concluded with the British government’s conclusion that India was too communally divided to be ready for dominion status and self-government. In March 1942, two years before Singh, Clare Boothe Luce and Emanuel Celler would begin their efforts on the Luce-Celler Act, the ILA published a series of hopeful articles, appealing to Sir Stafford Cripps to refrain from falling back upon the myth of political communalism as an excuse for denying India dominion status. In March 1942, just as the Cripps Mission was starting, the ILA warned the United Nations to stop espousing its imperial prejudice that “Jinnah [is] the leader of all the Moslems, for on his terms there can be no settlement” and suggested that “those who continue to dub the Congress ‘Hindu,’ and persist in minimizing its importance have, like the Bourbons, learned nothing and forgotten nothing.”¹⁷⁷ So long as Britain insisted on searching for religious difference, *India To-day* argued, India would not see any political progress. Despite these warnings, the Cripps Mission did fail, and Cripps did resort to blaming communalism. *India To-day* took a skeptical perspective:

¹⁷⁶ “The Viceroy Speaks,” “British Position Criticised,” and “As We See It,” *India To-day*, April 1940.

¹⁷⁷ “As We See It,” *India To-day*, March 1942.

Cripps, both in India and abroad, has attributed the failure [of the mission] to the inability of the Indian parties to come together. The Nationalists have vehemently refuted that. They insist that the question of the relative strength of the respective parties in the proposed government *never arose*.¹⁷⁸

The “inability of the Indian parties to come together” refers to the division between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. Unwilling to grant India independence, the British government blamed the failure of the Cripps Mission on the religious immiscibility of the Indian political parties.

Singh himself sent an op-ed to the *Washington Post* later that month, which the *Post* published on April 26, 1942, to subtly suggest that communalism need not inhibit Indian political unity. “Let us forget Sir Stafford Cripps’ trip to India. Let us not apportion blames on this party or that party for the temporary failure of Sir Stafford’s mission,” Singh insisted. Instead, America should focus on “what can be done today” to compel Indians to unite in support of the war effort. Singh expressed confidence that one man, “Jawaharlal Nehru,” could “raise his hand and say, ‘brothers and sisters, Hindus and Moslems, this is our fight to preserve our liberty...dedicate your lives for the freedom of mother India.’” Singh was further convinced that, despite religious difference, “Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and others will put their chests out, raise their chins and blindly follow him.” In this op-ed, Singh described a pan-Indian front united under the leadership of Nehru, by then an internationally well-known symbol of the Indian National Congress. By juxtaposing this image of a religiously diverse India united under the leadership of Nehru and, by extension, the Indian National Congress, with the image of Cripps’ attempt to blame the failure of the mission on “this party or that party,” Singh argued that Indian

¹⁷⁸ “Cripps,” *India To-day*, July 1942. Emphasis added.

nationalists could unite India in spite of its religious diversity and despite British claims to the contrary.¹⁷⁹

Singh more explicitly addressed his frustration with the British government's insistence on the issue of communalism after he interviewed Prime Minister Clement Attlee on May 4, 1945. Attlee and the Labour party swept the United Kingdom's 1945 general elections. The Labour party had recently, and historically, campaigned as the anti-imperial progressive party. Naturally, the result of the 1945 election excited Indian nationalists. On May 4, 1945, while reporting on the San Francisco Conference, Singh had the opportunity to interview Clement Attlee. Entering with high hopes, Singh left the interview disappointed. He "was disappointed because the labor Prime Minister seemed to have no more liberal or progressive attitude towards India than any Conservative...Like many Englishmen," Singh felt, "he has talked himself into believing that the trouble really lies with the Indians and not with the British." Singh asked Attlee "if he and his party had given any thought to finding some way to settle the India problem. Attlee snapped back. 'I would like to ask you that question. Have the Indians decided among themselves what they want?'" In response, Singh "remarked that though [Attlee] is sincerely convinced the British could not part with power unless the Indians got together, the Indians were just as sincerely convinced that so long as the British keep power they will never get together." Attlee concluded the interview by ensuring Singh that he "hoped that something would be done soon," and that "[he is] always working for Indian freedom."¹⁸⁰ As Clement Attlee reiterated the party line, claiming the British could not leave India until Indian political communalism had been resolved, Singh

¹⁷⁹ Sirdar J.J. Singh, "Raising an Indian Guerilla Army," *The Washington Post*, Apr 26, 1942, B7.

¹⁸⁰ J.J. Singh, "Exclusive Interview with Attlee," *India To-day*, July 1945.

unequivocally retorted that Indian communal division would not resolve itself so long as Britain insisted on highlighting and exacerbating it.

Repeatedly throughout the 1940s, Singh and the India League of America used every opportunity they had to discredit the myth of Indian political communalism. They committed the first few issues of *India To-day* almost exclusively to this cause, and continued to use *India To-day* regularly to this end thereafter. In March 1945, Singh seized his opportunity to testify before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization to guide Congress into imagining India as a diverse but unified post-colonial nation. Two months later, Singh vehemently attacked the myth of Indian political communalism in his interview with Clement Attlee. Considering his consistent efforts to propagandize against the myth of that Indian politics were too religiously fraught for Britain to cede control of the government, should it be any surprise that Singh leveraged the Luce-Celler Act as an opportunity to force the international community, by way of the U.S. Congress, into recognizing India as a politically unified nation distinct from the British Empire?

It is clear that Singh had such an intention as early as March 1944, when he first brought the idea for the Luce-Celler Act to Clare Boothe Luce. In an official letter to Luce on March 6, 1944, Singh relayed, "Senator Langer of North Dakota has introduced Bill No. S 1595...to 'permit approximately 3,000 natives of India who entered the United States prior to July 1st, 1924, to become naturalized.'" Singh explained that such a bill was a step in the right direction, but still failed to "put India and citizens of India on the same status as the citizens of China." He then requested that Luce submit a more comprehensive immigration bill to the House of Representatives, a bill "which will have the effect of (a) To enable Indian immigrants to the number of seventy-five to enter the United States annually. (b) To admit persons of Indian origin to citizenship of the U.S.A." By describing this bill as

affecting “citizens of India,” Singh implied that “India” was a sovereign polity that could have citizens. A year later, on March 13, 1945, when the House Immigration and Naturalization Committee asked him to describe the political status of Indians, Singh asserted, “We are British subjects.” Singh then yielded to his colleague, Dr. Haridas T. Muzumdar, who further explained, “There is technically no such person as a British citizen. There is such a thing as a British subject, and the people of India are British subjects.”¹⁸¹ Singh’s decision to describe Indians as “citizens of India” when selling this bill to Luce despite the fact that he was aware that Indians were technically British subjects makes it clear that he saw that the Luce-Celler Act could achieve more than equal rights for Indians; he saw the Luce-Celler Act as a means to legitimizing Indian nationhood.

After investing so much energy in achieving immigration and naturalization rights for Indians, Singh returned to India to settle down into family life. While he did apply for and become a permanent resident of the United States, it seems he never became a citizen, as the records of the United States Social Security Office still did not have a Citizenship Code on file for him as late as his “date of death” in October 1976.¹⁸² As Gopal Singh asserts in the commemoration he delivered to J.J. Singh celebrating his seventieth birthday, J.J. Singh moved back to India after 1959 because he “wanted his sons to be brought up purely as Indian citizens and not with dual loyalties.”¹⁸³ While Clare Boothe Luce may have seen the Luce-Celler Act as an opportunity to coopt rising Indian nationals like J.J. Singh, it is clear that Singh saw the Luce-Celler Act as an opportunity to claim their independence.

¹⁸¹ House Committee, *Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians*, 87.

¹⁸² Social Security Administration, “Form SSA-2554 (9-87),” Executed for SSN: 061-12-4377 on March 10, 2014.

¹⁸³ Singh, “Messages of Greetings on the 70th Birthday of J.J. Singh,” 5.

Conclusion

The Luce-Celler Act of 1946 served “American interests” insofar as it diffused anti-white nationalism, recreated racial hierarchies to preserve white dominance and prevented India from leaving the Anglo-Saxon Empire’s sphere of influence. Through Clare Boothe Luce’s involvement in this bill, we can see that the America’s Cold War interests were not simply about promulgating its free market and democratic ideologies abroad. They were also about preventing non-white nationalisms from becoming anti-white nationalisms and grew out of a fear that decolonization would lead to an international race war, in which “white” nations would come under the attack of their rising non-white subjects. The Luce-Celler Act did not simply invite India to take America’s side in the Cold War, but also coopted elite non-white subjects’ support for a social and political system that privileged whiteness.

The racial interests of this bill were not only outward looking—the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 also served to repress anti-white nationalisms within the United States. The Luce-Celler Act of 1946 introduced an elite class of non-white citizens to the United States, therein discrediting non-white citizens’ claims to racial discrimination and inequity. By introducing through official channels these elite non-white citizens to American society, the Luce-Celler Act also guided non-white citizens away from anti-white nationalism and towards the performance of whiteness as a means to achieving racial equality. By creating a hierarchy through which non-white citizens could become racially equal to, but not assimilated into, whiteness, the Luce-Celler Act attempted to sublimate non-white nationalism and channel it into a system that reified the customs and institutions of whiteness as the legitimate sources of political power and authority.

In many ways, however, the Luce-Celler Act was not an American bill, but an Indian nationalist bill. Acting on his impulse and sense of entitlement as a cosmopolitan elite, J.J. Singh pulled the levers of the United States' Congress, enlisting it as a tool in the Indian National Congress's struggle for Indian independence. Through facilitating the formation of transnational intimacies, as he did with Clare Boothe Luce and Jawaharlal Nehru, and by cultivating his own intimate relationships with America's social and political elite, Singh first inspired a small but powerful cosmopolitan elite to become interested in non-white Indianness, then "influenced the influencers" to imagine the possibilities of Indian nationalism, and finally propelled Congress to write Indian independence into the U.S. legal code.

Singh not only moved the American state to intervene in the Indian nationalists' struggle for independence from the British Empire, but also deployed the U.S. Congress in the Indian National Congress's battle with the Muslim League for political legitimacy. Singh led President Truman to sign America's approval onto a bill that explicitly described the "Indian" national as racially diverse, which implied religious and caste diversity as well, given the ways early Indian immigrants had used caste and religion to derive their racial identities. The bill implicitly characterized India as a racially diverse and politically independent nation unified under a secular government, specifically at a time when the British Government of India was intransigently insisting that it could not transfer power to the Indian nationalists on the grounds that they were too religiously divided to achieve a peaceful and united government. The Luce-Celler Act implicitly recognized the Indian National Congress's vision of a diverse but unified India and therein undermined both Britain's and the Muslim League's claims to the contrary. In this sense, the Luce-Celler Act was not an "American" bill at all, but an "Indian

nationalist” bill designed and pushed by representatives of the Indian National Congress to serve the purpose Indian independence.

In focusing on the centrality of J.J. Singh to the Luce-Celler Act, my thesis has tried to demonstrate the ways in which class and global mobility complicate totalizing narratives of imperial domination. J.J. Singh did not supplicate before Congress to get this bill passed, and he did not craft it because he desired deeply to become an American citizen. Instead, he manipulated the political machinery of the United States to get international recognition for his notion of Indian nationhood, a notion he arrived at specifically through his upbringing as a colonial elite. His competitor was not only the British Government of India, but also the Muslim League of India, and even American internationalists who desired to impose their vision of the “American Creed” upon the world—this narrative is not simply one of the colonial subject’s resistance against the race-based oppression of imperialism, but also of competition among a racially diverse social elite. J.J. Singh was not an oppressed colonial seeking to resist Empire; he was a globally mobile elite who largely transcended the racism and oppressions of imperialism and desired to be recognized not as the colonial elite of an Empire but as the representative elite of an independent nation.

In this sense, the Luce-Celler Act was born of an exclusive, elite politics. Globally mobile cosmopolitan elite, like J.J. Singh, Clare Boothe Luce and Jawaharlal Nehru, were among the few individuals who had traveled the world and seen its reaches, and therefore believed themselves more capable of determining its future than their “provincial” counterparts. Through forging transnational intimacies, these elite worked out their competing and resonating visions for the world order to come. As cosmopolitan elite who transcended the political limitations of national identity, these elite felt entitled to circumvent bureaucracy and formality, instead directly

engaging state infrastructures like the United States Congress, and mass-culture defining institutions like *The New York Times*, and *Life* and *Time* magazines. The intimate, exclusives spaces of cosmopolitan elite politics were not the only vectors of power in the world, but it is clear that they did hold a significant influence over shaping individuals' imaginations and nations' legislations of the new world order.

The Luce-Celler Act was no aberration in the post-war moment. Beside the Bretton Woods treaties, the Marshall Aid Plan, and the formation of the United Nations, the Luce-Celler Act sits quite comfortably as a bill that *could only* have passed in the post-war moment. The Luce-Celler Act emerged as the geographic and political fissures created by war inspired fears of racial warfare, encouraged colonial nationalists to compete for international recognition, and invited globally ambitious individuals to reimagine the meaning of nationhood and empire.

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