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Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi: Revolutionary Pragmatists?

By Kevin Wheeler

Abstract: Before 1949, both China and India experienced protracted struggles to gain freedom from their respective governing bodies. Although the Chinese and Indian Revolutions occurred during the same time period, and on the same continent, little energy has been spent on comparing the two in any appreciable manner, even less so when it comes to the leaders of the movements themselves. Granted, the reasoning for this is due to the belief that Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi are too dissimilar for any fruitful analysis to be obtained by juxtaposing them, but this paper's focus is on proving that they are far more alike than anyone has ever given them credit. Both men were pragmatic revolutionaries who adapted to the needs of their movements, and were willing to be flexible to new developments which could potentially alter fundamental underpinnings of their uprisings. With the preexisting notions of class struggle and violence which have so characterized Mao Zedong in the past, it may be absurd to claim him as a pragmatist, but in reality, he was in fact a powerful coalition builder before the People's Republic of China was founded. Furthermore, Mohandas Gandhi is seen as the principal advocate of non-violence in recent memory, but he accepted violence to avoid cowardice, and only came to the stance of non-violence after observing firmer approaches earlier in his life. Even though the two men arrived at different conclusions of how to best achieve victory, they did so for the identical reason of it being in the best interests of the Indian and Chinese freedom organizations. Most importantly, both revolutionaries came to personify their movements, and that accounts for their "god-like" standing in historical texts. This paper is intended to bring Mao and Gandhi down from their mythologized status and to see them for who they were during their revolutions, ordinary human beings who were pragmatic enough to sustain the momentum of their individual movements. Without their realism, the Indian and Chinese Revolutions would have been radically different.

Introduction

Adapting to current conditions is a necessary feature of any revolution, but this creates internal conflicts which are inherently different. Failing to adapt leads to rigidity, which in turn causes a near-certain failure to the insurrection and a possible collapse of the entire revolutionary movement. Strong leaders who are able to adapt to existing situations are vital to the success of any uprising, and both Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) and Mao Zedong (1893-1976) were consummate pragmatists in their respective countries. They are among the most important figures in Asia during this time period, and little has been done to compare their views. While both men had fundamentally different philosophies on how to bring about revolutionary change, which might make comparison seem fruitless, research has shown that they may be more similar than previously believed. Essentially, they chose those different ideals for identical reasons.

The purpose of this paper is to show that without the flexibility and modifications of Mao Zedong and Gandhi to better conform to their environments, the Indian and Chinese Revolutions would have been radically different, because there was no other individual who could have taken their place and maintained the level of revolutionary fervor they engendered. As a result, the time period examined here will be almost exclusively pre-1949 due to: the Indian Revolution succeeding with the withdrawal of the British in 1947 and Gandhi being assassinated in 1948, and Mao Zedong overthrowing the Nationalist Party and proclaiming the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.

In addition, this endeavor is further aimed at discussing the similarities and differences between their theories and ideologies in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of why Mao and Gandhi, although contemporaries in Asia, chose radically differently philosophies but were nonetheless still able to succeed. The reason for their success stems from their ability to conform to the needs of the time. It is entirely likely that they were only ones capable of accomplishing this vital task.

A great deal of Gandhi's beliefs and convictions stemmed from his studies in England and from his involvement as a member of the ambulance corps during various wars in South Africa. During return trips to India, he became increasingly embroiled in the struggle of his people against British rule, which led him on the path to becoming a revolutionary. While he was the embodiment of the term "revolutionary," he was far more like a social reformer and diplomat which caused him to become the leader of a revolutionary movement. Gandhi did not seek the leadership of the Indian organization, but accepted it because he possessed the charisma to deal with the British on their terms in order to obtain a favorable conclusion to their existing strife. Unlike him in a vast variety of ways, Mao Zedong remained

radical throughout his entire life. His beliefs in “permanent revolution” and violent upheaval led to constant political problems and bordered on anarchism at times. Mao had never studied outside of China and only went as far as Beijing University, the place where his actual Communist ideals took root under the tutelage of the Chinese innovator of Marxism and Beijing University librarian, Li Dazhao (1888-1927).

Mohandas Gandhi and Mao Zedong personified their revolutions. Even though there were other skilled leaders present, such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai (who were more behind-the-scenes contributors to their movements), they were the only likely candidates able to lead their revolutions effectively. The reasoning for this assertion is the result of their ability to adjust their ideologies to best represent their respective peoples. In essence, Mao and Gandhi created a dependency on their presence, because of the pragmatism they espoused. The sheer amount of similarities revealed here between one of the most violent revolutionaries in history, and the greatest advocate of non-violence in the twentieth century, is remarkable.

The Path to Pragmatism

At their core, both revolutionaries fought for, and even against, similar concepts and figures. Gandhi was a man of compromise and understanding, while Mao was radical and violent for the most part. The former was a student of the British who found that the best way to get them to leave his country was working with them (In a *diplomatic* sense, i.e. through compromise and understanding. This is true even with the reality that the movement as a whole obviously worked against British interests through *non-cooperation* with laws they disagreed with.) toward that goal based on his extensive experience with the police in South Africa¹ instead of using force as the latter believed was necessary.² Much of this stemmed from Gandhi’s spirituality, which drove him to live his life in a way which would not bring shame to him or anyone else; he chose to live by the principle of “Hate the sin, not the sinner,”³ and believed that “To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.”⁴ Nevertheless, Gandhi still retained the seemingly contradictory feeling that “where there is only a choice between cowardice and

¹ Mohandas Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 275-76.

² Mao Tse-Tung, *On Revolution and War*, ed. M. Rejai (Garden City New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1969), 57.

³ Gandhi, 276.

⁴ Ibid.

violence, I would advise violence.”⁵ In his country, Mao felt that “Without armed struggle the proletariat and the Communist Party would have no standing at all in China, and it would be impossible to accomplish any revolutionary task.”⁶ The point is, however, that both men were the products of whatever circumstances they found themselves in (as will be discussed next) and had learned to adapt to what they believed was necessary to further their personal and public goals.

From his youth, Gandhi had made the conscious decision to become a vegetarian and follow the instructions of his mother vehemently while studying law in London⁷ and while in South Africa where he participated in the Boer War and the Zulu Rebellion as an ambulance attendant.⁸ This, for lack of a better phrase, strict adherence to instructions and a policy of not hurting animals by refusing meat, laid a firm foundation for his later beliefs in non-violence and peaceful non-cooperation. Regardless, Gandhi was not a revolutionary in the common understanding of the word (i.e. “rebel,” “insurrectionist,” or “renegade”), for a number of reasons. For instance, he believed that even if his people had the weapons to seize the country by force, they most likely would not have chosen to do so because it was not in the nature of the majority of the Indian people.⁹ While he may have led a movement against them and was anti-imperialistic, Gandhi never saw the British people themselves in a negative light, something which he believed had been misunderstood by the government in London. “India has no quarrel with the British people. I have hundreds of British friends. Andrews’ friendship was enough to tie me to the British people. But both he and I were fixed in our determination that British rule in India, in any shape or form, must end.”¹⁰ In fact, due to those cordial relations, many Englishmen in India began seeing the British presence there in the same way that Gandhi and his movement did; it was not a benevolent force, but a burdensome overseer.¹¹ This growing sentiment, along with his own experiences with them in England and with the police in South

⁵ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Gandhi’s Way A Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (USA: University of California Press, 2002), ix.

⁶ Mao, 57.

⁷ Gandhi, 38-39.

⁸ Samuel Farber, “Violence and Material Class Interests: Fanon and Gandhi,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 16, no. 3/4 (1981): 202.

⁹ Robert Blackey and Clifford Paynton, *Revolution and the Revolutionary Ideal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1976) p. 147.

¹⁰ Mohandas Gandhi, *My Appeal to the British*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19, 24, 37.

Africa, made him come to see them as capable of both reason and cooperation.¹²

Mao never had such amicable relations with an imperial power, or even his family for that matter. Much like Gandhi, Mao's mother meant a great deal to him (some scholars, such as Lowell Dittmer, have claimed he had an Oedipus complex),¹³ but his father was a deep-rooted source for his inclination toward conflict.¹⁴ Growing up in a small village in a rural area of Hunan Province in southern China, Mao's many neighbors still lived under the same backward technological, social, and economic conditions that existed in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and his father came to symbolize that old way of life to Mao, politically and socially.

My mother was a kind woman, generous and sympathetic, and ever ready to share what she had. She pitied the poor and often gave them rice when they came to ask for it during famines. But she could not do so when my father was present. He disapproved of charity. We had many quarrels in my home over this question. There were two "parties" in the family. One was my father, the Ruling Power. The Opposition was made up of myself, my mother, my brother, and sometimes even the laborer. In the "united front" of the Opposition, however, there was a difference of opinion. My mother advocated a policy of indirect attack. She criticized any overt display of emotion and attempts at open rebellion against the Ruling Power. She said it was not the Chinese way.¹⁵

Mao became frustrated with the selfish rigidity of his father's feeling that his son should serve the family in accordance with Confucian values. With this inflexible attitude, and the rebellious tendencies of a youth, Mao acted out against his father on numerous occasions,¹⁶ a tendency that never subsided. It follows that when faced with a similar wall later in his life, that of the state of his country and people, he would again defy authority; in his case, this included several imperialistic countries and eventually the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek as well. This was

¹² Kamlesh Mohan, "An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920's," *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 103.

¹³ Lowell Dittmer, "Mao and the Politics of Revolutionary Morality," *Asian Survey* 3, no. 27 (1987): 317.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 317-18.

¹⁵ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1968): 132.

¹⁶ Dittmer, 318.

a task that Mao described as: “the overthrow of three mountains- feudalism, imperialism, and the comprador bourgeoisie” (the latter being the indirect imperialism through Chiang Kai-shek).¹⁷ Multiple foes, with multiple agendas, helped pave the way for Mao to accept violent revolution as the only possible solution to the existing state of China.

Both men were ideally suited to lead given the context of their regions, but it was still necessary for them to adapt their ideologies to the circumstances of the people themselves by being pragmatic about their situation, in order to win them over. As with any revolution, there are always numerous ideas, figures, and avenues people wish to support in order to succeed in achieving political power. It is essential that either a single person, or idea, predominates over others, or that all of the different plans to bring about change are reconciled with one another at some point. Gandhi and Mao were able to do this and consequently became the unquestioned leaders of their revolutionary movements by committing a great deal of time and effort toward that goal.

Of the two men, Mao, had the hardest time achieving party dominance, but Gandhi did have some difficulty as well. The Chinese Revolution had a great many people who could possibly lead it, and many did at varying times. This caused disunity and fragmentation within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), characteristics which Communism and Leninism were not supposed to have. The largest hurdle that Mao had to contend with, and the one which brought him to dominance once he overcame it, was defeating Wang Ming, Li Lisan, the “28 Bolsheviks,” and the Comintern representatives (most notably Otto Braun) who wanted to “Bolshevize” the party and get them away from relying on the peasants instead of adapting to what the movement actually needed.¹⁸ These men had been trained in Moscow by the Soviet Union and felt they knew what was best for the party to succeed against the Nationalists. However, their short stints as leaders of the party ended after their policies failed to protect the Jiangxi Soviet from Chiang Kai-shek’s extermination campaigns, because they insisted on utilizing conventional warfare against Nationalist armies. Mao had always advocated for guerilla tactics to be used in pairing with other forms of warfare, and this had mainly worked in holding off numerous attacks on their base areas, both before and after he rose to power.¹⁹ As Mao told Edgar Snow: “This does not mean the abandonment of vital strategic points, which can be defended in positional warfare as long as profitable.

¹⁷ Tan Chung, “Chinese History and the Chinese Revolution: On the Dynamism of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought,” *China Report* 26, no. 1 (1990): 7.

¹⁸ Nick Knight, “Working Class Power and State Formation in Mao Zedong’s Thought 1931-1934,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 32, no. 1 (2002): 33.

¹⁹ Mao Tse-tung, *On the Protracted War* (Peking: People’s Publishing House/Foreign Language Press, 1960): 104.

But the pivotal strategy must be a war of maneuver, and important reliance must be placed on guerilla and partisan tactics. Fortified warfare must be utilized, but it will be of auxiliary and secondary importance.”²⁰ Otto Braun and Wang Ming, however, managed to convince the party that they instead had to adopt the same conventional military blockhouse tactics being employed by Chiang Kai-shek in order to gain decisive victories over him. They wanted to *exclusively* use conventional warfare, instead of it being used in the background as Mao had planned. Following this policy led to the famous “Long March” and the Zunyi Conference of 1935 where Mao rose to unquestioned party dominance due to his successful tactics, charisma, and advocacy that the peasants had to be the main revolutionary apparatus rather than the small and weak urban proletariat.²¹

Thus, his admiration for the revolutionary potential of the peasants was balanced by a realistic assessment of their shortcomings as a class, and their urgent need for leadership by the working class and its vanguard party. His words then were certainly not those of a revolutionary who willingly embraced rural revolution and uncritically revered the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. They were, rather, the words of one who finds himself forcibly separated from the cities and the working class, and compelled to find a strategy which could exploit the dissatisfaction of the peasantry and channel their revolutionary impulse in the direction of a modernising revolution. Mao did not, therefore, lose sight of the need for working class leadership of the Chinese revolution, and his words and policies of the Jiangxi Soviet are consistent with those of both the 1927-30 and post-1949 periods.²²

This pragmatism was vital to installing Mao in the position of party leader following the failures of his peers. Even as early as 1936, under his leadership, “the Communists (and the Comintern) had radically changed their position. In a search for broad national unity, they included the Kuomintang and even Chiang Kai-shek...provided that the latter would agree to ‘establish democratic representative government, resist Japan, enfranchise the people, and guarantee civil liberties to the

²⁰ Snow, 112.

²¹ Mao, *On Revolution and War*, 10-11.

²² Knight, “Working Class Power and State Formation in Mao Zedong’s Thought 1931-1934,” 33-34.

masses.”²³ Claiming Mao was a pragmatist, “whose genius consisted not only in a brilliant clarity of mind but in an almost uncanny understanding of Chinese peasant problems,”²⁴ and who carefully and thoughtfully altered his beliefs to the circumstances of his movement, may sound inherently absurd with the ideas of violence and class struggle which has so characterized people’s memories of him in the past; but during critical times of conflict in the pre-1949 era, he continually distinguished himself as a pragmatist and coalition builder.

In India, there were fewer people who could have taken the reins of leadership than there were in China, mainly due to the country having been a fully absorbed crown colony of the British for so long, unlike China which had endured centuries of dynastic and quasi-imperial/colony status by several different nations. One of the only noteworthy examples of who could have led were the Militant Nationalists,²⁵ and with the nervousness of the Indian people in this time period toward open conflict (a nature which Gandhi shared, even admitting that he himself was a rather shy person for most of his life, something which he “never completely overcame”),²⁶ few could resist in an overtly militaristic way as they advocated. Gandhi may not have been a particularly charismatic man, but he did know how to speak with ordinary people and make them understand that they had to work together in order to defy British rule. Unity was absolutely necessary due to how fragmented the country was along religious and caste lines, and because “he was also convinced that the people’s united struggle alone could overthrow colonialism.”²⁷ In his eyes, only a concerted effort that had the backing of the entire country could force the British to accept the desire of the Indian people to rule themselves, and this would encourage them to withdraw willingly, and peacefully.²⁸

Both men were able to dominate the leadership of their respective movements by unseating the opposition with the pragmatic promotion of their ideals. While other people may have led the Chinese and Indian Revolutions at one point or another, only Mao and Gandhi personified those revolutions by eventually emerging as the ones who could meet the needs of the people and take advantage of the climate of the time. As a result, they succeeded not only in bringing the desired revolutionary change, but also being the only ones who adjusted to the

²³ Snow, 102.

²⁴ Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China*, (USA: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1980): 238.

²⁵ Mohan, “An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920’s,” 103-104.

²⁶ Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 59-61.

²⁷ Mohan, “An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920’s,” 105.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

necessities of their movements in order to bring about that change to begin with.

Convergent Pragmatism

Although both men had different ways of accomplishing the changes they desired, they had similar views on the need to utilize all levels of society to succeed in gaining autonomy from foreigners. This view can be seen in Mao and Gandhi's use of the peasantry and the masses, one of the few, but important, similarities that can be found between them. China and India in general were similar in that they were subordinated to imperial powers: India directly as a British crown colony, China indirectly through the rule of the Guomindang/Kuomintang and through the system of treaty ports/concessions with foreign nations throughout the twentieth century. Both countries had been violently suppressed by force of arms in the past, and this created a seething desire to rid themselves of colonizers. In India, on April 13, 1919, General Dyer ordered "the firing of 1,650 rounds of ammunition without warning at a peaceful crowd, [and] regarded it as an opportunity to show people the might of the British Empire for he imagined that 'the Lord hath delivered them into my hands.'"²⁹ This event, which became known as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (or more commonly, the Amritsar Massacre) left 379 dead, and possibly 1,200 wounded.³⁰ The killing did not end on that day, and continued for several more throughout the area. "Henceforth, political awakening and disillusionment with British rulers grew at a rapid pace."³¹ Similarly, on May 30, 1925, demonstrators (who were demanding the release of a number of imprisoned students that had been arrested for protesting against work closures at a Shanghai textile mill) were fired upon by a British inspector; "eleven were killed and at least twenty wounded."³² A month later, another 52 were killed and over 100 more were wounded protesting these original deaths. "The humiliation of having foreign troops on Chinese soil who could kill with impunity led to an unprecedented anti-imperialist explosion that considerably increased the visibility of the CCP and the Guomindang."³³ The May 30th Movement (as it became known as) and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre fostered an intense anti-imperialism and caused a surge

²⁹ Mohan Kamlesh, "The Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy and its Impact as a Catalyst of Indian National Consciousness," *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 3, no. 2 (1996): 164.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 168.

³² R. Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History* (U.S.A. Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2010): 191.

³³ Ibid.

of nationalism and revolutionary fervor among the Chinese and Indian people. These events (and the outrage caused by them) laid crucial groundwork which Gandhi and Mao expanded on and would utilize to further stimulate their movements. Both men were anti-imperialistic, and even though they saw different ways of dealing with it, they chose to adapt to these existing circumstances within their organizations. By doing so, they were able to make use of not only the peasantry, but also the nation as a whole. To put it succinctly, living under the occupation of foreign troops was rapidly becoming intolerable for everyone involved.

On the topic of peasantry and class roles, one must begin with Mao Zedong because the topic is invariably linked to him. That said, however, the common belief that he exclusively relied on the peasantry and was not a Marxist-Leninist at all (instead only forming a Maoism) is unfounded.³⁴ The reason for this lies in the overall point that he had to adapt to China's existing state of affairs and be a more "pragmatic Marxist."³⁵ As Mao put it many times, building on the words of the deceased first leader of the Nationalist Party, Sun Yat-sen, China had a "semi-feudal and semi-colonial status"³⁶ in the world, and the vast majority of the population were farmers and peasants. As a result, the proletariat/urban working class was simply too small to be an effective revolutionary force on their own,³⁷ something that traditional Marxists believed was required to succeed in an uprising. Even though it can be questioned if Mao actually possessed an "admiration for the innate 'wisdom' of the peasantry" and acknowledged an "ardent faith in the revolutionary creativity of the rural masses,"³⁸ he came to rely on them regardless, whether he was mystified by them or not. Due to this, "Mao supposedly revealed a singular and conscious disregard for the theoretical strictures of Marxism,"³⁹ and consequently, it is more appropriate to call Mao a Leninist rather than an outright Marxist or Maoist. This is because Lenin advocated a more pragmatic view that utilized everyone in Russia and turned the focus away from the proletariat as the sole group for revolutionary action during a time when it was still in a much similarly backward state as in China.⁴⁰

³⁴ Nick Knight "Mao Zedong and the Peasants: Class Power in the Formation of a Revolutionary Strategy," *China Report* 40, no. 49 (2004): 50-51.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁶ Mao, *On Revolution and War*, 74-75.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸ Knight, "Mao Zedong and the Peasants: Class Power in the Formation of a Revolutionary Strategy," 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁰ Arif Dirlik, "The Predicament of Marxist Revolutionary Consciousness: Mao Zedong (Mao TseTung), Antonio Gramsci, and the Reformulation of Marxist Revolutionary Theory," *Modern China* 9, no. 2 (1983): 192.

Knowing that China was so dependent on the peasantry and that its industrial class would not support a revolution, Mao advocated the use of the peasantry as the primary force for their insurrection. While he did have a great deal of support from other members of the CCP on this, he was continually opposed by many people (mentioned earlier) who adhered to a more “orthodox” version of Marxism that called for a proletarian revolution alone and who did their best to steer Mao away from his reliance on the peasantry. Regardless of this opposition, Mao was able to win over leadership of the party for a number of reasons, but the most relevant here was his confidence in the peasantry, and his compromise in which he still called for a revolution that was proletarian led, even if the membership was not proletarian dominated. One noteworthy example was the way he organized the CCP with “democratic centralism” and the “mass line” in which everyone’s ideas would ultimately be filtered and controlled by only a small number of people.⁴¹ This compromise, which was one of many before he became more authoritarian in 1942 during the Rectification Campaign (this will be discussed further in the following section), led to his becoming the unquestioned leader of the party and his eliminating of anyone else who could have led during this time period; this essentially created a dependency on Mao’s guidance in order to maintain the same revolutionary fervor that had begun to wane at the outset of the Long March.

Returning more to the peasantry and masses specifically, though, “Mao developed a model for revolution that was successful in encouraging mass peasant support while making clear the revolution would not be led by the peasantry.”⁴² Simply, he could only see them as conservative and difficult to work with,⁴³ but also necessary to win the revolution.⁴⁴ Ultimately, even though he wanted to make use of everyone and had advocated a peasant-centric CCP since nearly the beginnings of the party, and especially after the White Terror and subsequent collapse of the First United Front in 1927, Mao remained in the position of having a proletarian-led revolution.⁴⁵ Much like a true Marxist, he still viewed the proletariat as a better choice for revolutionary leadership, because:

The Chinese proletariat is more resolute and thoroughgoing in revolutionary struggle than any other class because it is subjugated to a threefold oppression

⁴¹ Ibid., 198.

⁴² Knight, “Working Class Power and State Formation in Mao Zedong’s Thought 1931-1934,” 43.

⁴³ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 42-43.

(imperialist, bourgeois, and feudal) which is marked by a severity and cruelty seldom found in other countries...the Chinese proletariat came under the leadership of its own revolutionary party-the Communist Party of China-and became the most politically conscious class in Chinese society...the Chinese proletariat by origin is largely made up of bankrupted peasants, it has natural ties with the peasant masses, which facilitated its forming a close alliance with them.⁴⁶

While the merits of this philosophy can be debated, the innate conservativeness of the countryside is an accurate supposition, due in part to Chiang Kai-shek only extending his direct rule over the cities and the areas directly surrounding them. Mao picked up on this point early on and knew that the countryside was where the revolution would ultimately begin because it could, and would, be used as a base area to organize the majority of the population into a force to bring communism to the nation.⁴⁷ In essence, even though Mao was pragmatic enough to realize that he needed to rely on the peasantry and the masses to effect revolutionary change, the title “peasant revolutionary” may not be an accurate one to assign to him due to his continual support for a proletarian leadership over them. Ultimately though, the Chinese Revolution still took on an aura of Mao-centrism, later termed “Mao Zedong thought” or “Maoism” in Yan’an,⁴⁸ proving that without Mao, the CCP likely would not have had the same identity because it had become dependent on him as their leader.

Even though Mao Zedong chose to live among the peasants during the revolution, he never truly meshed with them and lived as they did, which resulted in difficulties in getting them to agree with his notions of land reform and personal revolutionary ideals. This is a topic that will be discussed further in the next section. Gandhi, however, decided upon a Spartan lifestyle and full integration with the peasants.⁴⁹ “Gandhi had an uncanny, mysterious gift which kept him at all times in tune with the prevalent feelings and emotions of India's inarticulate peasants.”⁵⁰ What made this even more unifying for the Indians was that Gandhi was from a relatively well-off family and had a decent law career that he chose to give up in favor of living among the poorer

⁴⁶ Mao, *On Revolution and War*, 149.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁸ Thomas Kampen, *Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and the Evolution of the Chinese Leadership* (Great Britain: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000), 108.

⁴⁹ Mohan, “An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920’s,” 106.

⁵⁰ Baldoon Dhingra, “Gandhi and Permanent Revolution,” *Internationales Jahrbuch fur Geschichts- und Geographie- Unterricht* 14, (1972): 99.

groups/castes,⁵¹ all in order to get the general populace involved and to lift them out of their circumstances. Most importantly, Gandhi held a similar view of both the peasantry and working class that Mao had in China.

Comparable to the makeup of the Chinese, the Indian peasantry made up a majority of the population, and even though the working class was not as tiny as it was in China, it was still rather small to say the least. Gandhi advocated that the peasantry should be fully involved in the political and revolutionary processes and in democracy as a whole, but must be led by the intellectuals/working class of the country.⁵² While Mao would not have openly approved of the leadership of intellectuals as a class, as was shown when he ordered the execution of liberal intellectual Wang Shiwei in 1947 during the evacuation of Yan'an,⁵³ he wholly agreed with the domination by the proletariat and urban working class over the peasantry, and for the same reasons that Gandhi espoused. Although Bolshevik ideas spread throughout India after Lenin's death in 1924, there is no evidence that Gandhi himself was affected by Marxism or Leninism beyond his saying:

India does not want Bolshevism. The people are too peaceful to stand anarchy. They will bow to the knee who restores so called order. Let us recognise the Indian psychology....The average Mussalman of India is quite different than the average Mussalman of the other part of the world. The Hindu is proverbially, almost completely mild. The Parsi and the Christian love peace more than strike. Indeed, we have almost made religion subservient to peace.⁵⁴

After stating this clear understanding of the Indian people and being pragmatic enough to mold himself into the preexisting feelings in order to achieve success in their movement, Gandhi refused to accept invitations to visit the Soviet Union in the 1920s,⁵⁵ but the similarity of his ideals to the underlying concepts of Marxist thought, especially proletarian dominance over the peasantry, is striking.

In addition, both Gandhi and Mao were anti-imperialists, as mentioned above, but even though Mao entirely despised imperialism, Gandhi hated it because he felt that the practice had been perpetuated to

⁵¹ Mohan, "An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920's," 106.

⁵² Dhingra, 99.

⁵³ Schoppa, 287.

⁵⁴ N. M. P. Srivastava, "Lenin and the Indian Revolutionaries," *United Asia* 23, (1971): 318-319.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

divide and destroy the consciousness of the Indian people.⁵⁶ As a result, Gandhi chose to eat frugally and shed a safe home and career in order to live in the simple dress (he only owned one shirt) and poor sanitary conditions that the peasants were forced to toil under. He further gained the admiration of the peasants by trying to restore Indian self-respect⁵⁷ and by utilizing symbols that would get everyone involved in one way or another. The Spinning Wheel, which is now on the flag of India, was used to gain the support of women and promote equality for them,⁵⁸ (Gandhi understood that “no mass movement could be successful without the ‘muted’ sections of society” and heavily encouraged female involvement because they fell into that category.)⁵⁹ something Mao was attempting to accomplish as well. This was also aimed at stimulating a national interest, and nationalism specifically, in Indian cloth over that which came from England. Their fabric could easily be created by Indian women on their own spinning wheels with the huge quantities of domestic cotton, the main reason for Gandhi seeing the imports as asinine and unnecessary.⁶⁰ Not doing so, “was to Gandhi’s mind a waste of both substance and opportunities of poor people in a country where cotton abounded;”⁶¹ as a result, he believed that “the dumping down of foreign cloth in India has reduced millions of my people to pauperism.”⁶² The term used by Gandhi to describe this was *Swadeshi*, which roughly refers to an emphasis on domestic production and consumption, as well as the rejection of foreign-made goods.⁶³ Furthermore, the famous violation of the Salt Tax by Gandhi, which everyone suffered from because salt was one of the few seasonings that Indians could afford and produce on their own, achieved a mass following that succeeded in garnering the support of most of the masses.⁶⁴ Again, most importantly, the disobedience in choosing to create their own salt despite the ban encouraged crucial female involvement. These symbols were coined, and these actions executed, to show the British that they were more than capable of, and interested in, running their own economy and country.

⁵⁶ Mohan, “An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920’s,” 104.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mohan, “The Jallianwalla Bagh Tragedy and its Impact as a Catalyst of Indian National Consciousness,” 159.

⁶⁰ Clifton B. Kroeber, “Theory and History of Revolution,” *Journal of World History* 7, no. 1 (1996): 35.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance*, 146.

⁶³ D.S. Chauhan, “Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi: Reconstruction, Revolutionary Thought, and Action Strategy,” *Asia Quarterly*, no. 1 (1974): 70.

⁶⁴ Gandhi *Non-Violent Resistance*, 220.

Gandhi was completely committed to promoting equality and democracy in India in order to continue keeping mass involvement in the important events of the country and to facilitate better communication among the people. As mentioned earlier, Gandhi utilized symbols to not only engage women in the struggle, but to make them feel included and consulted in the revolutionary process; and not “ignorant of the prevalent political situation”⁶⁵ currently underway. Also, he envisioned a society that was not necessarily a utopia of collaboration, but one based on the need for teamwork; not on a government that told everyone what to do. This led Gandhi to accept a *de-centralized* democracy because he felt that industry must work cooperatively with farmers and that society must not treat any individual as untouchable,⁶⁶ two things that having a *centralized* democracy like Mao had in China did not do. In essence, he believed that “individuals and groups must function non-violently through mutual aid and cooperation”⁶⁷ to bring about a lasting peace, not violence and rigid conformity to party doctrine.

This is why much of Gandhi’s ideologies were based on some level of understanding, compromise, and cooperation. As a result, he felt it was possible to persuade the British to leave voluntarily through diplomacy and that it was possible to include everyone in the struggle for freedom, not just a single class that would simply take over and continue oppressive policies. Most importantly, he also promoted collaboration between the Muslims and Hindus, because despite their differences, Gandhi knew that in order for a revolution to succeed there had to be an “Indian United Front” of not only the different social classes but also of the different religions and economic backgrounds.⁶⁸ As he argued: “Muslim-Hindu unity must be our creed to last for all time and under all circumstances.”⁶⁹ With this mass movement, non-violence and peaceful non-cooperation could be successful; without it, the British would continue to be able to divide and control the Indian people. In many ways, Mao and the CCP felt the same way about the necessity of a mass movement, and this is why they promoted such a diverse coalition against not only the Japanese and other imperialists, but also the Nationalist Party during the civil war and World War II.

To both figures, a revolution had to be a popular movement of the peasantry, led by the proletariat (and also the intellectuals in Gandhi’s case), that would affect revolutionary change. Without the unity among the classes and the masses, the revolutionary movement

⁶⁵ Mohan, “The Jallianwalla Bagh Tragedy and its Impact as a Catalyst of Indian National Consciousness,” 159.

⁶⁶ J. B. Kripalani, “Gandhian Thought and its Effect on Indian Life,” *Cahiers d’histoire mondiale* 5, no. 2 (1959): 411-14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁶⁸ Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance*, 128.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

would be less likely to succeed. While class roles were far more strictly enforced in the Chinese Revolution, the Indians did utilize a loose class structure because “as it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor,” and this alliance was aimed at promoting equality and cooperation to succeed in the struggle against an occupying force.⁷⁰ Both of these men were powerful and innovative coalition builders who were able to unite their fragmented organizations, despite preexisting notions of who Mao was during the time period in question. Essentially, the ideals of Gandhi and Mao embodied their respective revolutions and were especially applicable above all other alternatives, and this made them indispensable to their countries, their peoples, their revolutionary movements, and the contexts of their time in general.

Divergent Pragmatism

This paper will now compare the most divisive characteristic which delineates Gandhi and Mao, that of advocacy for non-violence and violence, respectively. While this has been briefly touched upon already, it will be covered more in-depth here. It is important to note that this discussion will not be aimed at debating the merits of either ideology, but will show that even though violence and non-violence are obviously antithetical, both figures arrived at their philosophies for the same reason: that their chosen approach was best for their movements, even though the same reasons led to diverging conclusions. As a result, they were willing to do whatever was necessary to win power for their organizations, and did so in order to maneuver into the position of using any desirable instrument to their advantage. Seeing the two men in this manner pulls them down from the mythical status assigned to them and shows who they truly were, pragmatic men who used ideologies which would foster both unity and support within the confines of their fragile alliances.

Many people, including a number of Maoists, have viewed Gandhi’s use of non-violence as a sign of weakness which led to India remaining in a state of perpetual colonialism modeled on the former British administration,⁷¹ a perspective that is simply not true. “In general, violent overthrow of the government has been the popular method adopted by revolutionaries irrespective of their creed, nationality, or race,”⁷² but there is no prerequisite that all must be; Gandhi has been the notable exception to that rule. No two revolutions are the same, because

⁷⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁷¹ Priyamvada Gopal, “Concerning Maoism: Fanon, Revolutionary Violence, and Postcolonial India,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 1, no. 112 (2013): 121.

⁷² Chauhan, 69.

even if one replicated the same circumstances, there would probably be different results due to the unpredictability of human nature. Gandhi saw the need for a “constructive revolution” which would build a new state, not a destructive one that would delay progress.⁷³ “The constructive program was an essential component of Gandhian revolutionary struggle for Indian independence. It was the constructive program which gave content to the *satyagraha* framework and applied the Gandhian principles to the Indian circumstances.”⁷⁴ Being constructive, rather than destructive, was a vital piece of the Indian struggle for freedom, and Gandhi was pragmatic enough to realize this; non-violence was necessary not only because of the nervous nature of those in their movement, but also because they did not want to destroy their own society in the process of gaining independence. Whereas on a base level, all revolutionary leaders would probably agree with this, most would see the constructive aspect of the revolution being the *result* of the destructive one because it is necessary to destroy in order to create; Mao would of course agree with this stance. Gandhi, however, felt that the use of colonial violence against colonizers, in order to free themselves from the colonizer (the exact idea the Militant Nationalists were advocating), was an oxymoron and that it would undermine the goals of the Indian people.⁷⁵ “Secrecy and terrorism led to demoralisation and wastage, while Gandhi sought to bring revolution by converting the adversary to his point of view and enlisting him in the brotherhood of man.”⁷⁶ This is why Gandhi cultivated so many relationships with British people living in South Africa and India, because he did not want to lead an underground movement, but one that had a moral creed and did things in the light of day; not in dark alleyways. He essentially believed (and so did the Indian people of course) that clandestine/armed operations to gain their freedom would fail, and consequently make it even more difficult to achieve independence due to the duplication of the death and violence used by imperialists and colonists.

As a result, it is more appropriate to look upon Gandhi as a diplomat and social reformer, rather than an outright revolutionary; at least when one is employing the modern sense of the word. A pivotal aspect of the revolution for him was to bring the colonizer over to his way of thinking peacefully, not through direct conflict, and he worked with the British tirelessly to achieve this goal. In addition, he not only forced himself, but also convinced all of his followers through careful deliberation, to practice self-restraint and control when dealing with the

⁷³ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁵ Mohan, “An Assessment of the Gandhian Attitude towards Militant Nationalists in the 1920’s,” 108-109.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 108.

English throughout their everyday lives and during the revolution.⁷⁷ Due to this, the word *diplomat* can be assigned to Gandhi because he wanted to work within the bounds of the established system in order to be able to defy and defeat that system.

To Gandhi, non-violence meant “infinite love.”⁷⁸ The most accurate way to explain this would be to *loosely* think of the old Hippy adage: “Make love, not war.” Gandhi was nowhere near the *type* of enemy to the British that Mao was to the Nationalists, and knew that he could work with them toward an amicable solution that would benefit both their peoples. He felt, and promoted, the feeling that the British should not be ashamed to bow out of India, even if it was during the Second World War. As Gandhi said in June, 1942:

If British Power is withdrawn from India in an orderly manner, Britain will be relieved of the burden of keeping peace in India, and at the same time gain in a free India an ally not in the cause of Empire-because she would have renounced in toto all her imperial designs-but in defense, not pretended but wholly real, of human freedom.⁷⁹

This was because even though India would remain neutral, the Allies would still be allowed to use Indian rail and supply lines to benefit their war efforts.⁸⁰ Added to this, even if the Japanese were able to succeed in their invasion of Indian Territory, they would be non-violently resisted in the same manner that the British currently were, and this would be equally effective against them as it had been against the English.⁸¹

With regards to the Japanese and allowing India to be a quasi-supporter of the British and their allies during the war if they pulled out, Gandhi actually took the time to acknowledge others’ contributions against their mutual enemies. Even though he may not have agreed with either’s ideals, he said the cost that the Russians and Chinese had paid to fight the Axis powers had been enormous, and he sympathized with their plight.⁸² Gandhi disapproved of Japanese aggression as much as anyone in China, but said that “China never tried any experiment with non-violence. That the Chinese remained passive for some time is no proof that it was a non-violent attitude.”⁸³ Consequently, their violence against the Japanese (and others) only caused more pain and suffering, and led to

⁷⁷ Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance*, 5, 79.

⁷⁸ Dhingra, 97.

⁷⁹ Gandhi, *My Appeal to the British*, 27.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-28, 31-33, 39.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11-15, 20.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

further suppression during their occupation. While many in India had grown impatient with the non-violence that Gandhi advocated and desired quicker results (something similar to the assertiveness of Mao in China),⁸⁴ most still agreed that violence, especially when the British were in a state of war, would get them nowhere and that self-restraint was a watchword for their success.

This paper has been intentionally general with the exact terminology that Gandhi employed to describe his ideals because a thorough discussion of the *application* of the concepts and ideals themselves, not the names, would lead to a better understanding of his beliefs; but some are nevertheless unavoidable, namely, *Satyagraha* and *ahimsa*. For all intents and purposes, these were the words that Gandhi used in all aspects of his revolution, and the former basically meant a general focus on the pursuit of truth and firmness while the latter can be interpreted to mean non-violence.⁸⁵ All of his followers were required to take vows of (translated to their English equivalents): truth, non-violence, chastity, non-possession, fearlessness, palate control, non-stealing, bread-labor, equality of religions, anti-untouchability, and use of locally made goods.⁸⁶ To Gandhi, all of these related to truth and were aimed at making people understand that “man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore not competent to punish;”⁸⁷ hence, non-violence and non-cooperation/civil disobedience with laws they found corrupt and immoral were what was necessary to win the revolution.

Most of this was linked to how Gandhi promoted an all-encompassing use of religion as well. Although it is important to reiterate that he encouraged cooperation between both Muslims and Hindus (another uncommon belief that Gandhi promoted in the pursuit of unity for his movement), it is crucial to note that he said that every *Satyagrahi* (i.e., a person who practices *Satyagraha*) must have an unshakeable faith in God.⁸⁸ This is because he saw that life persists in the midst of destruction and violence, and that there must be a higher power and law than any that humanity could impose.⁸⁹ All of his ideals and thoughts were aimed at creating a spirit among the Indian people that would wish to gain their freedom with minimal bloodshed and in a manner which was applicable to the mood of the time. India had always been a rather religious society, but never had a violent revolutionary culture. Gandhi was one of the few who was truly able to grasp this and be pragmatic

⁸⁴ Kroeber, 35-36.

⁸⁵ Chauhan, 77.

⁸⁶ Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance*, 37.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 383.

enough as to apply his philosophy in a way that would engender mass popular support.

In contrast, the Chinese people had not necessarily always been as violent as Gandhi claimed, but had indeed chosen over thousands of years to use force of arms to remove a dynasty or ruler that had lost its “mandate of heaven.” This is the exact reason why Gandhi said that China had never attempted a non-violent solution to a governmental or imperial problem, and is also the reason why so many people agreed with Mao’s feelings that a violent revolution was necessary; because it had become so engrained in the consciousness of the Chinese people. Consequently, pursuing a course of action which included armed insurrection was in the best interests of Chinese Communist Party doctrine.

To succeed in assimilating the support of the people, Mao pursued what Arif Dirlik has termed the “Sinification of Marxism,” or the “Marxification of Chineseness.”⁹⁰ The ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin were excellent *templates* for Mao, but his pragmatism made him realize that it was necessary to gain popular support by having a rural revolution, as mentioned earlier. This required modifying Marxism to the Chinese situation, even though the roots that called for a violent upheaval remained unaltered. Essentially, this became the nationalization of Marxism in order to give a Chinese identity to the revolution that people there could relate to.

As Mao saw it, “the seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.”⁹¹ This exact concept was what should be the driving force and central task to any insurrection as he understood it, and the CCP followed it accordingly. While this *may* have fundamentally been more violent than what much of the peasantry were accustomed to, it does not negate the fact that Mao knew the idea was already there, he just had to encourage the growth of it. Mao believed that imperialists, colonizers, or any other type of occupiers *in general* would never relinquish their control or lay down their weapons without the people forcing them to do so with some form of violent attack.⁹² Even though the idea that China’s problems could only be solved through armed force was an integral CCP stance from the beginnings of the party, Mao was the one who applied it to the peasantry and not just the urban working class; this made him an important figure in the eyes of the masses and capable of leading because he had garnered their support.

⁹⁰ Dirlik, 188, 199.

⁹¹ Mao, *On Revolution and War*, 54.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 68, 74.

Furthermore, this adds an additional link to why the topic of land reform was so important to Mao and the Communists, it was to placate the peasantry. Taking lands from lords and wealthy land-owners that had been using it to collect oppressive and impoverishing taxes from the rural classes (and then to redistribute it among them) would significantly improve their chances of gaining the trust of China's masses. By reallocating the land, the peasants would have more of a say in their everyday lives and thus would be motivated to follow the CCP in revolutionary endeavors. Mao's charisma continued to sell this policy, and it reaped him a great deal of power and prestige among the masses, something that no other party member could muster in a comparable quantity that would have challenged Mao during the revolution.

The arguable culmination of pre-1949 Maoism was the Rectification Campaign in 1942. Principally, the point of the campaign was to root out corruption within the party that had surfaced while at Yan'an, and a great deal of this was done violently.⁹³ Class struggle itself was advocated by many members of the CCP (Liu Shaoqi being a noteworthy example)⁹⁴ and while it was meant to be a way to eliminate classes altogether and promote a forum in which all members of the party could express their opinions, it became a battleground for factional fighting and bitter political division. Mao aimed the Rectification Campaign at destroying the contradictions within the party caused from this and to forcefully reform the new wave of recruits received as a result of the Mass Exodus from the urban areas during the Japanese invasion to make sure they were more in line with party doctrine. To do this, he departed from the conservative and pragmatic land reform policies that the CCP had been utilizing before toward radical ones that were intended to force the peasantry to adapt to *Mao's* thinking, instead of the other way around. There was vicious backlash from this shift to immediate change, as opposed to the moderate program the peasants had been accustomed to, and this caused Mao to realize that he had to re-adapt his ideals to better suit the people once again. After learning from his mistakes, Mao reasserted his pragmatism in the mid-1940s; had he not done so, he could have lost a great deal of support, and the movement may well have faltered. This event, nevertheless, marked the point where Mao began to move away from his pre-1949 realism. Afterwards, he indeed became the devoted advocate of class struggle in the People's Republic of China period which people remember him for, and have chosen to incorrectly apply to his entire life. This exact illusion is the one in which this paper has been attempting to dispel.

⁹³ Yinghong Cheng, *Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 65.

⁹⁴ Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 435-441.

This is why Mao continued to promote a theory that called for *continuous revolution* (as can be seen in the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976)⁹⁵ after this campaign, and this was an essential extension of the idea that rectification of the party was necessary, all in order to make sure that the revolution would continue advancing with the people and be on-going to deny individuals the possibility of becoming lax with Communist philosophy. Surprisingly, Gandhi also advocated “permanent revolution,” but it was only aimed at adapting to the everyday changes of Indian society to make sure that the revolution would not remain static,⁹⁶ rather than attempting to enforce some dogma over a prolonged period of time. Mao and Gandhi understood the necessity in this period to not only adjust their ideologies to better suit their environments and then to advocate for them, but both men also grasped that they had to continue the revolution in spirit after it was physically over, because the task of nation-building would then begin in the aftermath of the withdrawal/defeat of an occupier or subversive governing body.

A Pragmatic Post-Mortem

Mao became preoccupied with the constant need for violent upheaval, both during and after the revolution. He saw a future for his people that included a destruction of any last vestige of colonialism or oppression, as well as a lasting society that was devoid of the kinds of classes that could potentially promote capitalism and endorse a return to the Nationalist Party’s decadence. Mao believed in mass participation in politics and complete conformity to party doctrine and ideals. Additionally, he was a charismatic individual who was able to win over leadership of the party and guide the CCP, and the revolution, in a direction which would follow a modified Marxian framework that was spearheaded by a desire for violent, rapid, and immediate change to their present circumstances. Although he may have left his pre-1949 pragmatism by the wayside once he gained power, he undeniably made realistic contributions to their movement before the PRC was founded.

Gandhi, likewise, was an anti-imperialist who longed for the day when the Indian people would no longer live under British rule and could manage their own affairs. He also believed in involving everyone in the society, including those from every caste and religious background. This was aimed at creating an atmosphere of internal cooperation first in order to be able to cooperate with England and convince them to leave their country. Unlike Mao, Gandhi and the Indian people were non-violent, and he adjusted his ideology to better suit that reality. Even though it is

⁹⁵ Ibid., 474.

⁹⁶ Dhingra, 99-100.

difficult to discern if Gandhi would have also abandoned his pragmatic nature after independence, because of his assassination, it seems unlikely that would have been the case with his long record of non-violence and peaceful non-cooperation up to that date.

Simply put, even though the nature and beliefs of the Indian and Chinese freedom organizations toward the type of revolution required were completely different, they were both led by men capable of working with the people at the peasant level and who amended their ideas and thoughts to better conform to the feelings of that class. Without the presence of these two figures, the Indian and Chinese revolutions would have had radically different ideologies, as no other person could have taken their place and fostered the same kind of revolutionary fervor and cooperation which Mao and Gandhi's pragmatism were capable of creating. Even though there were others who led at various points during the revolutions, most were either unwilling or unable to adapt to what the general mood of the time required, and chose instead to pursue a philosophy that the majority could not rally behind. Furthermore, even though each group had other important leaders (because no one person can lead a movement on his/her own), such as the examples of Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai who were mentioned in the introduction to this paper, these other leaders were dwarfed by Gandhi and Mao and came to be men who worked behind-the-scenes instead of in the forefront.

Whether Nehru or Zhou could have taken over and become the figures that Mao and Gandhi were in the event of their deaths or absences before independence is pure speculation. It does raise interesting questions, however, about whether the two men explored in this paper were absolutely vital to their revolutions, or just that the people had become psychologically dependent on them, because they had adapted to what the country needed when no other person had been able to in a comparable fashion. This may well be a topic which can be explored further and would shed additional light on these two figures, but it is outside the purview of this examination.

Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi, nevertheless, personified their revolutions because the masses came to rely on them as their respective leaders as time passed and when no other person rose to challenge them with a comparable pragmatism or ideology which would have competed with the popularity of theirs. Although it is an easy exercise to say that they were the *only* people who could have led the Chinese and Indian revolutions, this argument cannot be substantiated. As this paper argued, however, they did come to characterize their movements and were the only ones *able* to adapt their beliefs, in the same way and at the same time, to the atmosphere present in their country's revolutionary alliances. This resulted in Mao and Gandhi becoming integral figures in the minds of their people, hence the

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mythical status which has been assigned to them, and explains why this paper tried to bring them down from that pedestal and see them for who they were, revolutionary pragmatists.

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Author Bio

Kevin Wheeler served as Chief Editor of this year's volume of *History in the Making*. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from California State University, San Bernardino in March, 2014, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in History, with a European History Emphasis. Kevin intends to obtain a Single Subject Credential as a graduate student at CSUSB, and teach at the High School level. In the future, he plans to obtain an M.A. and PhD, and become a university professor. He has journeyed to France, Italy, England, and Ireland, and desires to continue traveling to the continent which has become such a part of his studies. Though his work in this journal is not in his specific field of study, he believes Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi embody the mythical status historians have placed upon many historical figures; and are useful tools in dispelling that illusion throughout the world. Kevin wishes to extend his gratitude to Dr. Robert Blackey, who has not only consistently challenged him to become a better writer and historian, but also was pivotal in his role as Chief Editor. Dr. Blackey's inspiration as Kevin's adviser in past years has been vital to his educational successes, and both Dr. Murray and Dr. Keating have also been continually helpful. Additionally, Kevin would like to thank his family for their continued support in his academic career, and his girlfriend, Riley Pate, for always being the caring and wonderful woman she is.

