DECONSTRUCTING *GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY*: AN ANALYSIS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S LETTERS TO HIS DAUGHTER

by Michele L Langford

This paper deconstructs Jawaharlal Nehru's extensive account of world history in the form of letters to his daughter, Indira. First published in 1934, *Glimpses of World History* remains an important resource in understanding the formative years of Nehru's perspective of world history and world politics. An analysis of Nehru's text contributes to growing field of scholarship concerned with the uses and approaches to world history. In addition, an analysis of influences on Nehru's construction of world history questions the traditional view that only British perspectives informed Nehru's ideas about the world. In conclusion, this paper suggests that Nehru's world history served as the premise to his key foreign policy initiative, nonalignment, once Nehru became prime minister of India in 1947.
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I. Introduction

A close reading of Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of World History* reveals the complexities of constructing and using world history. Written while in prison for nonviolent protests against the British Raj between the years 1930 and 1934, Nehru's historical narrative retold his version of world history in the form of short letters to his daughter, Indira. Published in 1934, *Glimpses of World History* was the first of three major works written by Nehru during his years as a nationalist leader in India before independence in 1947. In his world history, Nehru emphasized five important premises: world history showed that the world was progressing or getting better through science and reason; world history meant the inclusion of Asian histories into a European dominated discourse; world history was the story of contacts between Asia and Europe which produced a synthesis of ideas between the different regions; world history was closely linked to the theories of Marx and Lenin which emphasized the capitalist exploitation of the masses, particularly beginning in the nineteenth-century; world history connected with the present in that progress in an increasingly interconnected world depended upon the cooperation of all nations and a new international organization to serve as a forum for the exchange and synthesis of new ideas between nations. Nehru's overarching analysis highlighted the importance of universal contact and the consequent exchange of ideas among various parts of the world. Nehru found the confines of nationalism and nationalist perspectives insignificant to the larger forces of world history.

In essence, Nehru's effort to de-center the nation-state in an analysis of the past closely resembles the call made by several postcolonial scholars in contemporary studies. *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (2003) makes a similar argument. The editor, Antoinette Burton, questioned the use of national histories as a framework to study empire, and argued that the binaries of colonizer/colonized and metropole/area studies were too simplistic as each privileged the nation as the primary framework of study. Empire was indeed a global phenomenon and as such should be scrutinized within the framework of the world. By de-centering the privileged position of the nation as the primary unit of analysis, Burton sought to complicate our understanding of colonial and postcolonial past. Another contributor to the book, Stuart Ward, believed
the recent trend of postcolonial scholarship has moved toward a "globalization" paradigm in order to explain empire outside the confines of national histories. Further, Tony Ballantyne contributed to this innovative work by arguing, "It is important to recognize not only that the empire was comprised of networks and exchanges that linked the various colonies to the metropole, but also that its very structure was dependent upon a series of crucial horizontal linkages among colonies."\(^1\) He explained, "By emphasizing the mobility of colonial knowledge and the interweaving of empire, we can place greater emphasis on the transnational cultural and intellectual traffic that was the very lifeblood of empire."\(^2\) Collectively, postcolonial scholars challenged the reader to rethink the past, particularly the history of empire, in terms of the global implications and consequences.

Nehru’s *Glimpses of World History*\(^3\), written in the 1930’s, preceded these contemporary demands for a more global perspective in history. Nehru’s history certainly addressed Ballantyne’s "transnational cultural and intellectual traffic," as an important issue significantly earlier than the recent attention given by postcolonial scholarship. Often in his world history, Nehru argued that imperialism promoted the spread of ideas, ultimately improving both conquerer and conquered modes of thought. However, Nehru's history went beyond the analysis of empire, and he offered that the nation-state remained inadequate in any analysis of a larger, world history. Nehru believed world history, not simply the analysis of exchange between metropole/colony, required a reassessment from a more global perspective outside the confines of national histories. Long before the concept was discovered by European and North American scholars, Nehru's own historical narrative called for the breakdown of nationalist histories and construction of a more relevant world history as a means to understand the global exchange of ideas in the past and necessity of exchange for a better future.

The question remains, how did Jawaharlal Nehru come to the same conclusion as recent postcolonial scholars and even move beyond such ideas while writing from prison in the 1930's? Three possible sources of influence closely related to his history include

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1. Ibid., 112.
2. Ibid., 113.
3. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History: Being Further Letters To His Daughter Written In Prison, And Containing a Rambling Account of History For Young People* (New York: The John Day Company, 1942). The collection of letters was originally published in England in 1934 comprised of two volumes. In 1939, the collection was again published with an updated postscript in a single volume again in England. The first American version cited in this study was published in June 1942.
Nehru's British education, life experiences and travels, and the books read while in prison between 1930 and 1933. Through such experiences, Nehru constructed his own historical narrative by synthesizing ideas from a variety of sources that were not always British or Indian. Nehru's place as a colonial subject of the British Empire enabled him to move freely across the borders of Europe and the British colonies, read works from many locations both inside and outside of Europe, and contact other colonial leaders to discuss resistance to empire. Essentially, Nehru formed his perspective of world history through the opportunities provided by the worldwide imperial network. An analysis of *Glimpses of World History* forces the reader to rethink ideas about both origins and ways of constructing imperial histories and world histories.

In an increasingly connected world, Nehru's *Glimpses of World History* also offers another perspective on the origins of Nehru's intellectual basis for his foreign policy initiatives once prime minister of India in 1947. Nehru's historical analysis of world cooperation and the exchange of ideas became a driving force in his own foreign policy initiatives as prime minister. With his foreign policy of nonalignment, Nehru intended to avoid entanglements with the polarized power blocs embedded in the Cold War. In doing so, Nehru attempted to keep channels of contact and exchange open between India and all regions of the world despite the power politics of the 1950's and 1960's. His historical appreciation of intellectual exchange remained a fundamental basis of his foreign policy in the postcolonial world. In his unpublished papers, Nehru revealed his ideal civilization in a set of notes used to write his world history in 1934. Combining both a rejection of the nation-state and his Marxist ideas, Nehru hoped his history would promote the following idealized outcomes:


Certainly, a close examination of Nehru's construction of world history, important influences on his ideas and connection between his history and his policies as prime minister, contributes to our understanding of approaches to writing world history.

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4 Jawaharlal Nehru's unpublished papers are housed in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Pre-1947 papers can be accessed for academic purposes.
II. Existing Scholarship on *Glimpses of World History*

Existing historical works on Nehru are primarily in the form of biographies tracing his years as a nationalist leader and as the prime minister of India. In particular, S. Gopal wrote a lengthy, three-volume biography of Nehru originally published in 1973. While the biography specifically outlined Nehru’s life, Gopal wrote the extensive work prior to the contemporary critiques of nationalist leaders and tended to follow a narrative, not analytical, style. Similarly, Gopal described Nehru's historical account with less focus on how his writing reflected his own views of the world. In his biography, Gopal described *Glimpses of World History* as a world history that was not driven by politicians and governments, but by the "interplay of ideas, economic interests, and social relations." Gopal also asserted that the history represented Nehru's "half-liberal, half-Marxist view of history." And finally, Gopal suggested that Nehru's history revealed his belief that, "the best of Indian culture was a synthesis." However, Gopal mentioned this point in one sentence with little explanation of what needed to be synthesized or how Nehru explained this through his history.

More recently, Judith Brown’s *Nehru: A Political Life* (2003) further explored Nehru’s personal and political life before and after independence. Brown contributed to scholarship on Nehru by examining unpublished documents authored by Nehru after independence. In her extensive work, Brown focused on Nehru's perspectives on politics and the obstacles that often blocked Nehru's objectives both as a nationalist and later as prime minister. Brown's account of Nehru's imprisonment between 1930 and 1934 focused on the books Nehru read. The author briefly mentioned that Nehru composed both the letters to his daughter and his autobiography as a means of occupying his time and earning income while in prison. Brown asserted that Nehru's autobiography was particularly revealing about his "dual inheritance," where, "he felt he was a curious blend of East and West, and therefore out of place everywhere and at home nowhere." Both books served as excellent resources, although their extensive scope left little room, less

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6 Ibid., 93.
than two pages, for analysis of Nehru’s ideas on world history as seen in *Glimpses of World History*.

Additionally, several historians have also interpreted *Glimpses of World History* as a political piece that challenged the conditions of India during the 1930’s. Specifically, B.R. Nanda argued that Nehru’s work criticized Western history for excluding both Asia and Africa. Importantly, Nanda raised two significant factors understood in Nehru’s letters. First, the letters were meant to both aid Indira’s education and to challenge and resist Western, particularly British, domination, specifically its discourse of world history. Secondly, Nanda noted the presentist stance of Nehru, that Nehru purposefully wrote his history as a means to understand the political and economic situations of India during the 1930’s. History, to Nehru, was not a separate distinctive time, but directly affected and represented current situations.

Another interpretation of *Glimpses of World History* analyzed the text as a reflection of Nehru’s adherence to the modernist traditions informed by nineteenth-century liberal thought. In a 1991 article, David Kopf argued that *Glimpses of World History* reflected Nehru's complete faith in the ideals highlighted by nineteenth-century liberal thought: the use of reason and science as the means to progress towards a perfectible world. Kopf asserted, "The book by Nehru, as already intimated, is an affirmation of his faith in the idea that the history of humanity has moved and continues to move forward toward greater perfectibility in a political, socioeconomic, scientific, technological, and moral sense." Kopf also argued that Nehru's particular distaste for religion in his history served as further evidence of Nehru's secular ideals and concurrence with the epistemological ideas found in nineteenth-century liberal thought or, as Kopf argued, "modernity".

There is significant value in these analyses of Nehru's world history. Kopf's analysis is correct in that Nehru clearly wrote a history guided by the ideas of modernity. In the second letter of *Glimpses of World History*, "The Lesson of History," Nehru briefly provided his interpretation of world history and his acceptance of the progressive narrative. Nehru reminded the reader that this progress can only be seen in the context of

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the world. Individual civilizations suffer low points and revel in high points, but generally the pattern of history can only be located in the world as a whole as part of a universalistic notion of progress. He suggested, "The world is a big place and the rise and fall of any country for a while may not make much difference to the world at large."9

Nehru's history also reflected his concerns with India and the world in the 1930's as argued by Nanda. Nehru, similar to many in the post-World War I era, was astonished by the brutality and loss of life during the international struggle. Additionally, Nehru analyzed history in the hopes of better understanding British imperialism and how India might combat this system of domination. He would later admit in a speech to the Indian Historical Records Commission that he "wanted to understand those events (of the past) in relation to today and to understand today in relation to what had been, and try to peep into the future, however dimly, with the help of that understanding."10

*Glimpses* also serves as an excellent source for examining the formation of Nehru's own liberal and Marxist ideas as suggested by Gopal. Nehru was enamored of the ideas circulating about socialism and its "prophet," Karl Marx. In his text, Nehru expressed a fascination for Lenin and the "Great Revolution" in the Soviet Union. However, Nehru admitted that democracy and parliamentary institutions were praiseworthy as well. To Nehru, the ideal society would blend socialist ideas of economic equality with democratic ideas of political equality. Only this combination he would argue might bring an end to misery and poverty in the world.

These analyses describe some of Nehru's basic ideas in *Glimpses of World History*; however, Nehru's history revealed a much more complex approach to world history that transcended national boundaries in. He admired the developments in technology that enabled people to travel quickly throughout the world via railroad or air. Consequently, Nehru dealt with this increased interconnectivity and reliance among nations by emphasizing earlier examples of such travel, contact and interaction in his history. Nehru denounced his contemporaries for the narrow-minded nationalism that had emerged in the nineteenth-century and dominated in the twentieth-century. He argued

that history was not important or meaningful in the context of national histories, but could only be understood within a worldwide framework. In a letter on the nineteenth-century, Nehru explained:

you must try to remember that all of these nineteenth-century events in different countries took place contemporaneously, more or less at the same time, influencing and reacting on each other. That is why the study of history of one country by itself is very deceptive; only a world history can give us a right idea of the importance of events and forces that have shaped the past and made it into the present.11

In Glimpses of World History, Nehru also articulated his own views of world history as a global network where exchanging and synthesizing ideas between different regions, particularly East and West or Asia and Europe, proved critical for the wellbeing of humankind. To Nehru, the increasing interconnectivity of the world originated in the earliest periods of history and the ability of civilizations to synthesize newly introduced ideas with their own was significant in any civilizations survival. The consistent interactions between regions, usually Europe and Asia, created new conditions. Adaptation through the synthesis of new ideas with traditionally held beliefs was the only means of survival and Nehru's history emphasized these instances of contact and synthetic interaction.

Gopal already pointed out that Nehru recognized the need for Indian cultural synthesis. Nehru's history, however, reflected a much larger synthesis of both Asian and European ideas throughout the world. Certainly, Glimpses of World History remains a rich source for many of Nehru's perspectives on modernity, Marxism, and his anxieties about the world events in the 1930's. The present study has a larger goal, it seeks to examine Glimpses of World History in terms of its relationship to Nehru’s perspective on world history as a process of synthesis of Europe and Asia, and the problematic consequences when synthesis becomes disrupted by nationalistic ideology during and after the nineteenth-century.

III. Glimpses of World History: Textual Analysis

11 Jawaharlal Nehru, Glimpses of World History: Being Further Letters To His Daughter Written In Prison, And Containing a Rambling Account of History For Young People (New York: The John Day Company, 1942), 482.
Nehru organized *Glimpses of World History*, totaling 971 pages, into several sections reminiscent of the periodization found in European history: Ancient history, the Middle Ages, the centuries before the nineteenth-century, the nineteenth-century, the World War, and the postwar years. Typically, Nehru composed a basic outline of the time period he was addressing, followed by individual letters dealing with each civilization, or later nation, and the ways each fit into the context of world events. At the end of each historical period, Nehru summarized the concluding years of the era and introduced the forces that propelled the world into the next period of its history. He strayed from this format in the nineteenth-century and postwar period to include several sections on ideas instead of nations such as “Democracy,” “Socialism,” and “Marxism.”

Of particular significance, Nehru used European history as the primary reference point and did not challenge the periodization utilized in European discourse. This type of narrative centered European history and measured time periods and events only as each directly related to Europe. Nehru, in his analysis, attempted to write a history that would not be Eurocentric, but he failed to challenge the dating system based on Christianity, addressing it in the following way:

> It is customary to refer to dates after Christ as A.D.- Anno Domini- in the year of the Lord. There is no harm in following this widespread practice, but it seems to me more scientific to use the letters A.C.- after Christ- for these dates just as we have been using B.C. I propose to do so. 

Both methods of periodization centered Europe and Christianity as the privileged history, and Nehru continued to accept this uncritically. In addition, Nehru’s accounts of Asian history privileged India and China. According to Nehru, both Japan and South East Asia borrowed Chinese and Indian traditions and were indebted to these civilizations. In this, Nehru provided an elitist history of Asia placing China and India at the center of Asian history.

From Nehru's history of the world, one can clearly see what Nehru perceived as the forces that assist in progress, and the forces that obstruct progress. In the second letter

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12 See Appendix A for *Glimpses of World History* Table of Contents.
of the text entitled, "The Lesson of History," Nehru briefly provided his interpretation of world history highlighting a narrative of progress:

>a study of history should teach us how the world has slowly but surely progressed, and how the first simple animals gave place to more complicated and advanced animals, how last of all came the master animal- Man, and how by force of his intellect he triumphed over the others. Man's growth from barbarism to civilization is supposed to be the theme of history. In some of my letters I have tried to show you how the idea of cooperation or working together has grown, and how our ideal should be to work together for the common good.\textsuperscript{14}

From the earliest sections of his historical narrative, Nehru argued that the most significant factor in the progress of a civilization was the introduction of new ideas to deal with a consistently changing world. Even in his explanation of ancient history, Nehru argued that India, dominant and highly developed during the centuries of ancient history, began losing its creativity. He criticized ancient Indian civilizations:

>Instead of creating new ideas and things, the people of India busied themselves with repetition and imitation of what had been done. [...] Originality was absent and so was bold and noble design. The polished graces and arts and luxury continued among the rich and well-to-do, but little was done to relieve the toil and misery of the people as a whole or to increase production.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition, Nehru argued that the lack of creativity and originality to deal with changing conditions, "Are signs of the evening of a civilization. When this takes place, you may be sure that the life of that civilization is vanishing; for creation is the sign of life, not repetition and imitation."\textsuperscript{16}

Nehru went so far as to suggest that invasion was less a factor in the demise of civilizations than the lack of creativity. Again in the case of India, Muslim invasions were not the cause for collapse, but instead, "The real disease was not foreign invasion, but stagnation."\textsuperscript{17} Dating back to the earliest civilization, Nehru explained the importance of adapting to a constantly changing world. He believed that India and China lost their creative forces at the conclusion of the Middle Ages, becoming repetitious and stagnate, and ultimately vulnerable to European aggressions. Similarly, Nehru later argued that new creative energies and ideas stirring across Asia, particularly in India and China in the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 180-181.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 182.
twentieth-century, were paving the way for a new era of Asian domination and prosperity.

While the creation of ideas played the most crucial role in determining a civilization's success at domination in the world, Nehru made a strong case against the dangers of conceptualizing each civilization only in terms of its dominion over others. Ultimately, Nehru found little value in the fact of domination. In response to the subjugation of most Asian and African nations by European imperialists, Nehru stated:

This new role of Europe is quite a recent one, as we shall see, and already the scene is changing and the role appears out of date. New ideas are astir in all the countries of the East, and powerful movements aiming at freedom are challenging and shaking the domination of Europe. Wider and deeper even than these nationalistic ideas are the new social ideas of equality which want to put an end to all imperialism and exploitation. There should be no question in the future of Europe dominating Asia or Asia dominating Europe, or any country exploiting the other.\(^{18}\)

Nehru's idealized civilization synthesized ideas from the entire world without regional or national boundaries for the progress of all humankind.

In another letter, Nehru clearly articulated this ideal world civilization which was his synthesis of Asia and Europe. He argued that Asia and Europe:

Are just geographical expressions, and the problems that face us are not Asiatic or European problems, but world problems or problems of humanity. And unless we solve them for the whole world, there will continue to be trouble.\(^{19}\)

After working together on the world problems, Nehru hoped:

Then we can have real culture and civilization based on equality, where there is no exploitation of any country or class. Such a society will be a creative and progressive society, adapting itself to changing circumstances, and basing itself on cooperation of its members. And ultimately it must spread all over the world. There will be no danger of such a civilization collapsing or decaying, as the old civilizations did.\(^{20}\)

According to Nehru, the ideal civilization meant this synthesis of and cooperation between Asia and Europe, which would extend to other regions of the world as well.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 246.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 182.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 182.
Essentially, Nehru's narrative emphasized the moments in history where Asian and European ideas came into contact and found a new, more adaptive understanding of the world. It was during these moments of contact, that successful civilizations synthesized the new ideas with their own, while less successful civilizations rejected the spread of new ideas, falling into what Nehru called, "the dustbin of history."\textsuperscript{21}

Nehru began his history with a brief account of the ancient world condensed into the first 130 pages of the text. Similar to contemporary narratives of Western Civilization, Nehru chose to focus on Egypt, Knossos, Greece and Rome as the important civilizations of ancient history. In addition, Nehru examined the ancient Indian and Chinese civilizations such as the Ch’ins, Hans, and Guptas. Often in his interpretation of ancient history, Nehru provided chapters that compared Asia and Europe as his goals were clearly to counterbalance any European civilization with an equally influential and important Asian civilization. Further, Nehru’s construction of ancient history highlighted his perception of Asian dominance in the ancient period:

Her people [Asia] went in wave after wave and conquered Europe. They ravaged Europe and they civilized Europe. [...] Indeed, Europe was for long like a colony of Asia, and many people of modern Europe are descended from these invaders from Asia.\textsuperscript{22}

In his account of ancient history, Nehru emphasized the various ways contact was established between the East and West. Nehru used the terms East and Asia, as well as West and Europe, interchangeably to reflect the two regions of the world in his historical narrative. Imperial conquest seemed to be the primary force driving interaction between various parts of the world. Nehru often criticized empires and had a particularly strong distaste for Alexander of Macedonia. In a letter entitled, "A Famous Conqueror But a Conceited Young Man," Nehru explained that, "By this barbarous behavior he terrified Greece. But this and other instances of barbarism in his life do not make him admirable for us and only repel and disgust us."\textsuperscript{23} However, Nehru also appreciated Alexander's role in spreading idea:

One great effect of Alexander's march to the East was the fresh contacts established between East and West. Large numbers of Greeks went East and

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 413.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 46.
settled down in the old cities or in new colonies which they established. Even before Alexander there was contact and trade between East and West. But after him this increased greatly.²⁴

Similarly, Nehru found few admirable qualities in the Roman Empire. Nehru saw the Roman Empire as a rich man's civilization, where a handful of wealthy Romans exploited both their own people and the people in the colonies. He later wrote of similarities between the Roman Empire of ancient history and the British Empire of his day:

there is one strong resemblance between the Romans and English people- they are both singularly devoid of imagination! Smug and self-satisfied, and convinced that the world was made specially for their benefit, they go through life untroubled by doubt or difficulty.²⁵

However, Nehru presented one aspect of the Roman Empire which advocated the idea of a World-state, or of "universal sovereigns."²⁶ To Nehru, this concept suggested a world that would share ideas and cooperate:

there is talk today of a world-state, not a great empire, or a universal sovereign, but a kind of World-Republic which would prevent the exploitation of one nation or people or class by another. Whether or not anything like this will take place in the near future, it is difficult to say.²⁷

Again, the synthesis of the regions of the world offered hope for Nehru in his historical analysis.

Nehru also perceived Northern India as an important place for contact moments between East and West after Alexander's conquests. Throughout history, Nehru argued that Indians, "have grown up in a composite culture- a mixture of Hindu and Muslim with a dash of the West."²⁸ Nehru's study of the Kushan Empire, located in present day Central Asia and Northern India, served as a primary example of Nehru's perception that India was located in an important place conducive of contact moments and exchange. According to Nehru, The Kushan Empire, "sat like a colossus astride the back of Asia, in between the Graeco-Roman world on the west, the Chinese world in the east and the

²⁴ Ibid., 61.
²⁵ Ibid., 97.
²⁶ Ibid., 95.
²⁷ Ibid., 96.
²⁸ Ibid., 80.
Indian world in the south. It was a halfway house both between India and Rome, and India and China."29 Further, Nehru praised the Kushan Empire as:

another famous centre of Central Asia then, with a rich and brilliant civilization, known especially for the fame of its musicians and the charm of its women. Its religion and art came from India; Iran contributed to its culture and to its merchandise; and its language was related to Sanskrit, old Persian, Latin and Celtic. Another fascinating mixture.30

One final example of contact moments and synthesis in the ancient world needs to be mentioned here. In a letter entitled, "Harsha-Vardhana and Hiuen Tsang," Nehru discussed the travels of Hiuen Tsang (modern translation Xuanzang) all over Central Asia. Nehru's favorite example from Tsang's published travel journal was of a kingdom named Turfan that shows Nehru's promotion of synthesis:

A strange little oasis of culture was this desert kingdom. It is a dead place now where archaeologists and antiquarians dig for old remains. But in the seventh century, when Hiuen Tsang passed through it, it was full of life and a high culture. And this culture was a remarkable combination of India, China, Persia, and even bits of Europe. [...] How wonderful it is that in the far-off seventh century, rich streams of culture should have flown from distant regions to meet here and unite to form a harmonious synthesis.31

His passage on Turfan eloquently transformed Turfan into a romanticized ideal of the values of synthesis.

In his next section, Nehru demarcated the Middle Ages as beginning in the seventh-century with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and concluding with the fall of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. It was during this period in history, Nehru argued, that Europe was particularly "barbaric." For example, Nehru entitled one letter “Rome Relapses into Darkness.” He saw the Middle Ages as a time “the old had gone and the new had not taken its place; so there was darkness in Europe.”32 Nehru highlighted only a few instances of European progress such as the Magna Carta in 1215, Gothic architecture and the rise of European cities.

Nehru believed that the most significant events of the Middle Ages were in Asia. In Western Asia, the chapter entitled “The Coming of Islam” highlighted Nehru’s

29 Ibid., 81.
30 Ibid., 123.
31 Ibid., 123.
32 Ibid., 143.
admirations for the Arab peoples during this period. He suggested, “The story of the
Arabs, and of how they spread rapidly over Asia, Europe and Africa, and of the high
culture and civilization which they developed, is one of the wonders of history.” Still,
Nehru’s examination of this rich time period in history, and particularly Asian history,
resulted in a mere 109 pages of his text.

Imperial conquest by the Muslims continued to be the primary facilitator for the 
exchange and synthesis of new ideas in the Middle Ages. In a letter entitled, "From
Harsha to Mahmud in North India," Nehru explored the initial contacts made by the
Arabs in Northern India during the eighth-century before the complete conquest several
hundred years later. According to Nehru, the Muslim conquers, particularly in Northern
India, succeeded at synthesizing various ideas from the many regions they came in
contact with and later conquered. Nehru asserted:

Thus the Arabs took much from the old Indo-Aryan culture. They took also much
from the Aryan culture of Persia, and also something from the Hellenic culture.
They were almost like a new race, in the prime of their vigor, and they took
advantage of all the old cultures they saw around them, and learnt from them; and
on this foundation they built something of their very own- the Saracenic culture. 34

Nehru also praised the Indian civilizations of the Middle Ages for peacefully
mixing Indian Aryan and Muslim traditions under the Delhi Sultanate and later Mughal
Empire. According to Nehru, Indian people worked rigorously to attain a peaceful
coexistence between Muslim and Hindu communities. To put this into context with
European events in the fourteenth and fifteenth-centuries, Nehru argued, "while kings
quarreled and destroyed each other, silent forces in India worked ceaselessly for a
synthesis, in order that the people of India might live harmoniously together and devote
their energies jointly to progress and betterment." 35 In a letter entitled, "Akbar," Nehru
admired the Mughal emperors and particularly Akbar for his recognition of the need for
Hindu and Muslim synthesis during his reign. Nehru suggested, Akbar "must have come
to the conclusion that his strength, and the nation's strength, would lie in this synthesis." 36

33 Ibid., 142.
34 Ibid., 154.
36 Ibid., 308.
For Nehru, the Middle Ages and the rule of the Mughals exemplified the ideal synthesis within India in particular.

Nehru also praised the Mongol Empire for spreading ideas and culture throughout the world during the Middle Ages. Although the empire itself became an ideal space for exchanges and synthesis of ideas, Nehru criticized the first Mongol conqueror Chengiz Khan for brutality and suppression of the civilizations he defeated. In comparison to other historical figures that Nehru thought were wrongfully considered "great," Nehru stated, "Chengiz is, without a doubt, the greatest military genius and leader in history. Alexander and Caesar seem petty before him."\(^{37}\) However, this great warrior's conquests devastated existing civilizations. In the centuries following Chengiz Khan, however, the Mongol Empire became a significant contributor to the exchange and synthesis of world ideas, especially between the East and West. In a chapter entitled, "The Mongols Dominate the World," Nehru explored the centuries after Chengiz Khan beginning with his son Oghotai who was, in contrast to Chengiz, "humane and peacefully inclined."\(^{38}\) Despite military expansions that continued after Chengiz, the Mongol court experienced several centuries of relative prosperity and stability. Nehru described the court of 1252 under Mangu Khan as a place where:

> Merchants came, especially Muslim merchants, and found the Mongols generous buyers. Artisans and astrologers and mathematicians and men who dabbled in science of the day, all gathered together in the city of tents which seemed to lord it over the world. There was a measure of peace and order over the vast Mongol Empire, and the great caravan routes across the continents were full of people going to and fro. Europe and Asia were brought into closer contact with each other.\(^{39}\)

Again, Nehru suggested that empire was not entirely distasteful and was particularly important in spreading ideas and peoples throughout the world during the Middle Ages.

After his chapter entitled "The Passing of the Middle Ages," Nehru proceeded to another era which he defined as the time from the European Renaissance to the eighteenth-century. In 159 pages, Nehru saw this period as a time of transition of Asia dominance to dominance by Europe. In Asia, Nehru examined the break-up of the

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 216.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 221.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 221.
Mughal Empire in India finally culminating in the eighteenth-century. Nehru also explored the Chinese under the Ming Dynasty at the end of the fifteenth-century as:

far ahead of Europe in wealth, industry and culture. During the whole of the Ming period, no country in Europe or elsewhere could compare with China in the happiness and artistic activity of its people. And remember that this covered the great Renaissance period in Europe.40

However, this period would be the last where Nehru described China as superior to Europe. In the concluding years of the eighteenth-century, China broke up internally and fell victim to European imperialism.

In Europe during the centuries before the nineteenth-century, Nehru focused on three themes: renaissance, reformation and revolution. Nehru saw the renaissance as a creative burst of energy steering Europe out of darkness and defined this as, “the re-birth of learning- the growth of art and science and literature, and the languages of European countries.”41 His account of the Reformation was less appreciative, explaining that it was praiseworthy to challenge the corruption of the Church, but “did not bring religious liberty to Europe.”42 Further, Nehru linked the Protestant reform movement in Europe with the new bourgeoisie, which he defined as the middle class; he accused the new bourgeoisie of utilizing “the masses in their fights against the feudal nobles. Now, having triumphed over the nobles, they ignored or sat upon the masses.” 43 Clearly, Nehru began to articulate a history more closely related to Karl Marx's interpretation of history. In the chapter entitled, “Europe on the Eve of Great Changes,” Nehru articulated the importance of three famous revolutions: the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the industrial revolution. To Nehru, “everything else that happened in Europe during these 100 years fades into insignificance when put beside these three.”44

Although Nehru saw the centuries between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth-century as ones with little exchange and synthesis, Nehru found Napoleon Bonaparte's military conquests as the only example of contact and synthesis primarily because Napoleon spread ideas between East and West. Nehru devoted twelve pages to the

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40 Ibid., 268.
41 Ibid., 276.
42 Ibid., 284.
43 Ibid., 285.
44 Ibid., 344.
accomplishments of Napoleon following his assessment of the French Revolution and seemed to both admire and loathe Napoleon:

Courage he had and self-confidence and imagination and amazing energy and vast ambition. He was a very great general, a master of the art of war, comparable to the great captains of old- Alexander and Chengiz. But he was petty also, and selfish and self-centered, and the dominating impulse of his life was not the pursuit of ideal, but the quest of personal power. \(^{45}\)

Napoleon, similar to other conquerors Nehru had discussed, had significant talents in combat and war, but lacked humanity by Nehru's standard. To Nehru, imperial conquest and empires, whether Roman, Mongol or French, were on the whole an appalling development in history, but still retained some admirable qualities, particularly providing a forum for exchange and synthesis of ideas.

Nehru particularly admired Napoleon's Egyptian campaign which he argued created sole opportunities for exchanges between the East and the West during this period. Nehru explained, "It is interesting to note, however, that Napoleon took with him to Egypt a whole crowd of savants and learned men and professors with books and all manner of apparatus. There were daily discussions of this "Institute", in which Napoleon joined as an equal, and the savants did a great deal of good work of scientific exploration." Here, Nehru appreciated the exchange of ideas among the local Egyptians and the French learned men. In addition, Nehru stated, "Wherever Napoleon went, he carried something of the French Revolution with him, and the peoples of the countries he conquered were not wholly averse to his coming. They were weary of their own effete and half-feudal rulers, who sat heavily upon them."\(^{46}\) Nehru's narrative of Napoleon served as the final instance of admiration for imperial conquest as the means to achieve exchange and synthesis. A new type of empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century emerged from the industrial revolution, capitalism, imperialism and nationalism which starkly contrasted with imperial conquests of earlier eras.

Although Nehru dealt with histories of Europe and Asia prior to the nineteenth-century in his first chapters, he devoted most of his letters to events from the industrial revolution to his presentist observations of the 1930’s. Nehru’s world history examined

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\(^{45}\) Ibid., 381.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 387.
the one-hundred years before the Great War, the Great War itself, and the years immediately following the war in 600 of the 971 pages. The nineteenth-century was the significant turning point in history, and for Nehru, the industrial revolution which he described as "The Coming of the Machine," ushered in a new era of possibilities. According to Nehru, the ultimate expression of adaptive creativity was "the tool and the machine," which "raised man above brute creation. They freed human society from the bondage of Nature." Further, Nehru believed that the industrialization of society meant "the triumph of the classes that controlled the machine." Borrowing his ideas from the Marxian interpretation of history, Nehru saw the results of industrialization as a mixed blessing. While the innovative machine undoubtedly improved the availability of food and goods, it also gave rise to capitalism which tended to exploit the poor and failed to distribute the wealth across the masses. Capitalism empowered a small group of wealthy controllers of production while disenfranchising the larger group of working people. According to Nehru who clearly accepted Lenin's idea of imperialism, Asia became subordinated to the European capitalist system which:

led inevitably to a new imperialism, for everywhere there was a demand for raw materials for manufacture and markets to sell the manufactured goods. The easiest way to have the markets and the raw materials was to take possession of the country. So there was a wild scramble among the more powerful countries for new territories.

Nehru's construction of history as synthesis halted abruptly in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries as capitalism emerged as the dominant world system, a consequence of the industrial revolution in the late eighteenth-century. Nehru saw the capitalist system as detrimental to both the working class within Europe and all the peoples of Asia and Africa who were overrun by exploitive European countries; hence he defined the nineteenth-century as the "Century of Imperialism." He further asserted that the Asian nations during the centuries after the industrial revolution "were passive and suffering agents of Europe’s policy." His historical perspective on world events explained colonization as a consequence of capitalism. Thus informed by writings of both Marx and

48 Ibid., 346.
49 Ibid., 347.
50 Ibid., 355.
51 Ibid., 407.
Lenin, Nehru saw his resistance against colonial rule as a part of the larger history of resistance against capitalism.

In addition to imperialism, European capitalist systems created two different types of nationalism. The competitive nature of capitalism and its focus on profit and wealth meant that:

Nationalism was not merely a love of one's own country, but a hatred of all others. From this glorification of one's own patch of land and contemptuous running down of others, trouble and friction between different countries were to result. Industrial rivalry and imperial rivalry between different European countries made matters worse. 52

Nehru saw the world war as a culmination of nationalist rivalries provoked by capitalism and argued European nationalism became, “the new goddess at whose altar to every patriot is supposed to worship, and in their name and on their behalf patriots fight and kill each other.” 53 In contrast, Asian nationalism "took the shape of resistance to the foreigner, who was dominating and exploiting the country.” 54 To Nehru, Asian nationalism formed as a response to capitalist imperialism.

Additionally, Nehru believed imperialism and nationalism played a significant role in the breakdown of synthesis among nations despite the newly developed world system of capitalism. In the centuries prior, Nehru viewed the growing number of contact moments between East and West as beneficial to areas that adapted new ideas from these initial meetings. In contrast, Nehru wrote:

This new Imperial Age was very different from the old imperialisms of Rome and China and India and the Arabs and Mongols. There was a new type of empire hungry for raw materials and markets. The new imperialism was the child of the new industrialism. [...] Religion, science, the love of one's own country, all were prostituted to one end- the exploitation of the weaker and industrially more backward peoples of the earth, so that the lords of the big machine, the princes of industrialism, might grow richer and richer. 55

After capitalism began to be the driving force in the world, meetings between East and West became less about synthesis and more about domination and exploitation.

52 Ibid., 401.
53 Ibid., 342.
54 Ibid., 401.
55 Ibid., 399.
Imperialism and nationalism, being the product of capitalism, prevented the spread of ideas, emphasized competition, and became the ideological obstacles that blocked progress through synthesis. To Nehru, "the narrow outlook of nationalism has made us think of separate countries far more than of the oneness of the world and the common interests of different countries."56

It is important to note here that Nehru did not view industrialization itself as detrimental to the world and progress. Nehru saw both industrialism and mechanical progress both as part of the creation of new ideas. The problems arose from the failures to exchange and synthesize these new, creative ideas from the West to the East. In this, the East became stagnate while the West was progressive and later aggressive. In a chapter entitled, "The Hundred Years Before the World War," Nehru stated, "The real difference between East and West at the time Europe was the aggressor, in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, was the medievalism of the East and the industrial and mechanical progress of the West."57 Even after the independence of India, Nehru continued to believe that adapting industrialization to India and the East remained crucial for Indian progress.

In his analysis of the First World War, Nehru argued, "the greed of capitalistic industrial countries, the rivalries of imperialist powers, clashed, and made conflict inevitable."58 In addition, the postwar period solved little in the way of nationalist rivalry. In explaining the newly formed League of Nations, Nehru asserted:

This was to be a league of free and self-governing states, and its purpose was 'to prevent future wars by establishing relations on the basis of justice and honor and to promote cooperation, material and intellectual, between the nations of the world.' A very praiseworthy purpose!59

In many ways, the aims of the League would promote an environment open to the important exchange and synthesis of ideas. However, Nehru noted, "Whatever may have been the original intention of President Wilson about it, there can be no doubt that the League has been a tool in the hands of the great Powers, and especially England and France." The League of Nations, "signifies the continuation of old imperialist

56 Ibid., 485.
57 Ibid., 401.
58 Ibid., 625.
59 Ibid., 681.
To Nehru, the world war and years following favored a trend of competitive nationalism over world cooperation and synthesis.

In his final two chapters, Nehru eloquently summarized his views about world history and the continually increasing interconnectivity of the world. He wrote:

> Our incursions into history have shown us how the world has grown more and more compact, how different parts have come together and become interdependent. The world has indeed become one single, inseparable whole, each part influencing, and being influenced by, the other. It is quite impossible now to have a separate history of nations. We have outgrown that stage, and only a single world history, connecting the different threads from all the nations, and seeking to find the real forces that move them, can now be written with any useful purpose.  

Clearly, Nehru believed world history meant the process of the world becoming a tighter global network. Nationalism and the concept of privileging a nation-state, for Nehru, were the antithesis of his own ideal internationalism, the synthesis between East and West, Asia and Europe. His promotion of mixing progressive elements from various parts of the world and the sharing of new ideas was important in his history, and later proved to be the premise of his initiatives as prime minister of a newly independent India, particularly the policy of nonalignment.

**IV. Education as an Influence on Nehru's World History**

Nehru's own past and experiences are crucial to understanding his world history. Nehru was born in 1889 into a wealthy, Kashmiri Brahmin family. His father, Motilal, practiced law in Allahabad and had become extremely successful. Motilal appreciated the Western lifestyle and created a Western style residence. The Nehru family often indulged in Western luxuries that only the wealthiest British could afford in Allahabad during the early twentieth-century. For example, the Nehru family owned motor cars and had a swimming pool. In addition, Motilal raised Nehru in a home situated in the 'Civil Lines', an isolated place where only the elite British resided. Motilal Nehru surrounded Jawaharlal Nehru with British neighbors, promoted British social behavior at home and in public, and eventually sent his son to Britain to be educated.

Nehru received formal education at Harrow, a premier boarding school just outside London between the years 1905 and 1907 having left India at the age of fifteen.

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60 Ibid., 683.
61 Ibid., 947.
At Harrow, Nehru excelled in academics and impressed the faculty. Typically in his letters home to his father, Nehru wrote about Indian politics which were becoming more of an interest to him. Nehru seldom wrote specifically about his studies other than that he was doing quite well in all subject areas except Latin and Scripture. After leaving Harrow, Nehru wrote:

> I have left Harrow at last and left it for good. And strange as it may seem I was quite sorry to do so. I would not have believed this myself a few days before, yet such was the case. I did not know, till my last day at Harrow, how attached I had grown to the place.  

Originally, Nehru's father, at this time a moderate leader in the Indian National Congress, hoped Nehru would join the high ranks of the Indian Civil Service once he returned to India. However, only the British could serve in the ICS and as an alternative, his father urged the young Nehru to attend Cambridge University. From October of 1907 to 1910, Nehru studied science at Trinity College focusing on Chemistry, Geography and Botany. While Nehru was a successful and impressive student at Harrow, his performance at Trinity was mediocre, however, he became increasingly involved in many recreational sports including tennis, riding and rowing. After completing his work at Trinity College, Nehru joined the Inner Temple in London between the years of 1910 and 1912 where he studied for the bar and socialized among his old school acquaintances from Harrow. This was a time of lavish spending and Nehru often found himself in debt and requesting money from his father. Upon passing the bar, Nehru returned to India in August 1912 with the qualifications of a barrister.

Biographers of Nehru have varied in their accounts of how influential Nehru's British education was on his later years as a nationalist leader and prime minister. Gopal described Nehru's years in Britain as "Unformative Years," and made little connection between his intellectual education and his later views about the world. According to Gopal, Nehru, "emerged from seven years in England, having passed through the mill of a traditional education, with no confidence in himself or interest in the world." Instead,

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63 The British refused Indian admittance into the ICS until 1920 and Nehru narrowly missed such an opportunity by completing his education in 1912.
65 Ibid., 10.
Gopal believed Nehru's British education shaped Nehru's social values to be more similar to British norms. In contrast, Judith Brown suggested that Nehru's experiences and education in Britain significantly informed Nehru's own perspectives of the world, particularly his exposure to intellectual training and science. From his years at Harrow and Cambridge, Nehru gained a significant appreciation of modern science and its applications to ways of thinking about the world. Similar to Gopal, Brown also suggested that Nehru's grooming in the British educational system shaped Nehru into an Indian adhering to British social values and norms. She wrote, "Indian contemporaries later complained that Nehru was too much a gentleman, and worse, and English gentleman."\(^{66}\)

While Brown gave more significance to the formative years of young Nehru's life in Britain than Gopal, Lahiri argued that Nehru was entirely transformed in his thinking during his years at Harrow, Trinity and the Inner Temple. In her book *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930*, Lahiri addressed the student population in Britain who temporarily resided in the metropole for purposes of Western education in law, medicine, or preparation for the Indian Civil Service exam.\(^{67}\) Lahiri argued that Nehru's own political philosophy came from many ideas introduced to him in Britain, specifically, "Nehru owed much of his humanism, rationalism and liberalism to the European enlightenment tradition."\(^{68}\) Such ideas would become important to Nehru and serve as a premise for the continuation of parliamentary style democracy, a civil service, constitutionalism and the legal system in independent India. Lahiri also attributed Nehru's ideas about socialism to his readings and attendance at lectures by Fabian socialists such as Bernard Shaw.

From the more contemporary analyses of Nehru by Lahiri and Brown, one could conclude that Nehru's education in Britain significantly influenced his world history.

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\(^{67}\) Lahiri's contribution remains important, particularly because many students studying in Britain prior to the two world wars would later shape both the nationalist movement in Indian and construct policies in the newly independent nation after 1947. Clearly, Nehru was no exception and Lahiri dedicated several pages to Nehru as an example for her book. Lahiri found the Indian student response to living in Britain as ambivalent and a constantly negotiated terrain for identity. Similarly, Antoinette Burton in *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (1998) argued that Indian identity in Britain was negotiated and contested. Indians had to choose to reject or assimilate ideas introduced by their experiences in the metropole.

However, this conclusion may be misleading. Nehru's education seemed to inform his ideas of progress and European historical chronology, but could not account for his ideas about synthesis, world cooperation or the Marxian theory embedded in *Glimpses of World History*. Certainly, Nehru adhered to ideas founded in nineteenth-century British epistemology including the belief in progress and science which would have been introduced to the young Nehru at Harrow and Trinity College. In *Glimpses of World History*, Nehru wrote:

> As the nineteenth century progressed the rate of change became ever faster. Science produced wonder after wonder, and an endless pageant of discovery changed the life of the people greatly, like the telegraph, the telephone, the automobile and later the aeroplane. Science dared to measure the farthest heavens and also the invisible atom and its still smaller counterparts. It lessened the drudgery of man, and life became easier for millions.69

Additionally, Harrow and Trinity College introduced Nehru to Eurocentric historical narratives that privileged European periodization to define the past. As already discussed, Nehru attempted to present world history comprehensively, yet still he worked Asian histories into an existing European historical narrative.

While Nehru's history also embraced socialist theory, Nehru's British education did not inform Nehru ideas of socialism expressed in *Glimpses of World History*. His education certainly could have served as an introduction to socialist ideas because Nehru attended Bernard Shaw's lectures on Fabian socialism while at Trinity College. However, in mentioning the Bernard Shaw lecture, Nehru wrote:

> The lecturer was George Bernard Shaw, about whom you must have heard a good deal. I was more interested in the man than in the subject of the lecture, and that was the reason for my going there.70

Nehru's socialist model of world history presented in *Glimpses of World History* resembled more closely interpretations by Marx and Lenin, not Fabian socialists like Bernard Shaw. In many aspects, his travels abroad between 1926 and 1927 to places other than Britain shaped his perception of the world and world history.

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While Nehru's British education made an impact of his views on progress and historical periodization, in *Glimpses of World History* his synthesis of ideas between East and West was significantly more complex. While his education in Britain had given him a basic introduction to ideas about reason, science, progress and socialism, Nehru's own travels abroad, outside of Britain, enabled him to construct more clearly his perspective of world history that can be seen in *Glimpses of World History*.

V. Life Experiences and Travels Significantly Impacted Nehru's World History

In the interim period between his return from Britain in August 1912 and his travels abroad between 1926 and 1927, Nehru married a young Kashmiri woman, practiced law with his father and became active in local politics. Nehru displayed little interest in marriage in his letters to his father from Trinity College, but his father quickly arranged a marriage in February 1916 between his eldest son and Kamala Kaul, a young Kashmiri woman from the same caste as the Nehrus. Much like Nehru's education and career paths, Nehru's father was the coordinator, and Nehru followed whatever wishes Motilal expressed. Later, in 1917, Kamala gave birth to a daughter, Indira. This would be the couple's only surviving child before two miscarriages in 1924 and 1928.

Nehru showed the same disinterest for law as he did for marriage, yet continued to work in his father's practice. Nehru also assisted his father in running *The Independent*, a local newspaper founded by Motilal in 1919. Nehru found this more interesting than law and often wrote pieces for the paper in response to political activities in Allahabad. In addition to practicing law and beginning married life, Nehru also became involved in local politics. The infamous leader of the Indian National Congress, Mohandas Gandhi, began his first major non-violence protest or satyagrah in 1920. Nehru's father invited Gandhi to his home several times in 1919 to discuss ideas and Indian nationalist politics. After several meetings between only Motilal Nehru and Gandhi, Nehru met Gandhi in 1919. Nehru believed Gandhi's satyagrah was a significantly better path to challenge the British than the moderate politics of the Indian National Congress, and Nehru spent much of the years between 1920 and 1923 traveling the United Province promoting the satyagrah movement. It was his activities within the United Province that made him a locally recognized figure of the nationalist movement. In 1923, Nehru took on several
important roles within the Congress, serving as the secretary of the UP Provincial Congress Committee, a provincial division of the Indian National Congress, and as the general secretary of the All-India Congress Committee. Finally, Nehru was elected to the Allahabad Municipal Board and chosen as the chair. Nehru also experienced imprisonment for the first time when both Nehru and his father were detained from December 1921 to March 1922 for associating with the satyagrah movement. Later, the British arrested Nehru again for organizing satyagrah protests, and he remained in prison from 12 May 1922 until 31 January 1923.

On 1 March 1926, the Nehru family departed India for Switzerland in order to accompany Kamala who was suffering from an unknown illness. While doctors in India were unsure of the diagnosis of Kamala, the physicians in Switzerland officially diagnosed Kamala with tuberculosis. She underwent treatment throughout much of 1926 and 1927. Nehru also brought young Indira along and sent her to boarding school in Switzerland in 1927. The family stayed in Geneva for several months and then moved on to Montana, a small town in the Alps, for the remaining year. During these two years, Nehru found time to attend lectures in Switzerland, to travel to Brussels for a conference and to the Soviet Union before returning to India.

Nehru's ideas about contact moments and synthesis found in *Glimpses of World History* can be traced to his time spent in Geneva, Switzerland. Nehru tried to keep busy with lectures and courses, although he left no clear record of specific courses he attended. Judith Brown noted that Geneva was the home of the League of Nations and International Labor Office during 1926 and 1927 offering opportunities to meet important leaders and scholars. In a letter to his colleague in India, Syed Mahmud, Nehru wrote:

> Geneva is full of all kinds of special courses and lectures and I am attending a number of these lectures. On the whole they are interesting and as the lecturers belong to most of the different European nationalities, their varying viewpoints are instructive. 71

Nehru appreciated the opportunity to learn ideas from a wide range of Europeans and such experiences evidenced an early indication of his belief in the usefulness of a place to exchange ideas from different nations.

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While in Switzerland, Nehru also wrote an article challenging British rule in India which reflected Nehru's ideas found in *Glimpses of World History* that highlighted the fact that important contact moments in the nineteenth-century were more about domination and less about synthesis. While Nehru had already published some articles in the *Independent* challenging British rule, "The Psychology of Nationalism" was an important internationally read piece that appeared January 1927 in *The Review of Nations* in Geneva. Nehru wrote the article in an attempt to legitimate the Indian National Congress demands for home rule to a larger European audience. Nehru explained his use of the word "Psychology." By this he meant "viewpoint,":

The Indian being the under-dog has at least tried to understand the psychology of his rulers, not with great success it must be admitted, for the passion any lack of sympathy make it difficult to appreciate another. But the English have not had even this inducement and the average Englishman is singularly incapable of appreciating, or even trying to appreciate a viewpoint different from his own.  

Nehru explained how natural this psychology was:

That India desires to control her world affairs and to regain her lost dignity is natural enough and requires no explanation or justification. The psychology of Indian Nationalism is fundamentally the same as that of any other nation striving to rid itself of alien domination.

In his description of British treatment of Indians, Nehru denounced his own education by explaining that Britain, "had made us despise even the good that was in our culture and by a system of education, which taught us false or perverted history, had turned us into a nation of clerks and underlings." In addition, the article demonstrated that Nehru had begun to formulate his historical views of synthesis. Nehru argued:

Perhaps a healthy contact between the two types [of British and Indian races] would have done good to both by humanizing them more and toning down their angularities. But there is little of health, where an alien race governs another, however good intentions might be.

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72 The full length article was republished in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2.
73 Ibid., 259.
74 Ibid., 260.
75 Ibid., 266.
76 Ibid., 259.
Both races had lost the opportunities for exchange and British imperialism dominated over instead of intermixed with Indians.

In this period, Nehru's participation in the Brussels Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism also proved to be significant in the formulation of many of his ideas found in his world history. Until 1926, Nehru appreciated and explored ideas that were primarily European, but this changed when he attended the conference in Brussels in February 1927. The organizers of the International Congress invited leaders from all over the world, particularly outside of Europe, in an effort to create a collective movement to combat imperialism. In a letter to his father in November 1926, Nehru suggested the Indian National Congress send representatives to this Congress:

This league is attempting to gather in one fold all organizations interested in combating imperialism in every shape. It has succeeded in getting a great deal of support from nearly 400 organizations interested in combating imperialism in every shape. [...] The Congress at Brussels is likely to be a very representative one and it would be highly desirable to have some representatives of the Indian National Congress, for after all the most menacing imperialism of the day is the British imperialism in India.  

The Indian National Congress (INC) appointed Nehru as the INC delegate to attend the Brussels Congress. Nehru was unsure what might come of the international meeting, but did suggest the Congress would be beneficial because it will, "give us a chance to meet people from all quarters of the world."  

Nehru arrived in Brussels on the sixth of February 1927 along with diplomats from a myriad of regions of the world in order to discuss strategies against imperialism. It was the first time Nehru came in contact with such a wide variety of public figures from China, Egypt, Persia, Syria, the Dutch East Indies, Korea, and South America. Labor activists from Britain, Holland and the United States were also in attendance. The Congress took place on Belgian Government property in a building Nehru described as an old palace. Nehru arrived early and participated in preliminary, informal meetings held between the seventh and eighth of February 1927, while the formal, public sessions of the Congress began on the tenth. In addition to attending the sessions, Nehru participated on the Presiding Committee which met daily and compiled the agenda for each day of the

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77 Ibid., 251.
78 Ibid., 251.
Congress. Here, other nations recognized Nehru as world political figure for India, and here he also began to see imperialism in India as part of a wider, world problem.

Nehru's experiences at the Brussels Congress meeting directly influenced his ideas in *Glimpses of World History* about the privileged status of India and China as the center of Asian history. Nehru became interested in the events in China and saw China, like India, as a victim to European hegemony. According to Nehru, India had an obligation to help China in any way against British aggression. Nehru believed China and India were the major battlefronts against imperialism, particularly British imperialism. From the Brussels Congress, Nehru wrote:

> China is holding out her hand of comradeship to India. It is for us to grasp it and to renew our ancient and honourable association and thereby ensure the freedom and progress of both these great countries, which have so much in common.79

Such an idea was mutually shared between Nehru and the Chinese representatives from the Kuomintang regime. Nehru presented this belief in a common bond between China and India in his world history and held to it throughout his years as a nationalist leader and prime minister. From the Brussels Congress, Nehru saw India and China as two central regions of the world in the struggle against imperialism and this would later directly inform his focus on India and China in his world history.

The Brussels Congress certainly shaped Nehru's ideas about the importance of contact moments and the necessity of exchange and synthesis of ideas found in his world history. Only three days after arriving, Nehru released a statement to the press at Brussels stating, "Contact between the various peoples will lead to a better understanding of each other's problems and difficulties and is bound to result in closer cooperation which must bring success nearer to us all."80 For Nehru, the Brussels Congress represented a contact moment that served as an international forum for the exchange and synthesis of ideas. After the Brussels Congress in a letter to Gandhi in April 1927, Nehru wrote:

> It is solely with a view to self-education and self-improvement that I desire external contacts. I am afraid we are terribly narrow in our outlook and the sooner we get rid of this narrowness the better. Our salvation can of course come only

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79 Ibid., 327
80 Ibid., 270.
from the internal strength that we may evolve but one of the methods of evolving such strength should be study of other people and their ideas.⁸¹

In many ways, his experience at the Congress enabled Nehru to grow intellectually by exchanging ideas from his counterparts all over the world and this left a significant impression on him and his ideas about world history.

In addition, the Brussels Congress shaped Nehru's ideas about socialism, more so than his introduction to British Fabian socialists in Britain. Contact with other socialists at the conference introduced Nehru to new ideas about the world that he could apply to India. In his report to the Indian National Congress, Nehru wrote:

The whole basis of the League [the Congress proposed to establish a League Against Imperialism] is that imperialism and capitalism go hand in hand and back up each other and neither of them will disappear till both are put down. An endeavour is therefore made to join the forces against imperialism and capitalism and by this coordination to strengthen the two. So far nationalism of a narrow variety has been the main pillar of capitalism and imperialism in the imperialist countries.⁸²

While Nehru's history would later reflect a more Leninist approach that argued imperialism grew out of capitalism, clearly Nehru articulated a growing recognition that capitalism and imperialism were directly linked. Nehru's perspective of history in the nineteenth-century shared many ideas with his articulation of the goals of the League Against Imperialism. The conference served as an important forum for Nehru to encounter many different socialist views of the world and to form his own ideas about socialism as applicable to India.

Even Nehru's view of world cooperation and international organizations can be traced to his experiences at the Brussels Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism. As previously mentioned, Nehru perceived the League of Nations as a tool for the capitalist nations, particularly England and France, to control and exploit their own imperialist holdings. Nehru admitted that the intentions might have been praiseworthy, but the consequence of the League of Nations was an increase in intense competitive nationalism not the exchange and synthesis of new ideas. In Nehru's world history, the League of Nations served as an example of the failure of international

⁸¹ Ibid., 326.
⁸² Ibid., 287.
organization to establish world cooperation in the twentieth-century. During the meeting in Brussels, Nehru first encountered these ideas about the League of Nations:

Many speakers at the Brussels Congress spoke disparagingly of the League of Nations and called it a League of Governments. They referred rather grandiloquently to their Congress as the true League of Nations or Peoples. This is, for the present at least, an exaggerated description but there is a germ of truth in it and it is in the interest of the Indian Congress to be associated with an organization which might play a big role in the future. \(^{83}\)

From this, it remained clear that Nehru had not given up on international organizations and world cooperation, but saw the League of Nations as controlled by exploitive capitalist governments that worked against cooperation.

At the Congress, Nehru recognized the significance of it as a world organization where contact moments and intellectual exchange could occur and consequently benefit all involved. This idea would be adapted to Nehru's world history which idealized moments of contact and synthesis. Nehru's initial thoughts on the Congress clearly indicate the origins of his appreciation for international organization as a means to create a place for the exchange of ideas:

I do not expect much from it [the League Against Imperialism] and indeed I am quite sure that none of the members of the so-called imperialist or oppressing nations will help us in the least whenever their interests conflict with ours. I have no illusions about their altruism. But I welcome all legitimate methods of getting into touch with other countries and peoples so that we may be able to understand their viewpoint and world politics generally. \(^{84}\)

Nehru remained extremely uncertain, even skeptical, of the impact of the League Against Imperialism and the intentions of many of the members. However, Nehru recognized its significance in creating a peaceful space for contact which later became key in *Glimpses of World History*.

Nehru's trip to the Soviet Union in November 1927 also played an important role in informing Nehru's historical ideas about both synthesis and socialism. Both Nehru and his father received an invitation by the Soviet government to attend the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Soviet Revolution in Moscow. While father and son only stayed in the Soviet Union for three days, the visit left a significant impression on Nehru who became

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\(^{83}\) Ibid., 287.

\(^{84}\) Ibid., 326.
fascinated by Soviet socialism and consequently read anything written on the Soviet Union. He also wrote a series articles about his trip published individually in *The Hindu*, an Indian publication, during 1928 and were later published together in a book entitled, *Soviet Russia, Some Random Sketches and Impressions*. His writings reflected a growing interest in the intellectual background and consequences of the Russian Revolution.

To Nehru, the Soviet Union represented a place of contact and synthesis between East and West which he would eventual emphasize in his world history. Nehru wrote, "In Moscow, Asia peeps out from every corner, not tropical Asia, but the Asia of the wide steppes and the cold regions of the North and East and centre." Nehru admired the city and concluded his impressions by stating, "We came away with regret and with the desire to see again its golden domes shining in the sun, and its streets and squares full of strange peoples from East and the West." Similar to Nehru's perception that the Brussels Congress represented an international forum for contact and exchange, Moscow also served as another promising example of contact moments between East and West which would later influence Nehru's in his own thought about the world.

While many would argue that Nehru's ideas about socialism came from his experiences with Fabian Socialists in Britain, his trip to the Soviet Union was more instrumental in shaping his own interpretations of history and in his practical uses of socialism when prime minister. Because Nehru believed in democracy and political equality, it might have been assumed that Nehru followed the evolutionary socialist school of thought expressed by Fabian Socialists. However, in 1927, Nehru subscribed to the idea that the Soviet Union offered both political and economic freedom. Nehru explained:

> Each constituency has the right to recall its representatives in any soviet at any time. In other countries, as is well-known, representatives to the legislatures are elected for a fixed period of three or four or five years and cannot be recalled.

Additionally, Nehru differed from Fabian socialist in the means of attaining a socialist society. Nehru was impressed by the Russian example of revolution that had introduced

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85 The collection of articles has been reprinted in *Selected Works*, vol. 2.
86 Ibid., 387.
87 Ibid., 390.
88 Ibid., 395.
an entirely new society, classless and equal. However, Nehru also disapproved of the violence Lenin initiated throughout the Soviet Union. For Nehru, social change required revolution, but his own ideas about revolution would be deeply grounded in Gandhian ideas of nonviolence. Three years later in *Glimpses of World History*, Nehru directly addressed Indira in the beginning by writing, "Born in the month of the great revolution which ushered in a new era in Russia, you are now witness to a revolution in your own country, and soon you may be an actor in it." To Nehru, the ideas formulated in the Soviet Union, "may be of help to us in our own country."

Nehru's ideas about socialism and Marx also originated from the immense amount of literature Nehru read before and after his trip to the Soviet Union as evidenced in two articles Nehru wrote for an Indian audience suggesting several fundamental books that helped him understand socialism, communism, and the Russian revolution. Nehru read an eclectic collection of books written including Marx, Lenin, Kautsky and Trotsky, as well as secondary sources published throughout the world including Britain and the United States. Nehru also recommended reading two memoirs of the Russian Revolution, M. Phillips Price's *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution* and John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*. Nehru's suggestions spanned a large variety of interpretations of socialism, communism and the Soviet Revolution. The books were all published in the 1920's, long after Nehru's years at Harrow and Cambridge. His in depth exploration of socialism that became the basis of his history grew out of his intense curiosity about what he saw in the Soviet Union in 1927. Nehru may have been introduced to socialism in Britain; however, his more formative experiences came from the Brussels Congress, trip to the Soviet Union and the studies Nehru read of socialism, communism and the Russian Revolution during the 1920's.

V. Nehru's Reading While in Prison as an Influence on his History

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90 Ibid., 548.
91 For a complete listing of the books Nehru recommended on the Soviet Union, please see Appendix B. The published article can be found in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2.
In addition to Nehru's travels abroad and participation in the Brussels Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, Nehru's own intellectual exploration through his reading continued to be equally important in forming the views he expressed _Glimpses of World History_. Before his imprisonment in April 1930, Nehru returned from his travels abroad with renewed vigor and motivation to challenge the British government. In 1929, Nehru emerged into the spotlight of Indian politics as the newly elected president of the Indian National Congress (INC) where he worked closely with Gandhi, now his mentor. Nehru became the spokesman of the INC and a central figure in both national and international politics. The British arrested Nehru for his leadership in the Salt Boycott beginning in 1930. He remained in prison from 14 April 1930 to 11 October 1930 and again from 19 October 1930 to 26 January 1931. After a brief break from incarceration, the British arrested Nehru again and detained him from 26 December 1931 to 5 February 1932. It was during these imprisonments that Nehru spent countless hours reading various books and composing _Glimpses of World History_. In the original preface to _Glimpses of World History_, Nehru wrote, "Twelve years ago, however, when, in common with large numbers of my countrymen and country women, I started my pilgrimages to prison, I developed the habit of making notes of the books I read. My note-books\(^{92}\) grew in number and they came to my rescue when I started writing."\(^93\) By examining the books Nehru read in prison, one gains an understanding of other types of ideas informing Nehru's world history.\(^{94}\)

Nehru's choices of books read in prison reflected eclectic interests. From this list of books, one can find the intellectual depth of this young politician and his willingness to read and accept multiple ideas about the world and synthesize such ideas into to his own way of thinking about the world. For example, Nehru feared he would loose his reading knowledge of French and read many French plays in order to practice. Nehru also explored fiction for pleasure, although many of his choices seemed to be reflected

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\(^{92}\) Nehru kept notes of the books that he read throughout his imprisonment and used such notes to assist him in constructing his history. While these notes are not published in _Selected Works_, the books he read are listed in the publication to give the reader an idea of the materials Nehru was using to inform his narrative.


\(^{94}\) For a complete list of the books Nehru read in prison between 1930 and 1934 that were listed in his _Selected Works_ see Appendix C.
twentieth-century criticism such as Anatole France's *The Revolt of Angels*. Nehru also read prison texts, travel literature, philosophical writing, historical works and socialist books from all over Europe, not simply from Britain. Nehru examined classics such as *War and Peace* and the collected works of William Shakespeare, and also biographies and political histories written by other political leaders including Winston Churchill. Overall, Nehru's choices of texts to read in prison reflected a wide variety of topics and cultures.

While all of his book choices remain important and require further analysis, Nehru recognized one book, H.G. Wells's *Outline of World History*, as particularly important in his own construction of world history. In his preface Nehru wrote, "Other books of course helped me greatly, among them inevitably, H.G. Wells's *Outline of World History.*"95 However, biographers and writers often mistake this statement to mean that Nehru's history resembled or even mirrored Wells's narrative. Nehru's socialist perspective of world history in the Nineteenth-century has also been attributed to his reading of H.G. Wells and other British Fabian Socialists. In fact, Nehru embarked on a project similar to Wells in creating a world history for the purpose of illustrating the need to understand the world without a narrow nationalist perspective, but Nehru produced a significantly different narrative. Often, Nehru's world history criticized Wells's Eurocentric narrative and demonstrated the importance of Asian history generally and Indian history in particular. While both Wells and Nehru wrote under the assumption that the world was progressing, the driving forces behind historical progress in the world that they identified were significantly different. It was true that Nehru recognized Wells as a useful reference, but claiming that Nehru wrote a similar world history to that of Wells is wrong.

First published in 1920, H.G. Wells wrote *Outline of World History* as a means of explaining the dramatic events that unfolded in the First World War. In the aftermath of the war, Wells wrote, "There can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas. Without such ideas to hold them together in harmonious co-operation, with nothing but narrow, selfish, and conflicting nationalist traditions, races and peoples

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are bound to drift towards conflict and destruction."^{96} Wells organized his 1126 page book into distinct chapters titled by topics. His first seven chapters recounted a history based on Darwinian ideas of natural selection, which traced the evolution of plants and animals to the first man. With titles such as "Early Thought," and "Races of Mankind," chapters nine through thirteen examined the first men and their progress in developing ideas, gathering in different regions to settle into one geographical area, and becoming agricultural. Chapter fourteen entitled, "The First Civilizations," introduced Wells's idea of civilization, "the settlement of men upon an area continuously cultivated and possessed, who live in buildings continuously inhabited with a common rule and a common city or citadel."^{97} With this introduction, Wells wrote the next fourteen chapters based on early civilizations such as Egypt, Knossos, Judea, Greece, Rome and Carthage. Only one chapter, "Seven Centuries in Asia," discussed any history outside of European historical narratives and only focused on China, without any detailed description. Wells proceeded in his world history to several chapters on religion, particularly Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with a small insignificant chapter on Buddhism which Wells criticized for its "primitive" nature. In several chapters, tracing the European Renaissance, rise of monarchies, American and French Revolutions, the career of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the nineteenth-century, Wells completely abandoned any history of regions outside of Europe. His final two chapters traced the political history of the First World War, while his concluding chapter offered his own ideas on how to create an ideal world based on universal religion and education.

In a general sense, Nehru's ideas in *Glimpses of World History* about progress certainly resembled those of Wells's as a narrative of progress through ideas. Both authors subscribed to the belief that the world was continuously improving or getting better, but progressing toward what ultimate goal and by what means? Wells wrote:

> Slowly more and more men apprehend the reality of human brotherhood, the needlessness of wars and cruelties and oppression, the possibilities of a common purpose for the whole of our kind. In every generation thereafter there is the evidence of men seeking for that better order to which they feel our world must come. But everywhere and wherever in any man the great constructive ideas have

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^{97} Ibid., 131.
taken hold, the hot greeds, the jealousies, the suspicions and impatience that are in
the nature of every one of us, war against the struggle towards greater and broader
purposes. The last twenty-three centuries of history are like the efforts of some
impulsive, hasty immortal to think clearly and live rightly. Wells believed that the European Christian way of life was the clear path for one to "live
rightly," and world progress depended on the spread of both European and Christian
ideas. According to Wells, the greatest progress of mankind was the advent of world
religions to introduce a single universal order. Wells believed religion was the driving
force of world history, but not any religion. While Judaism and Islam were both
praiseworthy for ideas of one universal rule, Judaism was simply a "primitive" form of
Christianity and Islam was corrupt and fragmented by the struggles over caliphates. Only
Christianity had the opportunity to unite the world. Progress depended on the spread of
Christian ideas throughout the world. In stark contrast, Nehru's based his definition of
progress on more effective uses of science and reason. Nehru dismissed religion
altogether in his world history.

Perhaps Nehru's world history most closely resembled that of Wells in the use of
European historical periodization. Nehru's world history left European periodization
unchallenged, but instead added Asian histories into the standing narrative constructed by
European historians. Similar to most European scholars, Wells privileged the events in
European history as the primary context to analyze the history of the world. In fact, Wells
rarely wrote specific events and details of Asian history unless such history directly
affected Europe. For example, Wells's primary reason for including the Mongols in his
history was to suggest another lost opportunity for Christendom to unite the world under
its faith. In Europe, the Great Schism in the fourteenth century divided the church and
because of this disorganization, Wells wrote, "When at last the church was reunited and
missionary energy returned with the foundation of the order of the Jesuits, the days of
opportunity were over. The possibility of a world-wide moral unification of East and
West through Christianity had passed away." Even so, Wells completely eliminated
Asian history from his narrative beginning with the European Renaissance onward until

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98 Ibid., 308.
99 Ibid., 687.
the conclusion, only referencing India, China and Africa with small, if any, addendums at the end of each chapter.

While Nehru followed the periodization of Wells and other European historians, Nehru's ideas sought to directly challenge Wells's Eurocentric narrative by emphasizing the importance of Asian nations like India and China. For example, in Nehru's chapter entitled, "The World of Ashoka's Time," Nehru wrote:

For a long time Europeans imagined that ancient history meant only the history of Greece and of Rome and of the Jews. All the rest of the world apparently was a wilderness in those days, according to their old way of thinking. [...] So we must be on our guard, and must not think that our limited knowledge compasses all that has taken place in this world of ours. 100

Nehru not only criticized European narrow-mindedness, but also feared that his own world history might fail in the same type of exclusionary shortcomings.

Equally important, Wells's history advocated religion and education as historical forces driving world progress while Nehru's emphasized contact moments and synthesis. Wells wrote, "Religion and education, those closely interwoven influences, have made possible the greater human societies we have traced in this Outline; they have been the chief synthetic forces throughout this great story of enlarging human co-operations that we have traced from its beginnings."101 Although Wells called world religions the chief synthetic forces, the mass conversion into one universal belief, Christianity, could be the only remedy for war and conflict in the twentieth-century. None of Nehru's ideas about contact moments and synthesis could possibly be traced to Wells's promotion of a world dominated by one idea. Nehru's entire premise of progress depended on the multiplicity of ideas from all over the world being exchanged and synthesized. In fact, Nehru's world history reflected the antithesis of Wells's argument for the domination of world Christendom.

While both Wells and Nehru account for a severe breakdown in world cooperation climaxing in the First World War, Nehru's interpretation of the conflicts

between nations significantly differed from Wells's. Applying Marxist and Leninst ideas, Nehru believed world synthesis and cooperation abruptly ended in the nineteenth-century when the competitive nature of the capitalist system and its offshoots, nationalism and imperialism, created inevitable divisions and conflicts among nations. Wells, on the other hand, believed the conflict among nations began in the Middle Ages and the failure of the church to unite its own people. This opened opportunities for men vying for power to splinter away from the church into separate monarchies. According to Wells, "We have seen how Machiavellian monarchy set itself up against the spirit of brotherhood in Christendom, and how Machiavellian monarchy developed throughout a large part of Europe into the Grand Monarchies and Parliamentary Monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." According to Wells, in place of the monarchies rose nations which further splintered the unification of Christianity. With the rise of nationalism, Europeans began competing over political, not economic, power over colonial possessions earlier in the Americas and later in Asia and Africa. To Wells, imperialism signified still another lost opportunity for European Christians to unite the world under Christendom. Instead, the European nations continued to compete under ideas of nationalist interest. Wells criticized European imperialism not for its atrocities to their colonies, but for the inability of European nations to unite under one system and take over the rest of the world. While both Nehru and Wells perhaps agreed that nationalism was primarily at fault for the explosive condition of international politics in the early twentieth-century, the comprehensive historical deterioration of world cooperation was entirely different in the two narratives. Wells sought a more spiritual explanation found in the ideas of Christianity and the links Christianity had with political structure, while Nehru utilized a more economic approach relying heavily on the ideas of Marx and Lenin.

Even Wells's and Nehru's ideas on socialism drastically contrasted in their respective world histories. As it has been previously argued in this essay, Nehru's world history resembled more radical ideas about socialism and revolution, closely linked with Lenin. Wells, connected with the Fabian Society in London most certainly advocated evolutionary socialism during his lifetime. However, interestingly, Wells's ideas about

102 Ibid., 793.
class struggle, Marxism and socialism were not a part of Wells's history until page 935 and in fact, Wells's history did not find class struggle important in history prior to the nineteenth-century. Wells also believed socialist theory was incomplete and desperately needed further clarification in order to truly reform society:

the gist of the socialist proposal is that land and all the natural means of production, transit, and distribution should be collectively owned. Within these limits there is to be much free private ownership and unrestricted personal freedom. Given efficient administration, it may be doubted whether many people nowadays would dispute that proposal. But socialism has never gone on to a thorough examination of that proviso for efficient administration. 103

Wells believed an efficient administration in a newly formed socialist society should be based on universal religion and education. Wells's history barely reflected socialist historical analysis or its goals.

In a final look at the clear dissimilarities between Nehru and Wells historical perspectives, Nehru's ideas about world cooperation and international organization considerably differed from Wells's idealized world. In Glimpses of World History, Nehru's ideal world was one of plurality, cooperation and international organizations with many nations articulating different ideas and beliefs. Wells's history concluded with the idea of a single world state government ruled by a single law and religion. Such a world state would privilege European ideas, values and the Christian religion. Seemingly, Wells's history sought to legitimate European domination and imperialism through political and religious structures. Certainly, Nehru, himself a Gandhian nationalist challenging the British Raj, could not have been influenced by Wells's assertion that world order would be ushered in by an era of world domination by European Christians.

At best, Nehru's world history served as a challenge and response to the widely read bestseller by H. G. Wells. Nehru's recognition of Wells's book led many scholars to draw parallels between the two works; however, it remains clear that Nehru was reacting to the Eurocentric, Religious based interpretation of world history. Nehru's world history became an answer to or an alternative to the narrow-minded world history produced by Wells.

103 Ibid., 947.
VI. The Significance of *Glimpses of World History*

As an early example that emphasizes the importance of examining the past from a world historical framework, *Glimpses of World History* contributes to the growing recognition of the inadequacies of national histories and necessity for a new way of examining the past. Nehru's ideas about contact moments, exchange, synthesis, socialism, world cooperation and world organizations certainly remain relevant in a contemporary society that speaks to more contemporary notions of a "global village" and "global economy." Nehru's world history proves that Nehru envisioned the insufficiency of the nation-state much earlier in a time thought to be dominated by nationalist ideology. An analysis of *Glimpses of World History* also criticizes the narrow scope of colonial and postcolonial studies which tend to examine exchange patterns only between metropole and colony and the erroneous analysis it can lead to. However, Nehru's world history moved beyond imperial studies to challenge the failure of national histories to offer an understanding of world exchange and interconnectivity found in the past.

*Glimpses of World History* also provides a window into Nehru's formation of ideas and ways certain sources influenced his thinking. One can clearly see that British experiences, primarily that of his British education and reading of British Fabian Socialists such as H.G. Wells, played an important role in provoking Nehru to challenge traditional European constructions of world history. Additionally many of Nehru's ideas about world history originated out of his own experiences with world organizations and travel beyond Britain. Looking beyond the colonial situation in India, Nehru drew his sources about the world from his own contact moments with other world leaders, particularly those outside of Britain. This too has important implications on ways of understanding world history and the intellectual exchange of ideas. Moving beyond metropole/colony, Nehru's world history illustrated the importance of examining history through a more global lens.

Nehru's ideas about contact and world cooperation persisted long after writing *Glimpses of World History* and consequently played an important role in defining his own policies as prime minister. As Nehru wrote in *Glimpses*, stagnation and isolation were the downfall of early civilizations and only through contact moments and synthesis could a civilization progress. Nehru still believed this held true for India during the
1950's as it had for earlier historical societies. Nehru hoped nonalignment was the optimal means to continue to establish contact throughout the world based on friendly, cooperative relations. When Nehru became prime minister of newly independent India in 1947, he drew upon historical lessons from *Glimpses of World History* in formulating his foreign policy of non-alignment. This policy established a distinctive position for a postcolonial nation during the polarized international politics of the Cold War. In this era, many newly freed nations felt obligated to align with either the United States or the Soviet Union. In simplistic terms, Nehru's nonalignment rejected a permanent agreement with a particular nation, but was not a policy of neutrality. While the Indian government could and often did concur with Europe, China, the United States, or the Soviet Union on particular incidents or events, India refused to establish an undeviating commitment to any particular government and even sought to settle disputes between other nations on this basis. In particular, Nehru saw India as the new progressive leader among Asian nations. He created a policy that would ultimately become something new, synthesizing the past ideas of both Europe and Asia into a policy that advocated his historical vision of a collaborative of East and West. In a published speech written while prime minister, Nehru explained, "India becomes a kind of meeting ground for various trends and forces and a meeting ground between what might roughly be called the East and the West."  

Nehru hoped India would become an integral place for contact moments in the postcolonial world and he envisioned nonalignment as a means of encouraging contact and synthesis.

By analyzing only small excerpts from the two speeches made by Nehru in the 1950's, one can easily conclude that Nehru's world history continued to be important to Nehru throughout his years as prime minister. Clearly, the richness of examples of his historical ideas being played out in his international policies contributes to our understanding of the uses of history by politicians. In one speech delivered to the Indian parliament in 1952, Nehru's ideas about contact moments and synthesis remained a central point in discussing his policies. Entitled, "The Larger Scheme of Things," Nehru's speech defended his foreign policy against criticism that nonalignment favored relations with Britain and the United States. He explained:

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I have no doubt that it is the English language more than anything else that ties us to the Anglo-American bloc and yet I have not heard it cited as a reason for our so-called subservience to the Anglo-American bloc. It brings us nearer to their thoughts, their activities, their books, newspapers, cultural standards and so on, whereas we are cut off from those parts of the world with which we have no linguistic ties. I should like our country to know the other languages of the world besides developing their own so that we may grow and come in contact with more people of the world.  

Nehru emphasized contact moments as a means of progress, even in the postcolonial world, and importantly saw his reluctance to join a power bloc as a means to creating more opportunities for contact and exchange. Later in this speech, Nehru said:

I beg this House not to consider our foreign policy in terms merely of our own petty success or failure because the success or failure of any foreign policy today involves the success and failure of the whole world. If and when disaster comes it will affect the world as a whole and, therefore, it hardly matters what your policy or my policy is.  

Clearly, Nehru continued to believe that narrow-minded nationalist modes of thought needed to be replaced with a globally oriented process of thinking about international politics in the 1950's. In another speech delivered in 1950 entitled, "Our Policy Is Positive," Nehru's views of world history as progress through the exchange of ideas remains an influence in his thinking as prime minister:

Naturally, I do not wish my country merely to copy another, because in whatever direction we may grow we must grow out of the roots from which our nation draws sustenance and follow the genius of our people. Nevertheless, I feel that we can learn a great deal from the U.S.A. as well as from other countries of the West and we should take every opportunity of doing so. If India is to grow and prosper, she cannot do so by sticking only to her roots and isolating herself from the rest of the world. Therefore, we must strike a balance between the two extremes and then only can we make good.  

In a nation with a diverse population and a many layered history of multiple conquests, India struggled in the first six decades of independence to establish a new unified national identity and larger world identity where historical representation continued to be an integral part of this debate. Nehru used world history to create many of his policies that significantly impacted Indian politics in the first seventeen years of

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105 Ibid., 220.
106 Ibid., 215.
107 Ibid., 146.
independence. One can only speculate the influences Nehru's historical perspective had on his domestic policies as well. Beyond this question, to what extent Nehru’s historical perspectives shaped his daughter, Indira Gandhi’s own policies as prime minister is still another inquiry that demands further research in understanding the uses of history.

Following Nehru’s death in 1964 and a brief two year period of leadership by Prime Minister Shastri, Indira Gandhi was elected prime minister. Later in 1980, Indira would write “my father’s three books- Glimpses of World History, An Autobiography, and The Discovery of India- have been my companions through life,” and Glimpses “remains the best introduction to the story of man for young and growing people in India and all over the world.” Indira Gandhi, Foreward of The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985.
**APPENDIX A: TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR *GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY***

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169. Iraq and the Virtues of Aerial Bombing
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171. The Revolution that Did Not Come Off
172. A New Way of Paying Old Debts
173. The Strange Behavior of Money
174. Move and Counter-Move
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181. The Soviet Union's Difficulties, Failures and Successes
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192. President Roosevelt to the Rescue
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194. A Final Look Round the World
195. The Shadow of War
196. The Last Letter
Postscript
APPENDIX B: NEHRU'S SUGGESTED READINGS ON SOCIALISM


Lindsay, A. D. *Karl Marx's Capital.* London: Oxford University Press, 1925.


**APPENDIX C: BOOKS NEHRU LISTED IN PRISON DIARY**


———. *Kaiser Wilhelm; Tr. From the German by Ethel Colburn Mayne.* Edited by Ethel Colburn Mayne. London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd., 1926.


———. Disraeli; a Picture of the Victorian Age; Translated by Hamish Miles, Edited by Monica D. Ryan. Edited by Hamish Miles, 1894-1937 and Monica D Ryan. London: D. John Lane, 1927.


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