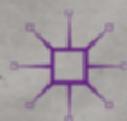


COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA AND THE IMPERIAL EXPERIENCE

BRITAIN AND INDIA IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

CHANDRIKA KAUL



Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience

Also by Chandrika Kaul

REPORTING THE RAJ: the British Press and India c1880–1922 (2004)

MEDIA AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE (2006 & 2013)

EXPLORATIONS IN MODERN INDIAN HISTORY AND THE MEDIA (2009)

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND GLOBAL NEWS NETWORKS:
Historical Perspectives (*with P. Putnis and J. Wilke*; 2011)

Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience

Britain and India in the Twentieth Century

Chandrika Kaul

University of St Andrews, Scotland

palgrave
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To Ishypoooh and Mum

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Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Currency and Exchange Rates</i>	xv
1 Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience: Perspectives and Perceptions	1
2 Coronation, Colonialism and Cultures of Control: The Delhi Durbar, 1911	19
Introduction; The Journalism Paradigm; The Imperial Paradigm; Imperial Media Event; Conceptualising the Coronation Durbar; Communications & the Coronation Experience; Press Coverage Prior to the Durbar; Gateway of India; Delhi & the Sovereign; <i>The Times</i> Coverage; Resonances & Impact; Concluding Remarks	
3 India as Viewed by the American Media: <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>, William Shirer and Gandhian Nationalism, 1930–1	71
Introduction; Indian Publicity & the US; American News Agencies & India; <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i> , McCormick & Overseas Coverage; McCormick & India; Shirer & India; Shirer & Gandhi; With Gandhi in England; Gandhi & the Western Media; British Propaganda & the American Press; Concluding Remarks	
4 ‘Invisible Empire Tie’: Broadcasting and the British Raj in the Interwar Years	123
Introduction; Radio in India; Commercial Radio Broadcasting; Government of India & Broadcasting; BBC & Indian Broadcasting; The Fielden Years; Broadcasting & Print; Concluding Remarks	

5 'Operation Seduction': Mountbatten, the Media and Decolonisation in 1947	172
Introduction; The Mountbatten Factor; Freedom at Midnight: The Foreign Media; British National Press; Broadcasting & Newsreels; Indian & Anglo-Indian Press; Concluding Remarks	
6 Concluding Remarks	219
<i>Notes</i>	228
<i>Appendices</i>	255
<i>Bibliography</i>	258
<i>Index</i>	272

Tables and Figures

Tables

4.1	Growth of Radio Licences in British India, 1927–39	141
5.1	Headlines of the British national press at Indian Independence	188

Figures

Cover: M. K. Gandhi and James A. Mill aboard the SS *Rajputana en route* to the Second Round Table Conference, London, September 1931, Associated Press Corporate Archives, London and New York, James A. Mills collection

2.1	Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, by courtesy of James Houssemayne Du Boulay private collection, London	33
2.2	Sir Valentine Chirol, by courtesy of James Houssemayne Du Boulay private collection, London	46
2.3	Crowds at the Delhi Durbar, 12 December 1911, by courtesy of James Houssemayne Du Boulay private collection, London	48
2.4	Contemporary views of the site of the 1911 Coronation Durbar, Delhi, photos by author, 2011	65
3.1	William L. Shirer on board ship <i>en route</i> to India, 1931 [photograph, copy], reprinted by permission of the Literary Trust of William L. Shirer, George T. Henry College Archives, Coe College, Iowa	73
3.2	Extract from private diary of William L. Shirer, 21 February 1931, reprinted by permission of the Literary Trust of William L. Shirer, George T. Henry College Archives, Coe College, Iowa	97
3.3	'A Frankenstein of the East', cartoon by Raven Hill, 12 March 1930, reproduced with permission of Punch Ltd	111
3.4	Gandhi and his associates, including Pyarelal Nayar, Mahadev Desai and Sarojini Naidu, 1931 [photograph, copy] by William L. Shirer, reprinted with the permission of the Literary Trust of William L. Shirer, George T. Henry College Archives, Coe College, Iowa	120

4.1	Sir John Reith, director general of the BBC, leaving the annexe of Westminster Abbey, London, after superintending the broadcast arrangements for the coronation service, 3 May 1937, reproduced by permission of Associated Press Corporate Archives, London and New York, AP photo	142
4.2	Broadcasting House, BBC Headquarters, London, 6 June 1936, reproduced by permission of Associated Press Corporate Archives, London and New York, AP photo	146
5.1	Lord and Lady Mountbatten at the Viceregal Swearing in Ceremony, Durbar Hall, Viceregal Lodge, New Delhi, 24 March 1947, reproduced by permission of Associated Press Corporate Archives, London and New York, AP photo	178
5.2	Max Desfor, photo by author, 2014	187
5.3	'Tria Juncta in Uno', cartoon by E. H. Shepard, 23 July 1947, reproduced with permission of Punch Ltd	197
5.4	BBC India Team for Independence coverage, the <i>Radio Times</i> , 8 August 1947, reproduced by permission of the <i>Radio Times</i>	202

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Abbreviations

AINEC	All India Newspaper Editors Conference
AIR	All India Radio
AP	Associated Press of America
API	Associated Press of India
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BLI	British Library of Information, New York
CMG	<i>Civil and Military Gazette</i>
DIL	Department of Industries and Labour, GoI
DPI	Department of Public Information, GoI
EPU	Empire Press Union
ES	Empire Service, BBC
<i>Express</i>	<i>Daily Express</i>
FO	Foreign Office, London
FPI	Free Press of India
GoI	Government of India
<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Manchester Guardian</i>
<i>Herald</i>	<i>Daily Herald</i>
HPoll	Home Political files, NAI
IBC	Indian Broadcasting Company
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IJA	Indian Journalists Association
<i>ILN</i>	<i>Illustrated London News</i>
INC	Indian National Congress
IO	India Office, London
IOLR	India Office Library and Records, British Library, London
IRTC	Indian Radio Telegraph Company
ISBS	Indian State Broadcasting Service
L/I	Information Department, IOLR
L/PJ	Public and Judicial Department, IOLR
L/PO	Private Office, IOLR
<i>Mail</i>	<i>Daily Mail</i>
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
<i>New Statesman</i>	<i>New Statesman and Nation</i>
PAFS	Press Association Foreign Special

RA	Royal Archives, Windsor
Rs	Indian rupee
RTC	Indian Round Table Conferences, London
<i>Telegraph</i>	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>
<i>ToI</i>	<i>Times of India</i>
<i>Tribune</i>	<i>Chicago Herald Tribune</i>
UP	United Press of America

Currency and Exchange Rates

In the 1930s:

1 Rs (rupee) = 1s 6d

1 lakh = Rs 1,00,000 = £7,500

NB: For the sake of consistency and historical accuracy, I have retained the original spelling of South Asian placenames throughout, so Bombay and not Mumbai, Ceylon and not Sri Lanka. The terms New Delhi and Delhi are used interchangeably throughout the book. The place of publication of books is London unless specified otherwise.

1

Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience: Perspectives and Perceptions

Introduction

As part of its Empire Day number in 1911, *The Times* argued that India was ‘the centre of the east’ and of an Asia that was ‘neither changeless nor asleep... We are the guardians of a great tradition, but the conditions are changing and with them the forms of guardianship must also change. As we associate the Indian peoples more closely with the mechanism of rule, so must we give more and more consideration to their sentiments and views in the policy of rule.’¹ Arguments for a realignment of imperial ideology to account for the ‘sentiments and views’ of the governed must be contextualised within wider perceptions prevalent in the early twentieth century that emphasised a revitalised Asia, in sharp contrast to Matthew Arnold’s well-known verse about the unchanging East, alluded to above by *The Times*. The unexpected and resounding nature of the defeat inflicted on imperial Russia by the tiny island state of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War during 1904–5, was a critical turning point. This war was covered by nearly two hundred western journalists (despite strict censorship by the Japanese), civilian observers and many military attachés, including Sir Ian Hamilton of the Indian Army. Major British, US and European newspapers and news agencies utilised advanced communication technologies, including the wireless, which was used for the first time in war reportage.² Historians have argued that after 1905, India too had ‘new interests and objectives and compelled new lines of British policy’.³ In less than four decades after George V’s reaffirmation of imperial grandeur at the 1911 Coronation Durbar, Britain was not simply associating Indians ‘more closely with the mechanism of rule’, as *The Times* had noted. Instead, a great

grandson of Queen Victoria was compelled to hand over the Raj entirely into Indian (and Pakistani) hands and the *Times of India* was proclaiming the 'Birth of India's Freedom'.⁴

These two events, in 1911 and 1947, respectively, help frame the parameters of this book, the aim of which is not to rework the standard theses of the rise of mass nationalism and the onset of imperial decline, punctuated by two world wars. Instead, the essays in this volume seek to offer an alternative window into the rich Raj experience through the prism afforded by communications and the media. All empires, as large conurbations, are predicated on means of control – control of both mind and movement. Jürgen Osterhammel has observed how power was exercised through 'communication imperialism'.⁵ The British worldwide empire was no exception. Further, the twentieth century itself was a media and communications century *par excellence*. Whilst many historical periods can lay claim to remarkable advances in technology, there are, nevertheless, defining developments that make the twentieth century epochal. More people communicated with others, with greater speed and more cheaply than ever before, utilising more diverse and developed media over a wider geographical and temporal range. Ironically, this also enabled the twentieth century to become the most officially controlled and regulated era to date. The intense government propaganda of Britain and other combatant nations during the First World War, Bolshevik control of communist Russia after 1917, Nazism's iron grip on Germany during the period after 1933 and in the Second World War, and the Cold War propaganda of the superpowers beginning soon after – all serve as emphatic illustrations from the period under review.

Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience aims to explore the minds of those who utilised the media and those who controlled it, as well as to examine its output and impact, within the context of Britain and its Indian Raj. Of necessity, it is a limited exercise in the study of a vast and complex field. The role of 'communication' is interpreted broadly to include both specific communication and media channels as well as the ways in which the political and sociocultural roles of such channels are envisaged. The book focuses on the media environment of empire as a conceptual tool to investigate its political culture and role in shaping the imperial experience during the twentieth century. The principal area of investigation is the British media, including the national press, Reuters and the BBC, but Indian newspapers and nascent broadcasting as well as US news agencies and select newspapers are also analysed.

Perceptions of the communication process impacted reciprocally, and attention will be focused on the perspectives of the media industries and personnel as well as imperial proconsuls and leading Indian politicians, paying regard to the volatile context of mass nationalism during these years. How did the primary stakeholders frame arguments about the changing communication process and the media as a positive or negative force? Was the media viewed as agents of change by contemporaries? Commentators have ascribed a pre-eminent role to journalism in the creation of modernity: 'it is easy to describe each in terms of the other', claims John Hartley, with both being products of European societies over the past few centuries. Both are linked to advances in science, exploration and industrialisation, and both 'promote notions of freedom, progress and universal enlightenment, and are associated with the breaking down of traditional knowledge and hierarchies, and their replacement with abstract bonds of virtual communities, which are linked by the media'.⁶ In the context of the Raj, is there also a counterhistory of media promoting deference and establishing order? In sum, what have been the role and impact of media in shaping the Raj experience in the first half of the twentieth century?

In terms of its approach and archival focus, the book aims to integrate imperial and media history in the manner popularised by the 'new imperial' history, which has sought to demonstrate the significance of the empire in British culture along with the values and ideologies that created and sustained this experience. This is reflected in the variety of primary sources that I have utilised which encompass the archival territories of both imperial and media history. I have relied on official reports, departmental memoranda, proconsular correspondence and memoirs, as well as newspapers, periodicals, news agency output, broadcasting transcripts, newsreels, institutional records of media organisations, recollections of journalists and proprietorial correspondence. Explored in conjunction with each other, these present an assessment of the relationship between media and imperial culture as manifested within different locales – metropolitan, peripheral and transnational – as well as the networks that bound them within a comprehensive frame of reference.

During the twentieth century the Indian empire was increasingly not just 'read' about but 'seen' and 'heard' as well. Varieties of print, photography, theatre, newsreels, cinema and radio all served to transform the imperial experience and transport the consumer over long distances and across time. Such transformations were not limited to media representations. Swift ocean liners now faced competition from civil aviation,

which took off, quite literally, in the interwar years, with the subcontinent soon to be within a week's journey time of European imperial metropolises. 'Was it not significant of the change that a new invention had brought with it, that our machine had jumped the Channel in ten minutes and had surmounted the Frontier peaks [Northwest Frontier] as a Rolls would take the Newmarket road?'⁷ Thus rhapsodised Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for Air, upon completing the inaugural passenger flight to India in 1927. What was key, he claimed, was not simply the speed of the travel but its regularity: 'An ordinary commercial machine with a full load of passengers and luggage had, day after day, carried out its time-table with the precision of a pre-war express train.'⁸

Correspondingly, as will be argued in the book, more intensive exploitation of the media was attempted by various stakeholders, with 'image' and 'perception' coming to play a critical part in the processes of imperial rule. We witness attempts by the Raj to combine 'hard' and 'soft' power, utilising Joseph Nye's categorisation of the changing nature of contemporary US foreign policy. Nye claims that these forms of power are related, can occasionally reinforce or interfere with each other, and that overall the distinction between them is perhaps merely a matter of degree. He defines 'soft' power as the ability to get 'others to want the outcomes you want' through co-option rather than coercion, which 'rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others'.⁹ It is not, Nye argues, 'merely the same as influence' but the 'ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence'.¹⁰ 'Soft' power can also be seen as the exercise of 'co-optive power' and can depend on factors such as 'the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes others fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic'. On the other hand, 'hard' power tends to be associated with 'Command power', which he suggests is 'the ability to change what others do' utilising 'coercion or inducement'.¹¹

The case studies in this book focus on the deployment of 'soft' power by the Raj through the channels afforded by communications and media as well as applied news management, including censorship. This strategy was combined with the exercise of 'hard' power, which in this context included punitive legislation and imprisonment, as well as physical force, as witnessed, for instance, in its response to demonstrations during the Civil Disobedience movement. 'Soft' power ought not to be discounted merely as an ephemeral bid to seek popularity by the imperium, but rather seen as a significant strategy in its approach to the increasingly problematic governance of India in the twentieth century.

Nye contends that 'Winning hearts and minds has always been important, but it is even more so in a global information age. Information is power, and modern information technology is spreading information more widely than ever before in history.'¹² However, this is not a new phenomenon and such an approach can equally be applied to considering the impact of the information revolution during the first half of the twentieth century and in the context of imperial Britain as a global power.

As the twentieth century unfolded, the British were confronted with the problem of the exercise of hegemony in a changing national and transnational context, and attempted to combine the 'hard' power of the sword with the 'soft' power of publicity, propaganda and news management through newspapers and news agencies, as well as broadcasting, especially under the impetus of the Second World War. During the interwar years, it became politically imperative to have the support of Indian moderates, liberals and constitutionalists, both to counter aggressive forms of mass nationalism and to help manage their Constitution, as embodied in the 1919 Government of India (GoI) Act and, most importantly, in its successor, the monumental GoI Act of 1935. The war also weakened the military might of the Raj, and the Amritsar massacre in 1919 helped transform Indian nationalism from its relatively exclusive and elitist nature into a popular movement. As I have argued in *Reporting the Raj*, formal strategies of information management and imperial publicity came into their own during 1914–22, due to external pressures combined with a new angle of vision brought to bear upon imperial governance by the Liberal Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu (1917–22).¹³ Montagu was convinced that 'the feeding of the newspapers, the answering of enquiries, the touch between the Government and those who would support it – all this wants doing ... It would be so splendid if political methods rather than coercive ones were successful in downing the opponents of the British government.'¹⁴ Building on such initiatives, the 1930s witnessed the next significant watershed with respect to the official implementation of propaganda and publicity strategies largely undertaken through the media. By the end of the decade, these had become an accepted facet of imperial governance enshrined in institutional structures as well as administrative procedures. Equally striking was the terminology routinely utilised by proconsuls and civil servants with respect to the integration of such activities as being not just necessary but also routine actions of imperialists. Thus A. H. Joyce, the veteran India Office (IO) publicist throughout the 1930s and 1940s, who was appointed to the new post of Adviser on

Publicity Questions in 1941, remarked to Leonard Matters, the London representative of the *Hindu* (Madras), who had written to congratulate him: 'I like to think of my job, and that of the representatives in London of the Indian Press as a sort of partnership, not merely in a profession of publicity and journalism, but in a crusade in which we strive to replace doubts and fears by understanding and goodwill.'¹⁵

However, as Nye has posited, 'the effectiveness of any power resource depends on the context'.¹⁶ The case studies featured in this book focus on a number of such contexts and engage, on the one hand, with the evolving approaches to communicating power via the media and, on the other, with the media's purported influence as a political tool. The book seeks principally to demonstrate how and why British politicians, civil servants, journalists, broadcasters and even George V sought to mediate imperial politics through the popular culture of communication. In addition, one case study directs the spotlight on the increasingly influential US press and news agencies (which had begun to challenge the monopoly of Reuters), examines their response to Indian nationalism during the interwar years, and considers the impact of such developments upon a Raj anxious about American public opinion, an area that has been relatively under-researched. The reactions of nationalists and the Indian press are also discussed at apposite junctures, with M. K. Gandhi's interaction with the media coming under detailed scrutiny.

Percival Spear wrote more than fifty years ago that 'The very weapons and arguments used by the Congress against the British were largely of western provenance. India broke her British fetters with western hammers. And it was significant of the community of ideas between the two sides that the fetters were never in fact broken by force, but began to be removed by one side as soon as they began to be rattled by the other.'¹⁷ For the nationalists – many of whom were journalists themselves – the media became an increasingly prominent tool of opposition. The link between print and nationalism has been subjected to differing analyses. For example, Benedict Anderson's thesis of the growth of nationalism through the creation of imagined communities knit together by common cultural and political ties envisages the evolution of a Habermasian public sphere.¹⁸ And while both Anderson and Jürgen Habermas have had their share of critics, there is no denying the impact of more extensive communication links as well as newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, books and the emergence of a viable reading and debating public on the growth of anti-colonialism in India from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

The intimate interconnections between media forms and political praxis in the protest movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been variously explored by contemporaries and historians.¹⁹ Ironically, despite rampant illiteracy, print and the written word were utilised in unprecedented fashion to play a seminal role in the life of the nation under the Raj. The complex explanatory factors for this, and indeed for the development of the Indian press, cannot be examined here except insofar as to acknowledge that by the twentieth century, concepts such as public opinion, mass mobilisation, publicity and propaganda were established watchwords for nationalists and imperialists alike. The interest in public affairs went beyond the saloons and debating clubs of elite, English-educated Indians, with the press, pamphlets and periodical literature helping to inculcate, develop and sustain such interactions. Nationalists who exploited the media were aware of the need to reach the largest audience possible. Thus B. G. Tilak, whose *Kesari* was a longstanding critic of the Raj, exhorted his journalists: 'No Sanskrit quotations and no frightening statistics.'²⁰

Though ambitious in scope, the *raison d'être* of this book is not to exhaust an area of research but rather to explore select panoramas of the landscape – to wit, monarchy and empire; nationalists and the media; new communication technologies and the Raj; and Independence as the endgame of empire. Case studies analyse the Coronation Durbar in 1911 as a 'media event' and imperial 'spectacle'; Gandhi, the US media and responses to the Civil Disobedience movement during 1930–1; broadcasting and the Raj in the interwar years; and, lastly, media and the decolonisation project under the Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, during 1947. In sum, these case studies serve to demonstrate the extent of the media's impact upon Indian affairs, assess its influence and limitations, and evaluate the success of imperialists and nationalists alike at winning hearts and minds in these seminal decades leading to Indian independence.

I

Over the course of the twentieth century, Britain and India, each in their turn, became arenas of competitive publicity wherein official propaganda vied with that of Indian political parties, commercial organisations, non-official Europeans, popular pressure groups and their respective media. The two world wars intensified the need for imperial control and news management, albeit in ways that were specific to large-scale international conflict. It is not intended to examine official war

propaganda in this book – a field that has received its fair share of academic attention – except to emphasise the advances made between the conduct of first and the second world wars by the GoI and Whitehall, both in their approach to the imperative for such actions, civilian and military, as well as the resources deployed towards this end.²¹ London continued to serve as the pre-eminent geographic epicentre for political news, as it had in the nineteenth century, yet it is necessary to underline the global dimension of the information networks that had matured by the twentieth, encapsulated by, but not limited to, institutional developments such as the Empire Press Union (EPU), as well as advances in transport technology (e.g. aviation) and the birth of new media (e.g. radio). Founded in London during 1909, the EPU brought together under the aegis of the British press, journalists and news agencies of her dependent empire, including India, the Dominions, Crown colonies and protectorates. The initiative was designed to harness the influence of communication and media technologies to the cause of imperial unity and to encourage intra-imperial cooperation and cultural interchange in the sphere of journalism, with the overall aim being to create a transnational information community.²²

The prominent role of the British national press (Fleet Street) and Reuters international news agency as conveyors of information and conduits of influence continued apace, and is discussed in the case studies, as did the reach of Reuters subsidiary catering to domestic news, the Associated Press of India (API), established in 1908.²³ Yet there were challenges to this supremacy: the substantive threat to Reuters' foreign monopoly, as analysed further in Chapter 3, was led by the Associated Press of America (AP) and the United Press of America (UP). Indians, too, had long resented Reuters' symbiotic relationship with the Raj, accusing the agency of subversion and subterfuge. The *National Herald* appeared to sum up such sentiments on the eve of Independence:

it has been the lot of India, [and] almost all the countries of Asia, since daily journalism became a permanent feature to have been fed on the mass communication of a British concern... In elegant phrases of choice English, Reuters has told us for decades, with unrelieved monotony, the beneficial influence of European racialism and colonialism. It has faithfully, and with meticulous care, transmitted the denunciatory epithets of Mr Churchill in the days when... India had not ceased to be his pet aversion... As the monopoly purveyors of news its supremacy has yet to be challenged. It had the support

of the British Government and it remains to be seen whether it will continue to receive the support of the national government.²⁴

The combined assets of Reuters and API in 1947 were worth about £100,000. However, despite the former's aim to keep India 'permanently as a Reuter territory', the monopoly survived only a few months after the transition to Independence.²⁵ There was also a spirited attempt by the mercurial Swaminath Sadanand to establish an Indian agency to challenge the Reuters-API monopoly in the shape of the Free Press of India (FPI). The FPI began in 1925, enlarged its operations to include foreign news in 1927, and by the early 1930s was offering a world news service under the direction of Margarita and Charles Barns, in alliance with the Exchange Telegraph Company, Central News and the British United Press. Funded intermittently by a coalition of nationalists, businessmen and journalists based in Bombay, and by subscription, its operations were stymied by a lack of finances, high operating costs and occasional political obstruction. Thus Margarita Barns describes how the security deposit of the principal Bombay newspaper sponsoring the news service was forfeited under the 1930 Press Ordinance and they had to 'run a 24-hour cable service of news for three nights by candle light!'²⁶ By the time the third Round Table Conference (RTC) met in London, she claimed that 'the organization was in full swing'.²⁷ However, despite some success, the FPI folded in 1935.²⁸

Within Britain, the Great War helped precipitate key structural and ideological changes in the national press landscape, given the astronomically high costs of production, increasing concentration of media ownership, rising commercialism and an advertising boom, and an overtly populist thrust, symbolised by the so-called 'war of the populars'. These years witnessed both an aggressive assertion of proprietorial interest in domestic political and imperial crusades and a marked degree of deference, as observed in the response (or lack of) to the successive crises of Abdication and Appeasement.²⁹ With coverage of India, Fleet Street continued its engagement along lines based on the political predilections of individual titles, broadly similar to the 1880s–1922 years, as analysed in *Reporting the Raj*. A generalised pride in imperial achievement, often assumed rather than articulated, coloured their outlook, as it did at the BBC under Director General Sir John Reith, whose personal role in the nascent development of broadcasting in the subcontinent is analysed in Chapter 4. Yet there existed, as before, a range of opinions and ideological differences regarding events and policies across the spectrum of the industry. The domestic pulls on a newspaper's loyalty also

continued to conflict with its imperial rhetoric. In the campaigns against the 1905 Partition of Bengal, Surendranath Banerjea, a prominent moderate nationalist (and proprietor-editor of the *Bengalee*), who advocated the case for revision, met with C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian* (hereafter *Guardian*) and doyen of Liberal pro-nationalist journalists: 'His sympathies were all with us. I pressed him to write in the columns of the *Manchester Guardian*, but his difficulty was that Lord Morley [Secretary of State for India] was a Liberal leader, and above all a Lancashire man.'³⁰ Further, one must not assume automatic hostility by the conservative press towards nationalism, nor left-wing newspaper sympathy for anti-imperialism, as shown, for instance, in Fleet Street's response to decolonisation studied in Chapter 5. This mirrors the complex picture that Nicholas Owen has painted of the relationship between the British Left and 'metropolitan anti-imperialism'. He argues that during the 1920s and 1930s, much of the Left was too fragmented to achieve any degree of coherence with respect to Indian policies, that several socialists saw eye to eye with their imperialist counterparts regarding the progressive benefits of imperial rule, and that decolonisation was due largely to electoral and economic realism, rather than a widely held ideological commitment.³¹

II

The British, whether acquiring military support or enforcing a reform agenda, were consistently faced with the problem of securing, at the very least, a workable measure of consent to their rule. Recourse to the law served as the first line of defence and offence in official attempts to control and censor dissent. However, as I have analysed elsewhere, the complex and multifaceted response to the freedom of the press ebbed and flowed largely as a reactive process, appealing to the cloak of ideology when convenient.³² Some administrators encouraged the development of the press, arguing that it might prove to be an auxiliary to good government. Others imposed stringent measures to control all printed matter. The contradictions between liberalism and authoritarianism, which the working of this imperial experiment exposed, tended to eventuate in acts of legislative and executive fiat on the grounds that press freedoms inevitably impacted on other institutions, and that, because the Raj was by its nature despotic, unrestricted freedom of the press was inherently incompatible with imperial governance. Thus a complex set of laws intended to censor and curtail a plethora of civil freedoms made its way into the statute books, including Indian Official

Secrets Act (amendment) 1903, Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act 1908, Indian Press Act 1910, Criminal Law Amendment Act 1913, Defence of India Act 1914, Rowlatt Acts 1919, Princes Protection Act 1922, Indian Press Ordinance 1930, Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act 1931, Emergency Special Powers Ordinance 1932, Criminal Law Amendment Act 1932, Foreign Relations Act 1932, Indian States Protection Act 1934 and Defence of India Rules 1940. Gandhi was tried in 1922 under the Press Act of 1910 (shortly before the Act was rescinded) and sentenced to six years in jail. In 1930 the Press Ordinance netted securities worth Rs 2,40,000, and 450 papers had ceased to exist by 1935 on account of the high levels of security demanded of them.³³

However, we also witness concerted attempts to incorporate 'soft' power and public relations into imperial culture, driven, on the one hand, by constructive realism: the necessity to respond to the evolving nature of opposition and the sophisticated use of the media – both Indian and international – by politically savvy colonialists. Thus the funding of official propaganda in the US during the 1930s through Secret Service funds, as discussed in Chapter 3, was now considered politically unviable, given the need to defend such expenditure before rising numbers of Indian members of the Legislative Assembly, a position further consolidated after Indian political parties assumed control of provincial governments following elections under the GoI Act of 1935. A more coordinated and organised institutional response also became essential due to the perceived unreliability of allies amongst the Anglo-Indian press, the emergence of potentially disruptive new media, such as radio, and the general impact of greater networks of information linking the subcontinent into a wider web of news flows. The development of broadcasting for imperial purposes instituted a form of media divergence, which challenged the existing arrangement between press, cable and news agencies. However, as my research into broadcasting under the Raj demonstrates (Chapter 4), a complex set of factors combined to pose almost insuperable problems for its adoption as a means of all-India communications before the Second World War.

On the other hand, the Raj was also motivated by the belief that successful policy outcomes were predicated, in an increasingly mediated world, upon the official ability to deploy 'soft' power: to sell its product/point of view to a discerning, potentially hostile, audience in as attractive a package as possible. Therefore it was considered imperative to create a positive and supportive environment for the reception of government initiatives, to convert the disaffected by means of persuasion through formal and informal methods, as well as pre-empt hostile

criticism, where possible. These involved a more intensive personal cultivation of journalists, foreign and Indian; increasing advertisements in pro-government papers within India; continued subsidies to Reuters and API; institutional developments within India, such as the enlargement of central and provincial departments of information; and subsequently, during the Second World War, a separate Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in Delhi.

The expansion of the central news services in Delhi, under the Department of Public Information (DPI), and replicated in the provinces, formed an important aspect of the Raj's endeavours to streamline its approach to media and communications, and the exercise of 'soft' power, after the Great War. To an overwhelming extent this revolved around the press, since it was widely accepted that Indian public opinion was a press-made opinion. The DPI was also concerned with foreign media, including Fleet Street, Reuters, the BBC, newsreel companies, and US news agencies and journalists. The 1930s witnessed the most concerted attempts yet to overhaul the machinery of the DPI, simultaneously transforming what was essentially a press office into a public relations office, with the professionalisation of services aimed at improving the public face of imperial rule – a process both reactive and proactive, as the case studies in this book seek to demonstrate.

Such activities were replicated in London at the Information Department of the IO, which was established in 1921.³⁴ The department continued to expand in size and scope and was headed by experienced British journalists, A. H. Joyce being the first civil servant to be appointed as Publicity Officer (the title was used interchangeably with Information Officer) in 1937, having earned his spurs as deputy to his predecessor, Hugh MacGregor, a veteran of *The Times*. It functioned in coordination with the Foreign Office (FO) news department, official organisations in America and the US embassy in London, as well as the Ministry of Information during the Second World War. The remit of the Publicity Officer encompassed a staggering range of activities, including the more routine work involved in the daily collection and distribution of newspaper cuttings about India within the IO and in Whitehall; recording India-related activities in London, including public events, visits of personalities and replies to parliamentary questions; maintenance and loan of collections of official photographs; preparation of a weekly summary of the Indian and Burmese press; responding to telephone enquiries and issuing official communiqués; and issuing announcements to news agencies and the press. However, of greater portent, and what was regarded as the 'chief work' of the Information

Officer, lay in 'ascertaining the policy which he is required to follow, settling the terms in which views may be expressed and in interviewing journalists and others, placing before them an exposition of policies or views, in discussion with them, and answering questions'.³⁵ He was also responsible for organising press conferences and arranging interviews by journalists of high officials, encompassing not just the British press but also the London correspondents of Indian and Burmese newspapers, as well as representatives of the Dominion and foreign press, especially the US media since 'American interest in India, in particular, has been very keen for a very long period'.³⁶ The requirements of other media, including broadcasting and film, were also addressed. By the 1930s the Officer had established 'close contact' with the BBC 'by whom he is frequently consulted before an item of news, relating to India, is broadcast in the Home or Empire News programmes'.³⁷ When dealing with confidential matters or a delicate negotiation, the Officer had to employ his discretion to contact only the select few 'responsible editors': 'The influence of the Information Officer on occasions of this kind obviously depends to a large extent on his own personal standing with the Press'.³⁸ It becomes apparent even from a cursory glance at the complexities of the Indian situation and the wide platform upon which the Information Officer functioned that the incumbent had to command a wide knowledge and experience, and the 'qualities of judgement and tact'.³⁹

Negotiations between Delhi and London regarding both the *raison d'être* and the praxis of official publicity and propaganda were undertaken throughout these years. The three RTCs convened in London (1930–2), and the protracted negotiations leading to the GoI Act of 1935 were the key constituents of the reform agenda being pursued by the Raj. Joyce was seconded from the IO to help with the official restructuring of government propaganda and played a key role in influencing the imperial mindset. He was convinced that the 'first duty' of a government publicity organization was to 'safeguard' official interests.⁴⁰ Moreover, it was 'vital' that the 'general public should be acquainted with its policy, and should be kept informed of the steps taken by the Administration to implement that policy. Upon a recognition of this fact depends both the strength and the life of a Government.' Such a publicity machine was 'the connecting link between the Administration and the public which it serves. It is in itself part of the Administrative machine'.⁴¹

The Hoare-Willington correspondence in the first half of the 1930s indicates the concerted regard at the highest levels about the necessity of publicity and news management as integral dimensions of the imperial experience, and this is discussed further in Chapter 4. Thus the Viceroy,

Lord Willingdon, responding on one occasion to a directive emanating from the Secretary of State, argued:

I am sure you will recognise that it is a very different job to create efficient publicity in a huge continent like India than it is in our country at home. If *you* want anything put out in the Press you simply telephone round to the various Press correspondents who are in London and the thing is done. Here at the moment I have one Press correspondent who represents the *Statesman* and, in Peterson's absence, also represents the *Times*, and if I want to get anything out to the Press, it has to be done through agencies, for I can't summon individuals from all parts of the country to make a statement to them at any particular time. But I do appreciate . . . all that you say with regard to its importance, and we are seriously trying to place this matter on a much more efficient scale.⁴²

In London, Hoare was enthusiastic and proactive. Writing in December 1931, he affirmed how the potentially adverse RTC propaganda by Indians following Gandhi's disappointment with the Second RTC (as described in Chapter 3) had to be countered by GoI propaganda undertaken by 'Indian friends' and 'inspired article-writers' in the Indian press. Whilst this was not a novel idea, Hoare was worried about the unreliability of moderates such as Tej Bahadur Sapru: 'They are full of forensic zeal when over here, but it seems somehow to evaporate between London and Bombay.'⁴³ A month later he claimed to be 'trying to arrange for a close contact with the Press, British, American and foreign, whilst these critical affairs are going on in India. I am also going to broadcast one night to England and I believe another day to America. So far the Press have behaved well.'⁴⁴

During the summer of 1932, Hoare again spelt out the importance of creating a positive environment for government policies, urging action upon his Viceroy: 'Is it not pretty certain, first of all, the communal decision [Communal Award] and, secondly, the Government Bill [leading to 1935 Act] will both fall short of the wishes of several sections of Indian opinion. If this is so, it seems to me quite essential that we should be in a position to get our own case across India.'⁴⁵ Hoare was particularly anxious because of what he felt was the 'apparent absence in India of all the most modern methods of propaganda, upon which we depend at home – the Prime Minister from Downing Street or Willert at the Foreign Office'.⁴⁶ He was convinced that imperial success was predicated on the 'kind of atmosphere that we can create and that it is almost entirely