

The William Phillips Mission- A Study in American Diplomacy

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Abstract:

My research on this topic has focused on the background to the Phillips mission and the tensions it revealed in the Anglo-American relationship during World War II. Through this research I found a gap in the existing historiography that has clouded our understanding of the reasons for the failure of the William Phillips mission, the effect of divisions within the Indian leadership on American anti-colonial policy and the Phillips Mission. Since this study involves the effect of Indian divisions upon Anglo-American diplomacy I will focus on analyzing the documentation surrounding the Phillips mission. What did Phillips think of the Indian leadership? What impact did this have on his recommendations to the President? Did the knowledge of those divisions influence American policy? Within those questions I will use the papers of William Phillips, and the State Department papers related to him, and reports of Indian nationalist leaders such as Jinnah and Gandhi. These works will allow me to analyze the divisions within the Indian nationalist movement and the effect they had on American policy.*

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The Indian nationalist movement is well known in America and throughout the world due to the great personalities that drove it and especially Gandhi. The focus of this thesis, however, will be to explore the effect the divisions within the Indian nationalist movement had on American anti-colonial policies regarding India and Anglo-American diplomacy throughout the 1942-1943 William Phillips' mission. While Anglo-American relations in World War II and the Indian nationalist movement are both widely studied topics, their intersections are rarely studied. The purpose of the thesis will not be an analysis of the Indian nationalist movement but an attempt to understand how its own actions and divisions affected Western policy rather than the other way around. This is an area I feel the current historiography has failed in; since it views the Indian nationalist movement as simply the Hindu dominated Indian National Congress led by Gandhi. That view ignores real divisions within the movement and clouds our view of Indian influence in the matter. While understanding the impact of larger issues on Anglo-American relations this thesis will attempt to focus on the importance of local factors in determining how policy is conducted in the field. This work will not provide all the answers but will answer some questions currently ignored.

India is an important and fascinating case study from which to examine American anti-colonial diplomacy during the World War II era. India was the richest and most important part of the British Empire which made it an important focus of anti-colonial struggle. The abundant wealth and rule through native elites led to the rise of one of the most influential English-educated elites in the colonial world. This allowed its members to speak for themselves and actively engage in promoting their interests in America through speaking tours. These English educated Indians also led one of the most publicized and famous colonial resistance movements. That prestige made the handling of their country the most important test of American sincerity in

pursuing its anti-colonial aims. The domination of English speakers allows crucial access to the minds of all three sides of the issue even for those who only speak English. Finally, India played a critical part in the Pacific theater of World War II where American attitudes dominated. This added a very concrete American interest in the Indian nationalist cause as American leaders feared unrest would harm the war effort. These phenomena combined to make India a vital area of American interest during the war and a useful test case for examining American anti-colonial policies and actions.

American diplomatic activity in India before the Phillips mission had been very limited for its importance. Since India was not a sovereign country, but only a part of the British Empire, there was no embassy. However, there were diplomatic officials in the country. The main diplomatic activity of the United States to this point had been a diplomatic technical mission to coordinate war production. Beginning in the spring of 1942 under assistant secretary of war Louis Johnson, it was not described as a political mission. Yet, Johnson argued that political solutions to India's problem were central to maximizing war production.¹ This raised a furor among the British and after a few months he was recalled. This left the mission in the less controversial hands of his assistant Henry Grady. That was the only substantial diplomatic mission, though America maintained interest in India from the beginning of the war.

The American interest in India is best summarized in Kenton Clymer's Quest for Freedom, which is currently the best general history discussing the impact of American diplomacy on the Indian independence movement.² Clymer holds that American interest in Indian independence or autonomy came from both idealistic and realistic reasons. Idealistically it came from a growing strand of American anti-colonialism growing out of the impact of

¹ Kenton J Clymer, *Quest for Freedom: The United States and India's Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)

² Ibid.

Wilsonian ideals and distrust of a European system that had created two world wars. It focused on India due to its exoticness and the efforts of Indian pressure groups. In the late 1930's the Indian nationalist movement started to send many public speakers into the United States and increased its propaganda elements. This effort escalated when war broke out and Indians saw a golden chance for freedom. According to Clymer, this propaganda worried the British enough that they retaliated against Indians who spoke against English interest in America and launched counter propaganda of their own. They were aided by American anger at Indian nationalists' refusal to cooperate without promises from England of autonomy for their government and quick independence. This anger was fueled by some seemingly pro-Japanese statements of Mahatma Gandhi. This was especially so after the Indian rejection of the Cripps proposal in 1942 when they were fighting a losing war. However, continued British intransigence through the war led to a change in American opinion toward favoring the Indian nationalists by the time of Phillips' mission.

According to Clymer, the realistic or concrete side of American support derived from two main worries: that British intransigence would ruin India's value as a base in the war against Japan, and that colonial possessions were a cause of the war and would hinder the post war settlement. The first worry was heavily predominant early in the war. With the lightning Japanese victories of 1941-1942 India rapidly became one of the front line bastions in the Allied war effort. It was also the last route available to supply the Nationalist Chinese who Roosevelt was desperate to hold in the alliance. Americans desperately wanted Britain to make a deal with the Indian national Congress. An example of the pressure this view placed on England is the failed Cripps mission of March 1942. Clymer contends that fear of American intervention because of concern for India's possible collapse in the war was a major factor leading to the

diplomatic mission of Sir Stafford Cripps to India. Cripps was selected because as a moderate who favored reform he would enhance the propaganda value of the mission. Cripps' failure was seen as the result of Indian stubbornness and American opinion swung to the British side. After 1942, the strategic situation changed in the Allies favor and this cause of support for Indian nationalism faded.

The second realistic reason for American support of anti-colonial policies was a belief that the colonial system had helped cause the war and would harm a peaceful settlement afterward. That led to Americans being very concerned that they not be seen as part of the European, and especially English, colonial system. The only way to get these nationalist movements on board with American post-war plans was to show them real progress. This was especially important in India due to fears of an anti-white feeling being infused in the nationalist movements of East Asia. India was one of the most prestigious nationalist movements in Asia and one of the few America could help directly, since it was not under Japanese occupation. Phillips reported to Washington, in June 1943, that simply accepted British policy in India would lead to serious repercussions, "as a result of despair and misery and anti-white sentiments of hundreds of millions of subject people."³ Those repercussions would not only be limited to India, but throughout the nationalist movements of Asia, and even our ally Nationalist China.⁴ However, the need to maintain the British alliance overrode this approach and though Roosevelt shared Phillips' views he did not support him. None of the causes of American support, realistic or idealistic, overrode the desire for smooth relations with Britain.

America was founded on ideals understood to be universal, and the founding fathers saw the new nation as a global symbol of progress and good government. The country was also

³ Phillips to Roosevelt, May 14, 1943, FRUS 1943, 4:220-2.

⁴ The inclusion of China as doubting American intentions might seem surprising, given our long and continued support for the Nationalists, but Chiang Kai Shek had written to the President urging intervention in India and failure would undoubtedly anger him at least to a degree.

founded with a remarkable degree of political consensus; though early politicians argued about the reach of government in matters of finance and policy, the fundamental structure of the system and most of its components never faced the same level of debate as other political systems at the time. Idealistic unity has contributed greatly to the remarkable stability of the American system since its foundation, but has hurt America's efforts in foreign policy. Viewing their country as the universal ideal and not having dealt with fundamental political divides, such as between communism and liberalism, Americans tend to view the problems of other countries in terms of their own history to an unusual degree. Such ideological blinders are not limited to America, but were present there to a larger degree. The progressive outlook of American elites following the New Deal led to them thinking of themselves as the framers of a new, more efficient world order, based on the one they had created at home.

The vision of a newer and better world created by America using the gains from World War II is fleshed out in the work of Elizabeth Borgwardt. Borgwardt's book, *A New Deal for the World*, examines the rise of the modern human rights ideology and institutions, but her arguments apply to American foreign policy during this period in general.⁵ She is arguing that the modern form and norms of human rights were mainly formed in the Second World War by the triumphant America. Those who created the norms were heavily influenced by their experiences in the New Deal. For these people, "it was primarily the lived experience of the Depression that enabled Americans to see the world anew, and to lay the groundwork for the projection of New Deal-style multilateral institutions on the world stage."⁶ In particular, the extension of economic rights to the traditional rights of freedom of speech and religion was due to the lessons of the New Deal. This focus led them to believe that America had to solve the

⁵ Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005)

⁶ Ibid, p. 6.

problems of the world itself. That motivation helped drive interventionist policy toward India, which was seen as hindering both the war effort and the international system.

The first puzzling choice in the William Phillips mission was the choice of Phillips himself. Firstly, the initial mention of Phillips, and his main contender, was in the *Washington Post* column of Ernst Lindley. These names were later taken up as the nominations of the President. William Phillips was born in 1878 to a wealthy family and was descended from famous abolitionist Wendell Phillips. Phillips' noble heritage gave him high connection and he was personally known to the President. He even signed his letters to the President "Dear Franklin". Despite this aristocratic background Phillips was a truly professional diplomat with much experience and prestige. He entered the State Department in 1907 and took part in the establishment of the Bureau of Far East Affairs, the first geographically based bureau in the State Department. This was a part of his drive to make the Foreign Service a professional service and not subject to amateur politicians. He was the first ambassador to Canada, twice undersecretary of state, and was ambassador to Italy from 1936-1941. This long and distinguished record gave him the prestige and experience to fulfill the mission, and his personal connections to Roosevelt gave him influence, but he had no experience in South Asian politics.

This lack of experience in South Asia, and long ties to European affairs led many to suspect he would be biased. Phillips' early experience in setting up the Far East bureau, and its Chinese consulate, did give him some experience in Asian politics, but that had been many years previous. Liberals in America immediately began to worry that Phillips would show bias towards Britain. In fact, Phillips was serving in the Office of Strategic Services branch in London when he received his new mission. Phillips himself said he got the job partly due to the British view that he "had been sympathetic with the British and had many contacts in England. I dare say they

felt that because of this I would take the British side of the problem.”⁷ However, Phillips was a dutiful diplomat, a man with an incisive and independent mind and the British would soon be even angrier about him than the Liberals had been.

Situation in India

The India that he would be observing was in a crisis complex enough to challenge even the most incisive of minds. A plethora of competing interests, organizations and power blocs contested for power. The three main contenders for power, in order of strength, were the British government, the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League. No final agreement on the shape of an independent India could exist unless these three groups all agreed to it. None of these groups was truly united either, containing a number of factions and interests. This section will give a basic background of the Indian National Movement and its main parties. It will give a very brief explanation of the divisions between Muslims and Hindus, the struggle between the Indian National Congress and the positions of each party. A brief explanation of some minor interests is necessary before that background can begin.

In addition to the main groups, a number of smaller factions existed on the periphery of Indian politics. One of the most influential was the Hindu Mahasabha (All-Indian Hindu Assembly) party led by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. This was a radical group of Hindu nationalists who argued for an India dominated by the Hindu majority. Their open rhetoric of Hindu domination was used widely by the Muslim League for propaganda purposes.⁸ Another rogue element was former Indian National Congress President Subhas Chandra Bose, who had

⁷ “The Reminiscences of William Phillips,” Columbia University Oral History Project, July 1951, pp. 138-39.

⁸ Allen Hayes Merriam, *Gandhi Vs Jinnah: The Debate Over the Partition of India* (Columbia, Mo: South Asia Books, 1980), p. 75

broken from the party and taken up a more militant position. Bose wrote a secret referendum from Berlin in April 1941 titled, “Plan for Cooperation between the Axis Powers and India.”⁹ The referendum advocated a pact with Japan to gain Indian independence and Bose would later lead a pro-Japanese army of former Indian prisoners of war during the Second World War called the Indian National Army. However, these parties never gained real influence and their main role was in their effect on the main three parties.¹⁰

Hindu-Muslim conflict in India goes all the way back to the seventh century C.E. and the Muslim invasion of India. It was far bitterer than the gap between Hinduism and other minorities, such as Sikhs. This was due partly to the size of the Muslim minority. There were 94,446,544 Muslims in the 1941 census of India, which was 24.3 percent of the population.¹¹ The problem was exacerbated by the fact that over sixty million of those Muslims lived in the provinces which now make up Pakistan and Bangladesh.¹² This concentration was the key factor in allowing the idea of Pakistan to be practicable. Secondly, the religions were very different in form. Islam is a monotheistic, exclusive, democratic, and dogmatic religion founded on a strong community.¹³ Hinduism was a far more absorptive, non-dogmatic, and caste based system. The rigid caste system that prohibited free social intercourse with other social groups had also worked to keep Hindu and Muslim communities quite separate. Jinnah underlined this separation in a 1940 speech. He stated that, “the Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literature. They neither intermarry, nor interdine and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and

⁹ Subhas Chandra Bose and Netaji Research Bureau, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942* (Bombay: Asia Pub. House, 1964), p. 419.

¹⁰ In fact, of the two leaders only Savarkar was mentioned in the documents compiled in Foreign Relations of the United States for 1942 and 1943 concerning India, and only once, by Phillips.

¹¹ Merriam, *Gandhi Vs Jinnah*, p. 18

¹² Ibid. the exact number is 61,770, 837.

¹³ Democracy refers to the basic assumption of equality in Islam compared to the Caste system of Hinduism.

conceptions.”¹⁴ As we will see later, Jinnah had a vested interest in promoting Hindu-Muslim conflict, but the rapid growth of the Muslim League suggests that his message was resonating with his constituents. All these differences worked to further the divisions between the two groups; divisions exacerbated by political power struggles.

The political struggle between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress really began in 1937. At that time Jinnah was not a proponent of a separate state and the Muslim League only had a little over one thousand members. The spark was the first major opportunity for Indian parties to have real power in government, the 1937 provincial elections. These elections were open and offered real power at the local level. They had been granted in the 1935 Government of India Act.¹⁵ Significantly, the vote was done by separate religious communities, a practice dating back to 1909. Religion based voting highlighted and exacerbated religious tensions by literally making political power based on religion. The Indian National Congress won overwhelming victories, while the Muslim League failed to gain even five percent of the Muslim vote.¹⁶ Crucially, Congress leaders such as Nehru failed to offer cabinet positions to the Muslim parties who lacked cohesion and power. They viewed themselves and the British as the only powers. The fears of Muslim leaders like Jinnah that they would be lost in the Hindu dominated Congress and powerless led to the birth of the Muslim League as a major power.

The Muslim league was created to give Muslim’s power on the national stage. Jinnah angrily told Nehru in 1937, “There is a third party... the Muslims.”¹⁷ He should have said that there is a third interest; the Muslim League was reborn to make that interest a true party. From that point on Jinnah tried greatly to create a cohesive Muslim political bloc that would safeguard

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 68.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 56.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ S. K Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi; Their Role in India's Quest for Freedom* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966) p 163.

the minority.¹⁸ To do that he turned to propaganda highlighting the irreconcilable differences between Hindus and Muslims to foster community among the Muslim state. That was what the Lahore speech from before was attempting to do. The second main element of League strategy was to cooperate with the British in order to gain their support. By standing in favor of the war, providing soldiers, and staying out of the Quit India movement they avoided British ire and the mass arrests and disturbances which weakened the Congress. They would not join the Congress drive for independence, because the Congress' "conception of 'Independent India' is basically different from ours. What we want is the independence of Hindus and Muslims and others. Mr. Gandhi by independence means Congress Raj."¹⁹ With this position the Muslim League was not willing to begin the talks necessary to begin peace without strong pressure on all sides and guaranteed incentives.

The position of the Indian National Congress was a much stronger one than that of the Muslim League. It dated back to 1885 and had included most of the great leaders of the Indian Nationalist movement, including Gandhi, Nehru and, for a while, Jinnah. Its organization was much larger, better organized, and could make a much better claim to be able to unify India. It had gained overwhelming victory in the 1937 elections and believed that it had given them the power to stand up to England. The real crisis in their relationship with England came with the war. While the nationalists initially supported the Allies and most never had Axis sympathies, the unilateral decision of the viceroy to declare India at war infuriated them. This led to a September 1939 proclamation of sympathy with the Allies, but a refusal to get involved with the war effort until a clear statement of British support for Indian independence.²⁰ This anti-British

¹⁸ For a more detailed explanation of this view see Merriam, *Gandhi Vs Jinnah*.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 80.

²⁰ Clymer, *Quest for Freedom* p. 15.

stance helped bring Gandhi back into the leadership of the Congress.²¹ This stance was continued in the August 1940, offer of the Viceroy to create advisory councils, and a post-war constitution for an India still in the Commonwealth. Congress refusal here led to mass arrests of more than 20,000 people beginning in October 1941. The greatest chance at British led reform was the spring 1942 Cripps mission. Led by noted liberal Sir Stafford Cripps, the mission failed due to its limited reforms. This convinced the Congress and Gandhi the British would never willingly compromise and they started the Quit India movement. This led to massive demonstrations beginning in August 1942 against British presence in India, even to aid in defense. Soon over 60,000 nationalists, including Gandhi, were arrested. They would remain in jail throughout Phillips' mission. He would encounter a Congress deprived of its main leaders; he never talked to Gandhi or Nehru, and in total opposition.

One of the most interesting documents that influenced Phillips' own views when he arrived was a memorandum on the Indian situation written by John Davies. Davies was a foreign service officer attached to the staff of General Stillwell the commander of American forces in India and China. Davies spent the fall of 1942 touring India and interviewing influential Indians, Britons and State Department officials. His memorandum is useful not only because of its influence on Phillips, who recommended it when he forwarded it to the Department, but for its cogent summary of the situation in India. Davies' descriptions of the two main parties are interesting, but his proposed solutions are even more useful. Davies is also more forthcoming in some of his conclusions and particularly Combined together these factors make the document one of the most important documents of the period.

²¹ Gandhi always remained somewhat separate from the Congress in order to increase his ability to maneuver politically.

Davies' memorandum adds complexity to the view of the leadership of the Indian National Congress. He first discusses the more powerful conservative wing of the Congress. According to Davies the conservative wing "is composed of capitalists like the Sirla brothers and Walchand Hirachand, middle class Hindu businessmen, many Hindu employees of the government, professional men, some students and Mr. Rajagopalachari."²² While the leadership generally wants to compromise with the Muslim League, the rank and file is more hard line. However, Davies argues that the wing would compromise if confronted with, "genuine assurances of a national Government through a formula allowing considerable Muslim autonomy."²³ Further, he holds that this wing is the more dispirited section of the Congress party due to its greater faith in Constitutionalism and compromise. Such demoralization leads this group to be more fervent in its search for American, Russian and Chinese support, due to a belief that the British will only compromise when they are forced to do so. Failure by the Americans and others to combat the British could have dire consequences. The leaders of this group "are beginning to wonder if they may not have to face a racial fight for liberation from white domination."²⁴ This accounts for their more ambivalent view toward the threat of Japanese invasion. Davies then moves on to discuss the left wing of the Congress party.

Davies' description of the left, or radical, wing of the Congress party is less sympathetic, but far less than it would have been just a few years later. This wing is "composed principally of students, intelligentsia, peasants, workers, and some Government employees. Only Nehru among the Congress High Command would be classified as a leftist."²⁵ It also consisted of some member of the Communist Party of India. It stands for "immediate independence, a strong

²² Phillips to Hull, John Davies, The Indian Problem Fall and Winter 1943, February 9, 1943 New Delhi Post Records, box 1426 file 800- Political (1943) Confidential NRC hereafter referred to as Davies memorandum

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

National Government, socialism... and concessions... to Jinnah's claim's to Muslim autonomy."²⁶ Many of their left wing turned to direct action and even violence using crude weapons. On the whole they remained less affected by the failure of the Cripps proposal and less interested and reliant on foreign intervention. It shares with the right wing skepticism about American willingness to overcome British resistance. He does note, however, that due to its more Marxist outlook, this wing is less inclined to think in terms of a racial struggle than the right wing.

The description of the Muslim League is not split into parts, due to its more unified structure. He begins his discussion of the League by noting that it is the party of a more backward, poorer community. This leaves it a sense of oppression not only from the British, but for the Hindus. In fact, the latter is considered more dangerous and oppressive than the former. This is hardly surprising considering that, "the antagonism towards the Hindus is of longer standing and is deeply rooted in religious, economic, and social hostilities."²⁷ Davies is careful to note the genuine nature of the fears of the Muslim League. Jinnah is the next topic and he is described as a skillful and opportunistic politician of authoritarian bent. According to Davies "he has skillfully exploited the apprehensions of his community and has built up the Muslim League as a disciplined organization obedient to his will."²⁸ Pakistan is dismissed as impractical due to the separation of the two main areas of Muslim majorities, modern Pakistan and Bangladesh, and their relative poverty. Indeed, the very idea is proposed as a mere bargaining tool. Davies ends the segment by stating clearly that the League is genuinely anti-British and that cooperation is possible. A main reason for this is the view that a recent speech by the Viceroy had detailed a

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

less conciliatory attitude toward the League by the British. This segment seems less positive than the one on the Congress.

These descriptions of the major parties involved in the dispute reveal a number of basic American conceptions about the Indian Nationalist movement. First is the overall positive picture portrayed of the movement itself. While Jinnah is once referred to as a *fuehrer* there is little condemnation of the movements themselves.²⁹ The very authoritarianism that led to that comment is seen as a natural reaction to the weak League position. Even the violence practiced by some of the more nationalist members is not heavily condemned. The memorandum does make it clear the parties involved are nationalists, but does not condemn the movement itself.³⁰ Secondly, Davies is aware of the divisions within the Indian Nationalist movement and where the power lies. He ascribes more power to the radical Hindu Mahasabha party and the Depressed classes than many might, but is well aware of the main divisions. Thirdly, is his belief that the differences of the factions are readily resolvable. The cry for Pakistan, and the stance of the Hindu Mahasabha, are mainly, if not solely, bargaining tools, and not fixed positions. By stating that the Hindus and Muslims differ on economic, social and religious grounds he is backing the more radical outlook outlined by Jinnah at Lahore. Finally, there is no sense in the memorandum of progress and possibility in the movement. He displays fears of future revolution, but does not portray the nationalists as active participants.

The third largest party in India was the radical Hindu Mahasabha party. The Hindu Mahasabha is a radical Hindu organization that wants to establish a Hindu state or *raj*. Davies compares it to the League, "As the League represents a reaction to a Muslim fear of Hindu domination, so the Hindu Mahasabha represents a Hindu reaction to the self-assertion of the

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid* He states that the violence is blamed by some conservative nationalists as anarchism. In fact, he argues it is nationalist activism and the lack of coordination is responsible for the random nature of the attacks not anarchist goals.

Muslim community.”³¹ The most interesting part of the discussion of this party is the debate found within its leadership. While its president V. D. Savarkar was stubborn, Vice President Sysma Prasad Mookerjee, was willing to compromise even on “the issue of Muslim self-determination.”³² This was due to the power gained by the Muslim league following the mass arrests of Congress leaders in fall 1942. After Viceroy Linlithgow’s December speech which indicated his lack of support for the League, the party switched position. However, even after the speech Mookerjee told Davies that allowed a large degree of Muslim self-determination, but not nation autonomy. Davies ends the report by displaying a concern that the radical Hindu rhetoric of Savarkar could easily turn into anti-white radicalism in the future. This analysis of the Mahasabha party argues for a compromise in two ways. The willingness of the Mahasabha party to compromise when in a weak position adds credibility to it agreeing to a brokered deal. Secondly, the possibility of radical Hindu nationalism being turned into radical populism argues for the need to end the crisis.

The final national party of interest is the Depressed Classes party led by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. American views of India were heavily influenced by the negative portrayals of people found in popular works such as Katherine Mayo’s immensely popular book, *Mother India*. Published in 1927 the book touched on the more lurid aspects of Hinduism such as child marriage and portrayed a very negative view of Hinduism. Davies here portrays a party led by an educated and talented man who is rabidly anti-Congress. He is careful to note that Ambedkar’s criticisms of Hinduism and the inactivity or even hostility of elements of the Congress party are backed up by American missionaries.³³ Ambedkar wanted a post-war independence with a carefully crafted constitution to protect minority rights. One of the few notes Phillips adds in his

³¹ ibid

³² ibid

³³ ibid

introduction to the memorandum, which he forwarded to the Department, is one stating that the influence of Ambedkar is exaggerated. He also states that Davies uses the most extreme interpretation of untouchables in India and thus exaggerates the problem slightly. Still the description is an important reminder of American fears over Hindu religiosity and concerns over the unity of India.

The main piece of interest in the Davies piece is not his portrayal of the nationalist parties, but his explanations for the situation in India and his proposed solutions. Davies feared a grave risk of America, “facing in our time chaos in India, which in turn may provide fuel for another great war.”³⁴ Viewing imperialism as a cause of war marks Davies as part of the general anti-colonial trend present in America at the time.³⁵ Two main sources caused this risk, “(1) the urge toward revolution in India combined with (2) the decay of colonial imperialism throughout the world.”³⁶ This risk was a definite threat and America and the United Nations, “could not much longer afford to temporize.”³⁷ What time America had was due to the weakness and divisions among the Indians.

Davies feels that, from an American view, the Indians should already be in revolt. He provides three reasons why India is not in the revolution. The first is quite simply the factionalism dividing the movement. A divided revolution is far less effective and can lead to fears of other sides staying loyal. Secondly, there is what he considers the weak nature of the Hindu character and in particular Gandhi. Gandhi’s passive program comes from an “over-realistic acceptance... of the fatalism and negativism of the Hindu character.”³⁸ He contrasts this

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ reference to Louis, William, *Imperialism at bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford university Press, 1978)

³⁶ Davies memorandum

ibid

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ *ibid*

view with the “more virile nature of the Muslims.”³⁹ This leads to a lack of ability to lead the aggressive campaign necessary to overthrow British rule. The final reason is simply the far greater effectiveness of military and police repression than was found in the American Revolution. This analysis is critical in understanding American complacency during the Phillips era.

The evidence is quite clear that Roosevelt wanted an independent India and also that he was not willing to cause a major rupture in the Anglo-American alliance in order to gain that.⁴⁰ His most likely plan was to wait until the post-war peace and use American leverage over the British to force decolonization. This view of the Indian opposition as divided, weak and demoralized was critical in destroying the sense of urgency required to force such a bold policy through. Davies is very clear in his view that the problem in India is a ticking time bomb. The lack of an active and violent opposition is one of the key areas in allowing the question to be avoided until the peace. The other is the limited nature of the color problem as he calls it.

Davies is clear on the problem of racial awareness becoming a source of contention and possible conflict. While he feels that race would never be a primary cause of war but, “insofar as color is identified with a condition of economic and political servitude, it can be a powerful emotional factor contributing to a future war.”⁴¹ In regards to India he feels it is not yet a problem, but that it is a growing force for several reasons. First was the tacit American support for British imperialism due to inaction. Second is the rise of Japanese propaganda and military success in the war. This not only awakens dreams of pan-Asian nationalism but gravely weakens the awe in which Europeans are held. The final factor is the word travelling from other dominated peoples. However, America’s colonial record in the Philippines and support for the

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ For a more detailed description of this fact see Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*

⁴¹ Davies memorandum
ibid

Chinese nationalists would help offset that. In the end, however, the Indians main concern was their own situation and to avoid a racial struggle American action would be needed. This was the primary reason for swift action, and it was one that could afford to be delayed into the post-war settlement.

Davies was not alone in his analysis of the problem of a growing racial divide is not confined to Davies. William Phillips himself grew deeply concerned with the idea during his mission. He wrote to President Roosevelt that,

India and China and Burma have a common meeting ground in their desire for freedom from foreign domination. In spite all we read in the press about the magnificence of the Chinese military effort... the actual picture as viewed from here is distressing and disturbing. Chinese apathy and lack of leadership and, moreover, Chinese dislike of the British, meet a wholly responsive chord in India, where, as I have said, there is little evidence of war effort and much evidence of anti-British sentiment . Color Consciousness is also appearing more and more and under present conditions is bound to develop. We have, therefore, a vast bloc of Oriental peoples who have many things in common, including a growing dislike and distrust of the Occidental.⁴²

Full agreement with Davies' views on the potential dangers of a colored bloc helping to bring about another World War. Whether they actually envisioned the main power being a massive Indo-Sino-Burma bloc or that these countries would play the role of Japan is immaterial the threat was seen as real. At the very least the continuance of colonialism in the Far East could lead to a diversion of resources from Europe aiding the rise of a resurgent Germany or some other unforeseen threat, and increasing the risk of war. Phillips' agreement with Davies on the danger of an Indian revolution at some point in the near future can be seen in his next missive.

If we do nothing and merely accept the British point of view that conditions in India are none of our business then we must be prepared for various serious consequences in the internal situation in India which may develop as a result of despair and misery and anti-white sentiments of hundreds of millions of subject peoples.⁴³

⁴² Phillips to Roosevelt, April 19, 1943 FRUS 1943 4: 219

⁴³ Phillips to Roosevelt, May 14, FRUS 1943 4:222

Phillips raised this issue due mainly to concern with the apathetic attitude toward the war by the Indian people. He dismisses the immediate threat of revolution quite clearly in a February missive, “the immediate problem has two sides; (1) that of so-called [white?] prestige in India, and (2) the safeguarding of our own position in India as a military base against Japan, as well as our future relations with all coloured races.”⁴⁴ The order of importance that he displays in this missive clearly projects no immediate fear of violent revolution. He references prominent Indian nationalist Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari’s view that “there would be a recurrence of disturbances throughout the country which the Government, however, would be able to put down by force.”⁴⁵ It also gives precedence to issues of prestige and the war effort, over racial concerns. Racial tension is not only last on the list; it is also not even a separate item. This is due heavily to the focus on immediate promises. This missive comes at time when fears over Gandhi’s death gave the greatest crisis atmosphere in the entire Phillips mission. A massive explosion of anti-British sentiment was expected as well as mass violence. Yet the only fear is over whether the already weak Indian support for the war would increase. It also illustrates an important distinction about India in the American diplomatic core in this time. However, an interesting element of the American focus on the war effort should be examined before that distinction is discussed.

India was a major factor in the Pacific theater where America would be required to do almost all the fighting. The divided nature of the Indians is crucial here in the organization of the Indian army. Phillips notes that “the present Indian Army is purely mercenary and only that part of it which is drawn from the martial races has been tried in actual warfare.”⁴⁶ He does not

⁴⁴ Phillips to Hull, February 19, 1943 FRUS 1943 4:197 The immediate problem is the worry that Gandhi would die during a fast to capacity and thus throw India into turmoil.

⁴⁵ *ibid* the use of recurrence is an allusion to the widespread unrest found in the Quit India movement in August 1942.

⁴⁶ Phillips to Roosevelt, May 14, FRUS 1943 4:221

specifically note which races are martial ones, though they undoubtedly include the Sikhs and probably the Muslims.⁴⁷ The view that the Muslims are martial is further by a statement Jinnah made to Phillips in a conversation. Phillips remarked that Jinnah stated that “Muslim Armed Forces are doing their duty.”⁴⁸ Jinnah had just stated that he viewed the war as India’s war and this is obviously an attempt to gain support by showing support for the war. A key point that is found here is a conception of the Hindu majority of Indians as naturally unmartial. Davies’ memorandum made his support of this view explicit in his discussion of the reasons why India is not currently in revolt. Phillips first describes Gandhi as “the god whom people worship and, I imagine, a wholly impractical god.”⁴⁹ Davies’ makes clear his distaste for Gandhi and his opinion that his death, and the subsequent rise to leadership of Nehru, would improve matters. Viewing the Hindu people as religious and spiritual people, who are naturally unmartial, they viewed the problem as one of prestige and post-war stability. These are important considerations, but ones which are low in priority during an actual war. Only the element of prestige has immediate priority.

The critical distinction being made here by Phillips is between “white” prestige and racial relations. The white prestige problem is usually reduced to American prestige. Phillips is deeply concerned about America being seen as separate from British imperialism. This view was shared by the department. In a statement made to be released upon Gandhi’s feared death repeated reference is made to the lack of involvement of American forces in internal matters. It states simply, “the purpose of the American forces in India is to persecute the war of the United Nations against the Axis Powers... the primary aim of the Government of the United States is to

⁴⁷ The Muslims are likely included because they were seen as manly and one third of the army is seen as martial. Such a large percentage is probably beyond the means of the small minorities such as Sikhs.

⁴⁸ Phillips to Hull, April 7, 1943, FRUS 1943 4:214 Phillips does not comment on the remark which implies he thought it accurate.

⁴⁹ Phillips to Roosevelt, January 22, 1943 FRUS 1943 4:182

aid China.”⁵⁰ Two critical objectives are clearly present in that statement. First is a clear desire to avoid association with the British government or white rule in India at all. America is not there to establish its interests or get involved in aiding the British. Secondly, the key need to show American support for the colored. The best evidence America had at this time of its anti-imperialist credentials was its support for the Chinese Nationalists. It is hardly surprising that they made sure to mention them immediately. The prestige of America and its idealistic goals would be critical in establishing a fair and lasting peace.

William Phillips had a slightly different and more hopeful view than Davies on the state of the fictionalization of the Indian nationalist movement. His introduction to the Davies’ memorandum itself is very useful in this regard. He holds that Davies statement that “‘communal antipathies have grown and are growing is true only in the sense that the principal communal parties have drawn in their lines more closely, chiefly on the issue of Pakistan.”⁵¹ The main evidence he gives is the lack of communal violence during and following the mass disturbances of the Quit India movement. He gives three reasons for this quiet. First is the fact that Gandhi asked for his followers not to attack Muslims who did not participate. Second the Muslims who are not part of the Congress part are also anti-British. Thirdly the goal of national independence has broad support among all Indian groups. Another difference is an emphasis on the importance of a few major leaders.

Phillips asserted in a communiqué that the fate of India lay in the hands of four men. The men are British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, Mahatma Gandhi and Mohamed Ali Jinnah.⁵² Obviously this puts Phillips in the older Great Man theory of history where the actions of the leaders of movements drive historical change. He describes their

⁵⁰ Hull to Phillips, February 25, 1943, FRUS 1943 4:204

⁵¹ Davies memorandum

⁵² see Phillips to Roosevelt, January 22, 1943 FRUS 1943 4:182

relationship this way, “Churchill dominates the Viceroy, the Viceroy dominates the Government of India, Gandhi controls the Congress and Jinnah the great mass of the Indian Muslims.”⁵³ He applies an equal amount of British and Indian responsibility in the system. This is unusual for the European dominated State Department of which Phillips was a senior member. Phillips spends the section on England talking about different factions and not the main leaders. In England officials tended to favor compromise and dominion status, while in India they are hard-line conservatives. Phillips is convinced that Gandhi would compromise if he believed that British promises were credible. Later Phillips noted that Gandhi’s fast led him to have the influence of a semi-divine martyr and gained him support amongst even former opponents.⁵⁴ He goes on to say that the level of influence of Gandhi is hard for Anglo-Saxons to understand and that, “there could be nothing like it in any other country but India.”⁵⁵ Jinnah is noted as a bitter political enemy to Gandhi. The Muslim league is described as growing in power and a formidable opposition. The dispatch demonstrates a decent understanding of the state of the nationalist movement.

The most detailed and open of Phillips’ statements of his views on the Indian nationalist parties was in a January 26, 1943 dispatch to Washington detailing recent developments and current party positions.

One element of the American view of the Indian nationalist which must be emphasized here is the belief that its main divisions were caused by a deliberate British policy of divide and conquer. Davies states this explicitly that the British are following classic imperialist doctrine in India from which “there follows naturally a policy of divide and rule.”⁵⁶ Phillips stated that “reluctantly I am coming to the conclusion that the Viceroy, presumably responsive to Churchill,

⁵³ *ibid* FRUS 1943 4:183

⁵⁴ Phillips to Roosevelt, February 23, 1943, FRUS 1943 4:201-202

⁵⁵ *ibid* FRUS 1943 4:202

⁵⁶ Davies memorandum

is not in sympathy with any change in Britain's relationship to India."⁵⁷ Since Phillips viewed the necessity of fresh British offers to give the nationalists something to compromise on as the critical factor in creating a settlement this puts the fault squarely on them. Both come from an anti-colonialist strand in American thought prevalent in the Roosevelt era.⁵⁸ A belief that imperialism led to war was part of it, as was traditional American anti-imperialism dating back to 1776. Davies gives a scathing view of the British as greedy, conservative and probably incompetent in his memorandum.⁵⁹ Phillips describes the stubborn Viceroy as a "'chip off the old block' that Americans knew something about in 1772."⁶⁰ The model for this American anti-colonialism was America's treatment of the Philippines.

This model is made quite explicit in the Davies memorandum. He argues that "had the British raj any serious intention of transferring power to the Indians, there would be evidence, as there was in the Philippines, of systematic training and preparation for the assumption of native self-rule."⁶¹ Phillips discussed the issue this way, "We cannot suppose that the British Government can or will transfer power to India by the scratch of a pen at the conclusion of the peace conference unless there is an Indian Government fit to receive it."⁶² The problem at the moment therefore is to get the Indian leaders to begin the ugly process of compromise and discussion necessary to create the future government. The factional division among the Indian nationalists greatly increases the importance of this step since they greatly complicate the process. Long-term de-colonization was a major argument for a quick settlement to begin the process, but a lengthy de-colonization period would allow time to be made up.

⁵⁷ Phillips to Hull, February 10, 1943 FRUS 1943 4:187

⁵⁸ For a fuller description see Louis, William, *Imperialism at bay*

⁵⁹ Davies memorandum

⁶⁰ Phillips to Roosevelt, February 23, 1943, FRUS 1943 4:202

⁶¹ Davies memorandum Davies goes further saying how the Japanese in Manchuria were envious at the adroitness of British divide and rule tactics. That is hardly a statement the British would appreciate.

⁶² Phillips to Roosevelt, March 3, 1943 FRUS 1943 4:206

While none of the American commentators doubted the genuine nature of the divisions between the Indian factors they all agreed that the factions would be willing to compromise. Davies argues that “with an assurance of self-government, the present unrealistic and unhealthy atmosphere will be largely dispelled and a working agreement can probably be reached.”⁶³ Phillips is more circumspect but notes that the leaders themselves say they were willing to compromise if the British opened the door. This acknowledgement of the willingness of the Indians to at least attempt to compromise added great weight to the drive for action.

Four blueprints for the solution of the crisis in India will now be examined in order to determine how the diplomats planned to overcome the communal problem. The first is the vaguest and is the recommendations found in the Davies memorandum. Davies kept the formula vague because the final positions of the various factions were uncertain and the post-war conditions were unknown. Nevertheless he had some various formulae that would determine the general shape of the resulting compromise. While describing the impediments to constructing a solution he notes the alien nature of the Indian political scene. Of particular importance is the degree of difference between factions which is not “the tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum difference between the Democrats and the Republicans.”⁶⁴ The issues are many, “national freedom is a political issue. Religion is a political issue. So is Hindu racialism, Muslim separatism, and the untouchable’s social struggle. And so is democracy, communism, do-nothingism, and princely absolutism.”⁶⁵ Due to these profound differences the issue can not be resolved using American methods and the moral approach is bankrupt. Dominion status is raised and dismissed as impractical as is the idea of Pakistan. Power can not simply be transferred to the strongest faction

⁶³ Davies memorandum

⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁶⁵ *ibid*

either, since that would be anti-democratic and would likely lead to civil strife. The actual solution will require a far less rigid and national approach.

Davies recommends an approach where international organizations watch over an initially weak coalition central government, while the precise power sharing arrangements are worked out. This more limited approach is necessary because, “a compromise among the various Indian factions seems to be the least unsatisfactory solution.”⁶⁶ The provincial borders would be withdrawn, the states absorbed into the state through the ruler may stay in power, and the grievances of the Depressed classes addressed. In order to provide for stability and continuity the central executive would have longer terms than in the west. The army would be reduced to the level of a central police force to prevent its use in communal struggles. A paragraph follows which describes the reasons why this gradual approach is so useful.

If a system of international guarantees and the administrative machinery to implement them can be established, it would permit a transitional period between British rule and full self-government. An arrangement of this nature would seem to be desirable in that it would provide a period during which the leaders of the new India could adapt themselves under sympathetic guidance to large administrative responsibilities, during which communal arrangements could be made with a minimum of dislocation and during which India could be guided into stable international cooperation rather than allowed to lapse into factionalism, extreme nationalism, or dependence on any one foreign power.⁶⁷

A more orthodox presentation of the Philippines model of American de-colonization could not be constructed. Gradual, internationally guided progress toward full independence is the way for the India of the future. American fears of another period of international instability brought on by imperialistic bickering are very evident in this formula. Only mature, independent and properly stable former colonies could assure post-war speech. Indian factionalism could only be eradicated by gradually creating a system in which all the parties have a place. To enact this vision Davies feels the British should declare a specific date for independence and release the

⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁷ *ibid*

Congress leaders from jail.⁶⁸ These actions would have three significant effects. First they would mitigate the Anglophobia, color consciousness and war apathy currently afflicting Indian politics. Secondly, they would, “give pause to those Indians who are playing a game of political sophistry in the belief that the British will continue to divide and rule India.”⁶⁹ Plainly this sentence means the factions would need to moderate their positions in order not to be left out of the new power center. Finally, it would be good propaganda for Asian nationalist movements under Japanese occupation. Davies is careful to note that all these considerations would aid the war effort. The memorandum ends with a lengthy analysis of the leadership qualities of the Indians likely to head such a government.

The most important proposal for a solution to the crisis which Phillips viewed was the Allahabad Conference. This was a conference of moderates and independents such as Mookerjee and Rajagopalachari, and many representatives of minor factions. It met on December 12-13 1942. The goal of the conference was “to seek a formula, especially on the question of Pakistan, which would be acceptable to those attending the meeting.”⁷⁰ Having accomplished this, “a Round Table Conference would be held to which Jinnah would be invited and his acceptance of the formula requested. Then the nationalists could present a united front to the British and demand to see the imprisoned Congress leaders to forge a general settlement. Considering that a major part of the British justification for their rule was the disunity of the Indian politicians, this would be a grave blow to British prestige. Apparently an actual formula was agreed upon and while the actual text was secret members of the council leaked the main points.

1. The principal parties, including the British government, agree that those zones (not necessarily Provinces) in which the Muslims are in not less than a sixty percent majority shall

⁶⁸ ibid

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ Phillips to Hull, No 10. January 26, 1943, New Delhi Post Records, box 1426 file 800- Political (1943) Confidential NRC

have the right of self-determination by means of a plebiscite participated in by the entire enfranchised population in those zones.

2. Should an Eastern and Western Pakistan be established, the Muslims will not demand a corridor between the two.

3. Pakistan will demand no financial concessions from the rest of India.

Both the person who informed the mission of the details of the formula and another credible independent Indian Leader stated that the formula was accepted by most parties.⁷¹ There is a great chance that this vote would have been accepted at least by Jinnah and put the whole affair in Gandhi's hands. Later in the dispatch Phillips discussed conversations between Jinnah and noted independent Rajagopalachari. In them Jinnah agreed not to hold the plebiscite on separation on a mere majority basis in Bengal.⁷² Only majority Muslim provinces would vote. In addition, Jinnah reluctantly agreed to consider proposals which did not restrict the franchise to Muslims. In other words, Jinnah agreed to the terms of the Allahabad Conference and gave approval that they be transmitted to Gandhi.⁷³ Linlithgow refused permission for Rajagopalachari to submit Jinnah's agreement to the imprisoned Gandhi. The Allahabad Conference was conceived to add additional weight to the request. This obvious British sabotage had a major impact on Phillips because it was exactly the kind of moderate compromise that the British said the Indians refused to consider. The British response to the conference was a major stepping stone in Phillips' belief that they were responsible for the crisis.

The British responded by having Viceroy Linlithgow give a speech in which he stated clearly that India should remain one. He stated that, "I would judge it to be as important as it ever was in the past, more important, that we should seek to preserve [Indian] unity."⁷⁴

Linlithgow was eloquently yet clearly turning against the Muslim League the moment a deal

⁷¹ *ibid* The other source was Raja Maheshwar Dayal Seth General Secretary of the Mahasabha party. He based this on numerous prior conversations with Jinnah.

⁷² *ibid*

⁷³ *ibid*

⁷⁴ *ibid* the speech took place on December 17, 1942.

seemed at all possible. The speech was obviously intended to appeal to the radical members of the Mahasabha and Congress parties. Indeed the Mahasabha party congress in late December saw a return to a hardline stance. As Phillips put it, “this statement was interpreted by all competent observers as an attempt on the part of the Viceroy to appease the All India Mahasabha as a counter-balance to the All India Muslim League.”⁷⁵ He then makes the logical conclusion that the speech was intended to sabotage any progress made at the Allahabad conference, which it did. In reaction Phillips re-examined his views of the main Indian parties.

His analysis of the Muslim League is penetrating and, on the whole, hopeful of a compromise. Pakistan is the obvious question to begin on since all other questions were nowhere near as contentious. The Lahore resolution of March 1940 is correctly identified as the key document demonstrating League intentions. Phillips notes how the “general reaction was to subject the Pakistan Resolution to ridicule.”⁷⁶ In the next two years the idea resonated and changed the Muslim League from “an organization of the Muslim intelligentsia” into a “mass movement reaching the very lowest class of Muslim.”⁷⁷ It also made the League the genuine party of the “great majority of Muslims in India.”⁷⁸ This new power was extended by the Cripps offer which to Jinnah offered a British promise of Pakistan. He therefore increased his price by stating that any provisional government must now guarantee post-war Muslim self-determination instead of merely avoiding the question.⁷⁹ In addition, the provisional government must meet under the current constitutional framework. Jinnah feared a new framework drawn up by a Congress dominated government would change the framework to phase out the Muslims, like in 1936. Phillips concludes that the League wants the guarantee of a right to self-determination as a

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ *ibid*

⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ *ibid*

powerful bargaining tool in the Constituent Assembly. Knowing how appalled the Congress is at the idea they would have the influence to gain major concessions in the constitution. If the Congress proved uncooperative the plebiscites could always be held and Pakistan created. Such a position is amenable to a compromise solution.

Congress is the next party to undergo detailed analysis. Like the section on the Muslim League this analysis was based on the formal reply given by the Congress to the Cripps proposal. The Congress reply details its view that “any break in [Indian] unity... would be injurious to all concerned and exceedingly painful to contemplate.”⁸⁰ A critical passage indicates support for self-determination, “Nevertheless the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian union against their declared and established will.”⁸¹ In plainer terms the Congress is willing to grant the right of self-determination on Pakistan, as a last resort. What they want to ensure is that a constitutional assembly is tried first in order to exhaust all possibility of compromise before the horror of Paksitan is allowed. Another key concern is that specific conditions be set on the right to self-determination. Nehru stated that this was to prevent Jinnah from presenting “the rest of India with ‘outrageous’ financial or other demands.”⁸² As Phillips puts it, the two parties are adopting the same position, only the League is doing so positively and the Congress negatively. With agreement seemingly so close what is holding the parties from compromising.

According to Phillips there are three main factors standing against the settlement of the long standing argument over Pakistan. First is a considerable distrust between the two leaders themselves; “Jinnah hates and distrusts Gandhi and on every possible occasion charges him with insincerity and with the desire to establish Hindy raj (rule) in this country.”⁸³ Gandhi is

⁸⁰ ibid

⁸¹ ibid emphasis in original

⁸² ibid

⁸³ ibid

apparently upset that an “upstart” like Jinnah can challenge the Congress position.⁸⁴ Previous meetings have been sabotaged by personal enmity. The next problem is the claim by the Muslim League to represent all Muslims. Gandhi and the Congress cannot stand this for they claim that the Congress is, “a national organization representative of all communities.”⁸⁵ To accede to the League’s demands would undermine the Congress’ position. Finally, there is the fact that neither side is willing to give firm compromises to its opponent as long as there is no actual British promise of concessions. Neither party would want to compromise its position in the actual final agreement by being overly generous without specifics. None of these differences seems to be insurmountable and Phillips’, and Davies’, belief that the Indian parties could settle if convinced that their compromises would produce real results seems quite reasonable.

The next proposal that will be examined was submitted by Devanahalli Venkataramanaiah Gundappa a prominent Indian novelist. The factor which makes this an interesting is that it is one of only two detailed proposals from Indians for solutions found within the records of the new Delhi consulate.⁸⁶ Gundappa immediately declares four principles which drive his policy; “(1) the unity of India, (2) the Independence of India, (3) Democracy or the People’s government for India, and (4) a humane Internationalism as the mission of India.”⁸⁷ He also declares that while he is not a member of the Congress Party he shares its ideals. In broad outline Gundappa calls for the creation of a provisional government with a cabinet chosen by the Governor General but subject to oversight by the legislature. The cabinet’s advice would be followed by the government except on affairs of military and defense deemed of importance beyond India. Those issues would need to be detailed in advance, and full information provided

⁸⁴ ibid

⁸⁵ ibid

⁸⁶ the Allahabad proposal is discussed but the proposal is not actually in the file.

⁸⁷ D. V. Gundappa, “India’s Political Problem”, Aptil 4th, 1943 New Delhi Post Records, box 1426 file 800- Political (1943) Confidential NRC

to the cabinet though its advice would not be binding. Following the war a constitutional body would be created to draw up a permanent constitution for the new Indian state.⁸⁸ Regarding the Muslim issue, the proposal calls for a federal government with any safeguards for minorities that do not weaken it greatly. Only a national referendum on the subject of Pakistan is allowed for not a provincial one. The question of the States will be handled by a subcommittee. This proposal is obviously one weighted toward the Congress view.

This proposal is about of the detail that you would expect of the working of an intelligent political amateur. It definitely follows the Congress blueprint, because its call for a federal government and national referendum would hand power to the Congress. The Muslim League would almost undoubtedly have rejected it unless under great pressure and with firm guarantees of minority rights. By continuing the model of the Government of India Act it would most likely cause a replay of the conditions that in 1936 led to the rise of the Muslim League. The constitution would have to be ratified by the British due to their separate treaties with the state governments. Another similar proposal argued for setting up an American style federal republic with a rotating communally based presidency.⁸⁹ By giving the Muslims a rotating presidency it deems that they would acquiesce in allowing a system that Congress would dominate. Such a scheme seems naive at the very least. Neither of these schemes was likely to have gained the support of the Muslim League. They are mainly useful to indicate the support of western views of democracy and high level English education that helped generate American support for the Indian cause. Many of the principles of not only the American Constitution , but of the “new Deal for the World” Borgwardt shows is prevalent at this time help explain why the Americans were so anxious to aid the british cause.

⁸⁸ The body would be made up 150 of members of the legislature chosen by that legislature, fifty representatives of the states and twenty more members chosen by the governor general. This plan was not considered final.

⁸⁹ K. P. Mallikarjunudu, Untitled Proposal, April 20th 1943 the only real difference would be the addition of a limited no confidence vote against the presidency.

The final proposal that will be analyzed is the basic outline that William Phillips submitted to the State Department as the “general opinion in Indian circles.”⁹⁰ The proposal is relatively short and worth presenting in full.

(1) A declaration by the King Emperor of readiness to grant commonwealth status by an appropriate time after the war and meanwhile to constitute a provisional national government;

(2) Viceroy should either (a) invite a prominent Indian preferably a political leader to form a provisional coalition government representing the various political parties or (b) he himself appoint such a government;

(3) Power should be transferred to such a provisional government Viceroy retaining in his hands and in those of his military advisers such questions of defense organization and military administration as are of extra Indian interest, that is of importance to the United Nations in the conduct of the war;

(4) Similar provisional coalition procedure is recommended for the provinces;

(5) The states prefer to remain aloof until satisfied of stability in the center⁹¹

The proposal takes into consideration only the provisional government that would hold power during the war. In that area it seems that the proposal of D. V. Gundappa is not that controversial. Such a proposal would seem to be a very reasonable procedure to enact. Executive authority would not be circumscribed in matters of war, the most important area. It would also give valuable cabinet experience to a number of Indian political leaders. Phillips anger at the British unwillingness to negotiate on this point seems quite understandable. The problem with such an arrangement is how to divide up the offices of government for the various factions. No Indian faction was willing to give specifics until it believed that a substantive proposal was in the offering. Phillips had a solution to both this Indian refusal to commit themselves and the British sabotage of any actual attempt to sort out the problem.

That solution was to convene an international conference presided over by a major Allied leader to bypass the British and force the Indians hands. The conference would begin with an invitation from the President to the major political parties to meet and discuss the situation. The

⁹⁰ Phillips to Hull, April 3rd, 1943 FRUS 1943 4:212

⁹¹ *ibid*

conference would be presided over, “by an American who could exercise influence in harmonizing the endless divisions of caste, religion, race and political views.”⁹² When the invitations are issued the King Emperor would proclaim a guarantee of religion by a certain date in order to spur discussion. American chairmanship would be critical not only in showing an engaged America but in overcoming the engraved Anglophobia of the nationalist parties. Such an invitation would force the nationalist leaders to attend; “If either of the principal parties refused to attend the conference, it would be notice to all the world that India is not ready for self-government.”⁹³ Phillips doubts that the political leaders would be willing to seem unwilling to actual compromise and share in power. British objections over the conference and the necessary release of Congress leaders from jail would be made, but could be overthrown. The suggestion was not new, but “the proposed plan perhaps provides the guarantee required by the Indians, and is in line with British declared intentions.” Those intentions were the repeated British statements that they would gladly hand over power if the Indians were united. Vague as the proposal is it is the most detailed solution Phillips represented.

The proposal exposes the main problems that Phillips felt were causing the present impasse in the situation. On a side note, Gundappa’s proposal from a month later included a plan for a conference of all Indian parties. The main difference being that the Viceroy would call it and it would have all the major and minor Indian factions.⁹⁴ Distrust of the British is plain but so is reservations about the willingness of the Indians to compromise. The only solution according to Phillips was for America to force the British and the Indians to act by arbitrating the dispute. If either party refused a serious arbitration it would expose itself as the main barrier to settling the crisis and losing influence. The problem that killed the deal and any other is that it involved

⁹²ibid

⁹³ ibid

⁹⁴ D. V. Gundappa, “India’s Political Problem”, April 4th, 1943 New Delhi Post Records, box 1426 file 800- Political (1943) Confidential NRC

overruling Churchill and Roosevelt was clearly unwilling to do so unless faced with a major catastrophe.

After all this analysis of the divisions in the Indian nationalist movements, British efforts, and proposed solution what effect did the divisions of the Indian nationalist movement have on American policy? A brief summary of American views on the nationalist movement and reasons for American action is in order first. Phillips and the other observers saw the movement as truly divided between the Muslim League and the Hindu dominated but nationalist Congress Party. However, they felt that the differences between the two parties could be worked out if both sides felt that a genuine offer of post-war independence and provisional government was made. The main stumbling block to an agreement was the British whose independence offers lacked credibility. British policy toward the nationalists was also seen as based on a deliberate policy of divide and rule that sabotaged meaningful attempts at progress. American intervention was necessary in order to avoid chaos in India in the future, a growing racial consciousness that could cause future wars, and prove the American commitment to the ideals of the Atlantic Charter. A major piece of the post-war stability was at stake, and time was in short supply. Yet the American model of de-colonization was based on the Philippines model of a gradual handing over of power to properly trained native elites. Such a solution required time, but did not face an imminent deadline. American belief that the Indians would not revolt due to Hindu weakness, factionalism and the leaderless state of the Congress party removed the need for immediate action. In this state of affairs American prestige was the only thing truly at stake and that was not worth risking the Anglo-American alliance. While Clymer does a good job of summarizing the actual American view he does not provide the details on which the decisions were made. The details were of little consequence in the end, yet they add some depth to the historiography.

American knowledge of the real divisions and personality conflicts had only a slight impact on American policy toward India. The basic understanding of Clymer's text, that Americans viewed the British as mainly responsible for the divisions in the Indian nationalist movement, is true. However, Phillips and the others were also influenced by the disunity of the nationalist movement itself. A further look at Phillips' view on the matter leads to the matter becoming a critical factor in his views on the Indian movement. Both Davies' and Phillips fundamentally believed in the willingness of the Indian parties to compromise, but only if they were forced to. By looking at the Phillips mission only from the viewpoint of Phillips, who had no power, and the Congress, whose leaders were in prison, Clymer misses a crucial element in American views on the Indian national movement. As Phillips conference proposal proves he believed that American pressure was necessary to force the hand not only of the British, but also the Indians. The personality conflict of Gandhi and Jinnah was recognized by American observers and considered a considerable factor. While in the end the divisions among the Indian nationalist movement had a minimal impact on American policy, they definitely impacted Phillips' proposals to his government, and the enthusiasm of American support. The number one reason Davies gave for the lack of a revolution in India was the divisions among the movement. Since only a revolution could spark a crisis big enough to force Roosevelt's hand that analysis is critical. Phillips only grew panicked when Gandhi was fasting, fearing the upheaval his potential martyrdom could create. That was the only chance he had of dictating policy, and it fizzled out. He managed to get official support for a visit to Gandhi but not enough support to overcome British resistance. It was only because of that utter unwillingness of the British to compromise at all that the impact of the divisions was so slight. That attitude convinced Phillips that the British must first compromise before the Indians could actually compromise and thus the disputes were

of less importance. It was reluctance to risk a rupture in the Anglo-American alliance that dictated American policy in the end.

Another element of the picture that is lacking in the current historiography is the impact of racism on American policy. The attitude of Davies and to a lesser extent Phillips proves that assertion. The second major reason that Davies gave for the failure of the Indians to revolt is Hindu weakness. To him Hindu's were too spiritual and not tough enough. He would most likely have been far more alarmed facing a "virile" Muslim majority. Phillips is less open about it but his descriptions of Gandhi and the Hindu movement demonstrate racist attitudes. Gandhi is not a political leader, but a god and his followers are devoted in a way no rational westerner could understand. Clymer is right that the English education and intelligence of the Indian leaders managed to make the Americans identify with them. All the foreign officers compared the Indians to the American Revolutionaries and obviously respected them, but the undercurrent was there. American policy was going to offend either the British or the Indians in this matter and the relative weight of each party mattered. With that said the impact of racism was not the determining factor by any means. Britain had a far greater impact on the war effort than India ever could. Analysis of the impact of peripheral conditions on the center in foreign policy will always suffer that problem. It is hard to examine effect when the root cause of the decision is based on something else entirely. Yet even in this situation it is clear that the periphery did have an impact, even though it was a small one.

Essay on Sources

Considering the impact it had on my paper, I will begin my discussion of secondary sources to Kenton Clymer's *Quest for India*. This was the book which made the project for me.

Not only did it provide the basic narrative in one easy package allowing me to readily gain an overall picture. Clymer's book is so useful in that it advanced upon the old works such as William Roger Louis' *Imperialism at Bay*. It was also a big advance over previous histories of American diplomacy toward India in World War II, by author's like Gary Hess in that it did not take an accusatory attitude toward American policy. it also presented the challenge of the paper. The problem with the strength of Clymer's text was that I thought I needed to base my paper on challenging or accepting its argument. In the end the value I could add to his work was not mainly historiographical, but in an analysis of an area he did not cover deeply. That really hindered me later in the process as I struggled with the feeling I was not adding enough to the subject. I had a great fear of ending up with a paper which only proved Clymer's basic point though negative evidence. That is what happened mostly, the divisions on the Indian nationalist movement had little impact on American policy. However, in the research I found a lot of detail on the American views at the time that Clymer missed. The American views were more advanced than the existing historiography said and American willingness to act was limited by the understanding of real divisions in the Indian nationalist movement. In the end I feel that I added something to the historiography that has been dominated by this man.

I will keep this section short considering the amount of detail about the sources I put into the paper itself. That was a deliberate action not meant to use up space but to provide context enough to allow the reader to make informed conclusions. It was also part of an attempt to provide details lacking in the current secondary research, since Clymer gives very little detail on the writings of Davies and Phillips himself. My primary sources were limited in number, but each one provided an incredible amount of depth for research. I'll begin with the sources that are not referenced in the paper directly, the autobiography and reminiscences of William Phillips. They

were of use mainly in getting to know the man. They were phased out of the project as the paper became more about the American view on the ground in India and less on Phillips himself. The same goes for the papers and other writings of the Indian nationalist leaders. Considering the short space allowed in this paper I felt that trying to analyze them separately would be unfeasible. Instead I provided an overall picture of the situation in the introduction and left the matter at that. The memoranda of William Phillips and John Davies provided sufficient primary source material in themselves for a paper of this length.

Now on to the main sources that I used in this piece, *The Foreign Relations of the United States* and the records of the New Delhi consulate. *The Foreign Relations of the United States* was incredibly useful in giving me the basic proposals of Phillips. The records of the New Delhi consulate at the National archives were basically the full version of the documents in the Foreign Relations series. They provided me the longer more detailed sources such as the Davies memorandum and the various proposals of Phillips and Gundappa. I considered using the papers of Sumner Welles or Cordell Hull in order to provide the picture at Washington, but that would overly complicate the analysis involved here. The real views that were not covered by Clymer were the details and recommendations of Davies and Phillips themselves. On the whole I feel that the harder task was choosing which set of documents to analyze and not the finding of potential sources.

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