In 1951, four years after India and Pakistan became independent nations, the prominent Democrat Chester Bowles approached President Harry S. Truman and asked to have the ambassadorship to India, if the job was available. Bowles described Truman’s reaction: “The president was appalled at the thought of anyone wanting to go to India and he said, ‘Well, I thought India was pretty jammed with poor people and cows wandering around the streets, witch doctors and people sitting on hot coals and bathing in the Ganges, and so on, but I did not realize that anyone thought it was important.’” Equally irresistible is the confession of Truman’s worldly secretary of state, Dean Acheson, who confided in his memoirs: “I have never been able to escape wholly from a childhood illusion that, if the world is round, the Indians must be standing on their heads—or, perhaps, vice versa.”

Historically, the U.S. understanding of India evolved as a part of what Edward Said has called Orientalism, a way of conceptualizing Asia that presupposed Western superiority and undergirded Western domination. Orientalism was a “discourse,” principally “a British and French cultural enterprise,” that encompassed “such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant . . . colonial armies and . . . colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental ‘experts’ and ‘hands,’ . . . a complex array of ‘Oriental’ ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdom domesticated for local European use—the list [Said concludes] can be extended more or less indefinitely.” What was for nearly two centuries a European enterprise became after World War II a U.S. one.

Gender is a discourse in its own right and a constituent element of the
more general discourse of Orientalism. Given the expansive content of Orientalist discourse, however, it is perhaps most useful to focus on Said's description of it as a “cultural enterprise.” Although culture “is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language,” as Raymond Williams put it, these days it has nothing on discourse. In the formulation of Max Weber and Clifford Geertz, culture consists of the “webs of significance” (in Weber's phrase) spun by human beings. Everyone, even the shapers of U.S. foreign policy, is affected by culture and deploys webs of significance in order to understand the world outside the self. At the policy-making level, this is political culture. Some webs are inherited, being the property of institutions rather than the individuals who move in and out of them. Other webs come with those who staff these institutions. People are not only the makers of webs but their subtle victims because they can become enmeshed in the skeins that they or others have made and become dependent on the sustenance and security that their webs provide. Significantly, no matter what others' webs look like, we perceive them through our own. Our understanding of others thus comes from our views of ourselves.

The focus of this essay is on gender, one of the critical skeins in the web of significance deployed by U.S. policy makers and used to explain India. An analysis of gender illuminates important aspects of relations between nations; here the concern is with the United States, India, and, tangentially, Pakistan. Mrinalini Sinha has written, “Empires and nations are gendered ideological constructs,” to which one might add that nations also construct each other. For the purposes of this essay, gender, or “gendering,” is not a static idea but a transnational process: it is the assignment of certain characteristics based on prevailing ideas of masculinity and femininity to a people and nation by another people and nation. Masculinity and femininity are not, in this view, biologically determined categories but culturally and socially conditioned constructs. Nations and the people who constitute them become “gendered,” and this affects the policies that other nations pursue toward them.

The history of U.S. foreign relations is not generally held to be susceptible to gender analysis. The makers of U.S. foreign policy, almost all of them men, do not talk explicitly about gender issues or intentionally use a vocabulary of gender when they discuss their policies toward other countries. They talk about strategy and geopolitics, economics and access to raw materials, and systems, ours versus theirs. Because of this, as Joan Scott has written, most historians believe that gender “refers only to those areas . . . involving relations between the sexes. Because, on the face of it, war, diplomacy, and high politics have not been explicitly about those relationships, gender seems not
to apply and so continues to be irrelevant to the thinking of historians concerned with issues of politics and power.\textsuperscript{9}

Increasing numbers of diplomatic historians have pursued Scott’s argument that “high politics itself is a gendered concept.”\textsuperscript{10} In two important essays, Emily S. Rosenberg has suggested that historians of U.S. foreign relations undertake “a quest to understand the ever-changing ideologies related to gender, and their social and political implications.”\textsuperscript{11} This essay takes up that quest in an effort to discover how ideas about gender, many of them found in popular culture, affected policy makers in Washington and New Delhi as they considered each other, especially during the period 1947–64.

Examination of the gender issue requires in the first place the use of sources not often studied by diplomatic historians, among them anthropology and psychology texts, photographs, popular literature, travelers’ accounts, films, and plays. The study also demands an unconventional reading of conventional sources on policy making. One must look at the usual published documents, in the State Department’s \textit{Foreign Relations} volumes and elsewhere, as well as consult the holdings of the U.S. presidential libraries and the national archives of the United States, Great Britain, and India. But the researcher with gender in mind must look for odd things in the documents: stray remarks about personal style or gesture, for example, or comments about a people’s alleged “emotionalism” or “effeminacy,” and even references to the kinds of parties U.S. hosts put on for their Indian or Pakistani guests. What for most diplomatic historians would be a collection of marginalia becomes for someone interested in culture a treasure trove of information demanding thick description.

Begin with the Western idea, which persists over time, that India is a female country. One of the most influential books ever written about India by a Westerner was Katherine Mayo’s \textit{Mother India} (1927), a scathing attack on Hindu customs and practices.\textsuperscript{12} Mayo’s choice of title was no accident; it built on a long tradition of representing India, the place, as female. The early twentieth-century U.S. traveler Sydney Greenbie noted, apparently without irony, that on a map India “looked like the ponderous milk-bags of a cow holding the very living essence of Asia.”\textsuperscript{13} Writers contrasted the West and India in ways that evoked gender. The West was grasping, materialistic, scientific, and calculating; India was spiritual, impulsive, even irrational. “The masculine science of the West,” wrote Greenbie, “has found out and wooed and loved or scourg’d this sleepy maiden of mysticism.”\textsuperscript{14} In the discourse of India’s relations with the West, concludes Richard Cronin, “one metaphor emerges as dominant. The West is a man, the East is a woman.”\textsuperscript{15}

The Western representation of India as female worked to confer effemi-
nacy on most Indian men. Caught in the enervating web of Hinduism, which was regarded by Westerners as less a religion than a pathology, the majority of Indian men had been deprived of their manliness and their virility. In the context of gender, it is possible to discern three features that Westerners historically assigned to most Indian men. The first of these was passivity and its more exaggerated forms; the second was emotionalism; the third was a lack of heterosexual energy. All were associated with femininity, which Westerners regarded as effeminacy if exhibited by a man, and all involved the application to India of Western constructions of the feminine and the masculine.

The first of these features, in this case a cluster of characteristics, included passivity, servility, and cowardice. Nothing, argued Westerners, could stir Hindu men out of their passive torpor. Indian men could endure anything, evidently without suffering from a sense of shame about their inaction. They did not resist oppressors but regarded them with stupefying indifference. During the 1920s and 1930s, there was a Hindu craze in the United States, and thousands of U.S. citizens became familiar with the “three levels of conduct” of Vedanta, the type of Hinduism most often brought to the country by Indian swamis. Level one was “obedient activity,” level two was “desireless activity,” and the third and highest level was “pure passivity.” The terms could have been borrowed from a primer on behavior written for proper U.S. women, now projected onto allegedly effeminate Others.

The exaggerated form of passivity was servility. This, Westerners declared, Hindu men had in abundance. Many subscribed at least implicitly to John Stuart Mill’s dictum that “in truth, the Hindu, like the eunuch, excels in the qualities of the slave.” The traveler Henry M. Field was astonished and delighted with the apparent servility of Indian men. He was “surrounded and waited upon by soft-footed Hindoos, who glided about noiselessly like cats, watching every look, eager to anticipate every wish before they heard the word of command.” Everyone called him “sahib,” a title of respect, and the servants automatically rose in his presence. “I never knew before how great a being I was,” Field wrote. “There is nothing like going far away from home, to the other side of the world, among Hindoos or Hottentots, to be fully appreciated.”

Beyond servility was cowardice. Westerners asserted that Hindu men were unwilling to stand and fight and that this explained the apparent ease with which they had been conquered. First the Muslims, then the British, had found the Hindu population relatively unresisting, especially in Bengal. To make this argument, particularly after Bengalis were heavily involved in the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, required tortuous reasoning, but Katherine Mayo was up to the task. She claimed that acts of Hindu resistance
were cowardly because they relied on treachery, not confrontation. "If only he need not face his enemy," she wrote of the Bengali male. "If only he may creep up behind and take his enemy in the back."19

The idea that Indian men were passive, servile, and cowardly persisted into the Cold War period. U.S. policy makers condemned Indian foreign policy makers for their unwillingness to take a stand in the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and believed that Indian neutralism got its comeuppance in the fall of 1962, when Communist Chinese troops smashed through Indian defenses on the northeast frontier and pushed deep into Indian territory. Roger Hilsman, an assistant secretary of state who came to New Delhi with a high-level delegation to offer India help, could not refrain from a sharp observation: "We were ushered into the Prime Ministerial residence through the reception hall lined with photographs of all the neutral and unaligned Chiefs of States who have so notably failed to come to India's support during the present crisis. The irony was more than funny—it was oppressive."20

A second trait that according to U.S. officials and Westerners revealed the effeminacy of Hindu men was emotionalism, usually associated with hypersensitivity. Rather than deal with issues logically and coolly, Hindu men flew off the handle—just as U.S. women were allegedly apt to do. U.S. policy makers claimed constantly to find verification for the cliche that the West was rational and tough, while the East was emotional and sensitive. In a 1948 profile, the CIA described the Indian prime minister: "Nehru is a man of broad vision and of integrity, but his character is weakened by a tendency toward emotionalism which at times destroys his sense of values. He is gracious as well as brilliant, but volatile and quick-tempered."21 A sense of pride came naturally with independence, but the Indians were an especially sensitive people—or so claimed ambassadors to India Loy Henderson (1948–51) and Chester Bowles (1951–53).22 In 1954, the law partner of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles wrote that Indians had "an almost feminine hypersensitivity with respect to the prestige of their country."23 President Eisenhower agreed. Reading of Indian objections to the administration's plan to provide arms for Pakistan, Eisenhower wrote Dulles: "This is one area of the world where, even more than most cases, emotion rather than reason seems to dictate policy."24

Finally, U.S. officials believed that Hindu men failed to show a healthy sexual interest in women. This failure was not, of course, a characteristic of U.S. women, but of unmanly U.S. men. Hindu men seemed inclined to homosexuality or, like the great nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi, sexual renunciation. Visitors to India noticed Indian men holding hands, as they
do still. They saw sculptures of beings that were bifurcated into male and female halves, adding to the apparent confusion of gender roles in India. In the mid-1950s, Harold Isaacs surveyed 181 prominent U.S. citizens, including several foreign policy makers, about their attitudes toward India. Respondents offered a host of gendered, and censoreous, descriptors: Indian men were “servile,” “cringing,” “submissive,” “effete,” “weak,” and “effeminate.” They were characterized by “passivity,” “inertia,” and “docility,” and they lacked “vigor,” “industry,” “stamina,” “virility,” and “muscles.” Most revealing is the diatribe of a distinguished (though anonymous) scholar: “Indians? I think of fakiry, spelled both ways. It’s the same thing. It means deception. . . . Somehow I am almost tempted to use the word feminine. I feel a certain effeminateness about Indians that bothers me, although I am not bothered in general by homosexuals. . . . Effete is a word I think of.”

U.S. officials learned much of what they knew about empire from the British. Of course, the United States became an imperialist nation in its own right, but like the British raj the U.S. empire was undergirded by perceptions based on gender. When U.S. policy makers looked abroad in the late nineteenth century, they beheld nations whose populations seemed to cry out for the protection, guidance, and discipline only white men could provide. As Emily Rosenberg notes, “Women, nonwhite races, and tropical countries often received the same kinds of symbolic characterizations from white male policy makers: emotional, irrational, irresponsible, unbusinesslike, unstable, and childlike.” Concerned, perhaps, that their own masculinity was at risk—a concern of U.S. men at least as far back as the Revolution, when Tom Paine had charged men to awaken from “fatal and unmanly slumbers”—policy makers developed patriarchal designs on the weaker members of the family of nations. There were figurative children out there who needed help, and there were figurative women who were too soft or emotional to take care of themselves. This view applied to Latin America, the countries of which were frequently depicted as women in distress, victims (like Cuba and Puerto Rico) of Spanish villainy. Delicate Chinese mandarins required protection against the brutalities of men from Europe, Russia, and Japan. Theodore Roosevelt’s emphasis on the strenuous life and the manly virtues of combat gave rhetorical substance to images of Others based on gender.

U.S. officials also learned most of what they knew about India from the British. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they watched with interest as the British played the “Great Game” against Russia, trying to block tsarist expansion through the Khyber Pass into South Asia. They struggled to compete with the British for markets in the region. And they adopted the gendered British view of the peoples of India. The mid-
nineteenth-century U.S. traveler Robert Ninturn thought that Indian soldiers lacked only one thing—"manly courage." India itself was a "rich and fertile country," but it was "inhabited by a cowardly and effeminate race." Nearly a century later, John K. Fairbank, stationed in British India during the Second World War, found Indians "timorous cowering creatures, too delicate to fight like the Chinese." The United States did not become an imperialist nation in India, but it replaced Great Britain as the principal Western power in South Asia, and U.S. officials brought with them many British assumptions, some of them founded on perceptions of gender.

There was another reason why U.S. policy makers saw Hindu men, and India itself, as feminine. In the U.S. view, there are sharp lines drawn between the genders. As Susan Jeffords has argued, while the U.S. definition of masculinity may change over time, "it remains consistently opposed to the 'feminine,' those characteristics that must be discarded in order to actualize masculinity." Hindu men, however, subscribe to codes of masculinity that are not the same as Western ones. In ancient Hindu myth, pride of place is reserved for feminine principles. The cosmos was the creation of Shakti, or energy, which has a feminine gender in Sanskrit. The first mortal couple were the twins Yama and Yami. The woman, Yami, was not derived from Yama, as Eve was derived from Adam, but had her own, powerful identity. The leading Indian hero of the 1857 Rebellion was a twenty-year-old princess, the Rani of Jansi. She remains widely admired and was the subject of a popular movie released in India in 1953.

Hindu ideas of how men should look and what they should be incorporate what most Westerners would regard as a female aesthetic. In India, a boy or a man can be called the equivalent of beautiful without embarrassment. The ideal man, wrote Krishnalal Shridharani, has "regular features, eyes that move languidly, lashes that fringe, hair that resembles velvet." In contrast, U.S. "girls favor men with jutting chins, hair that stands on end [this was the early 1940s], bulging nostrils, hands that can break down doors, and one-way eyes that express Harpo-Marxian intensity." In general, the line drawn in the West between masculine and feminine behavior is drawn in a different place in India, and by incorporating so-called female attributes into their personalities, Hindu men fulfill themselves, round themselves off. Androgyny is not a pathology but a virtue; bisexuality can be "an indicator of saintliness and yogic accomplishments." As for homosexuality, it is worth recording an excerpt from a song called "The Wounded Heart," sung by the hearty, Pushtu-speaking Muslim men of the far northwest: "There's a boy across the river with a bottom like a peach/But, alas, I cannot swim."

India's Mahatma Gandhi personified the distortion of gender categories
as Westerners understood them. In his own life Gandhi practiced brahma-charya, or self-control, which included not only a limited diet and rigorous mental discipline but abstinence from sexual relations with his wife (and refusal of self-made sexual temptation). He hoped to achieve in his sexual life what Lloyd and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, in a phrase that is revealing to a diplomatic historian, call "the serenity of neutrality." More to the point, Gandhi turned Western gender discourse to his own purposes. He deliberately challenged this discourse in order to attack both British colonialism and the Indian caste system. As Ashis Nandy writes, Gandhi "rejected the British as well as the Brahmanic-Kshatriya [ruling caste] equation between manhood and dominance, between masculinity and legitimate violence, and between femininity and passive submissiveness." Gandhi's political activism was inspired by what he and his followers called satyagraha, popularly construed as "passive resistance." Gandhi disliked the translation, preferring "truth force," but the sight of Indian nationalists walking calmly into beatings and arrests by the police suggested to Westerners a kind of resignation. In fact, Gandhi hoped to separate bravery, which the nationalists had in abundance, from aggressiveness, a trait associated with Western maleness. Gandhi opened the ranks of the movement to women, and satyagraha embodied what Gandhi held to be the peculiar strengths of women—compassion, endurance, and courage. This position, as Nandy contends, challenged patriarchy and thus negated the very basis of colonial culture.38

Some Westerners, of course, flocked to Gandhi's banner; a good number of them were women. But Gandhi's appeal perplexed many Westerners. The popular New York columnist Arthur Brisbane voiced his scorn for Gandhi's methods: "In these days, you only get justice when you fight for it. Even then it is slow."39 On board a ship bound for the United States in 1943, Nehru's nieces, Nayantara and Lekha Sahgal, talked to some marines about Gandhi. "Our talk of non-violence only made them laugh," Nayantara remembered. "This guy Gandhi must be crazy. Suppose a man came along and killed his sister; would he sit still and not do anything about it?" 40 The Mahatma's unwillingness to take up cudgels for his cause seemed proof that he was insufficiently manly. His opponents were made to feel ashamed and guilty for using force against those who seemed to glory in their quiet courage. Shame and guilt are weapons of the cunning, not the physically strong.

The Congress Party led the Indian government through Nehru's ministry and beyond. Though most of its members, including Nehru, rejected Gandhi’s plans for an agrarian, localized economy, they carried with them the movement's conviction that courage in world affairs need not be confused with Western definitions of manliness. In fact, they cultivated the gen-
dered view that India was a female still at risk, despite its independent status, of seduction or brutalization by the West. The prime minister had long believed this. Writing to a U.S. friend in 1938, Nehru declared: “India is a feminine country. . . . Anyway she has certain feminine virtues and certainly the feminine vices.” It was an image the prime minister never abandoned. The United States in particular had to be watched. It was “a blundering giant with no finer feelings or regard for Asian sentiment,” the inheritor of “rapacious tendencies” previously attributed to the British. Indians found the United States “a kind of loathsome Uncle Sam seeking to seduce the lovely virgin India.” As it had with the British, the characterization of U.S. Others as sexually aggressive served a useful purpose for Indian leaders: it rallied a diverse people around the defense of the motherland, and by representing the state as weak it elevated unity and self-defense to a high moral plane.

The femaleness associated by Westerners with India did not have the same implications for all the people who lived in India. While Westerners commonly judged Hindu men, especially Bengalis, to be effeminate, allegedly passive, cowardly, servile, emotional, and bi- or homosexual, they represented Indian women differently. Indian woman were alleged to be seductresses, waiting to lure unsuspecting men into danger. The practice of purdah, or the seclusion of women, supposedly functioned as a way of tempting men, driving them to distraction without the promise of sexual fulfillment. As Sydney Greenbie saw it, “Forty million women live in seclusion, and all their inexperience, all their ignorance, all their suppressed desires, deny and condemn and withhold from men the fullness of life which they crave.” Westerners also regarded Indian women as glorified housekeepers incapable of loving their husbands, superstitious lightweights whose heads were turned by pseudoreligions and shiny baubles, or harridans who could not control their passions.

The most dominant Western representation held that Indian women were heartless, domineering, and emasculating. This representation emerged most strongly with reference to Hindu gods, the most compelling of whom is the goddess Kali, one of the forms of the god Shiva’s wife. Kali is a frightening figure to a Western man. Over the years, she has appeared in a variety of U.S. media. In the March 1950 issue of Fate magazine—a kind of occult Reader’s Digest with stories such as “They Eat Dirt and Like It”—Kali is depicted as a beautiful but cruel destroyer of men. She has four arms: one holds a bloody cutlass, a second a man’s head that the cutlass has severed, and a third a pan into which drips blood from the head. She stands on the chest of another man, who is intact but seemingly comatose. She wears a belt made of human arms; around her neck is a wreath of heads of the giants she has slain. This
image of Kali would not be unfamiliar to an Indian viewer. But the text of the article goes on: “Before her goddess each worshipper is a Kali herself, and she would recognize no male in the presence of Kali.” Here is a totalizing image, in which all Indian women are conflated with the bloody-minded, emasculating deity they venerate.46 If she is not killing men, the Kali of Western construction is making them do terrible things in her name. The sensationalist paperback Woman of Kali, published by Gold Medal Books in 1954, had as its title character “Sharita, high priestess of the cult of death” in “barbaric India, land of languor, intrigue, strange appetites, exotic women, cruel, and scheming men!” Sharita’s army of Thugs carries out her murderous wishes.47 So do the Thugs seen in the 1939 film Gunga Din and the recent Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, though these movie Thugs worship Kali directly. In the latter film Kali has hordes of male slaves, who lose their free will when they drink her blood.

What has any of this to do with U.S.–South Asia relations during the Nehru period? The contention here is that ideas about gender, particularly the U.S. belief that Indian men were effeminate, conditioned U.S. policy toward India as the Cold War developed in South Asia during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, dovetailing as they did with U.S. strategic concerns and ideas about race, religion, and caste or class, among others. This occurred in good measure because Nehru, who was not only prime minister but foreign minister from 1947 to his death in 1964, seemed to inherit from Gandhi qualities that U.S. men considered feminine. Partly this was a matter of Nehru’s style. He wore the traditional north Indian shirt, the kurta, that flowed past his hips like a skirt. He loved flowers. He was rarely seen without a small rose in his lapel, and on birthdays he exchanged bouquets with other male government leaders.48 Nehru drank fruit juice, never alcohol.49 Admirers and critics alike noted Nehru’s supposed feminine qualities. Harold Isaacs’s respondents characterized the prime minister as “naive” and “fluffheaded,” among other things.50 “Nehru is so delicate and graceful that he makes one feel awkward,” confessed C. L. Sulzberger.51 Christopher Isherwood likened Nehru to “a tremendous nanny,” and Eleanor Roosevelt thought him “sensitive and gentle.”52

But it was not just style that made Nehru seem effeminate. Nehru’s foreign policy was designed to keep India out of the Cold War. The nation would follow the path of neutralism, moving between the contending power blocs, committed to neither. Faced with the enormous task of unifying his country and providing for his people, Nehru hoped to avoid an expensive and dangerous arms race. He sought a role as mediator, choosing to act as an impartial referee who would keep disputes between the powers from erupt-
ing into global war. Drawing on a long Indian tradition of arbitration and mediation, Nehru worked to resolve conflicts outside the subcontinent without resort to war, or to limit wars that had already broken out. India played a leading part in promoting negotiations in Korea from 1950 on, served on the International Control Commission sent to monitor the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, and tried to coax the United States and the People’s Republic of China away from unremitting mutual hostility during the 1950s.53

To U.S. policy makers, there was something wrong with all this mediating. It smacked of naivete, cowardice, and moral evasiveness. There was a right side and a wrong side in the Cold War, and it was deceitful for Nehru to pretend otherwise. Nehru detected the disapproval of the West, and he responded to it: “A strong country,” he told a U.S. audience in 1961, “would not lose its strength in gentle approaches to solving the cold war issues of the day.”54 U.S. policy makers were unconvinced. They believed that India, in its foreign policy, was acting just like a frightened woman.

The three state visits Nehru made to the United States—in the fall of 1949, December 1956, and November 1961—gave the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations opportunities for close examination of the Indian leader. Each encounter illustrates the influence of gender thinking on U.S. explanations of the man who personified India for nearly two decades. President Truman was not unsympathetic to Indian problems, and a week before Nehru arrived in the United States, Ambassador Loy Henderson made an eloquent plea to the State Department for a generous program of economic aid for India.55 But Henderson had previously expressed reservations about the president’s imminent guest. “Nehru,” Henderson had written, “is a vain, sensitive, emotional and complicated person.” While in school in England, Nehru had adopted the attitudes of “a group of rather supercilious upper middle-class young men who fancied themselves rather precious”—here is the barely concealed vocabulary of scorn for the supposed effeminacy of the Oxbridge dandy.56 Truman himself had spent over four years demonstrating that he was “not afraid of the Russians” and that it was essential to “stand firm” and not “baby” the adversary. In Nehru he beheld a man with a rose in his lapel who reviewed the U.S. honor guard arrayed at the airport with evident distaste. The two men simply did not click. Truman found Nehru uncommunicative and suspicious. The reason, Nehru later confided, was that he had been put off by the president’s extended discussion of the merits of Kentucky bourbon with Vice President Alben Barkley.57 As Nehru’s biographer Sarvepalli Gopal put it, “Truman’s cocky vulgarity had grated” on the prime minister.58

Gender perceptions also played a role in Dwight Eisenhower’s meetings
with Nehru in late 1956. On the basis of ideology alone, there was no reason
to suspect that Eisenhower and Nehru would get along. Eisenhower’s secre-
tary of state, John Foster Dulles, was a staunch opponent of Indian neutral-
ism and an advocate of military alliances, in two of which resided Pakistan.
Eisenhower had of course approved these arrangements. But the president
knew of Nehru’s dislike of military pacts and deliberately soft-pedaled their
importance. In fact, Eisenhower seemed largely untroubled by Indian neu-
tralism. \(^{59}\) Though he concurred with Dulles and others that Indians were
“emotional,” he was neither threatened by this nor stirred to acts of patern-
alism. Eisenhower was a grandfatherly figure. His manhood had been es-
established by his successful generalship during World War II. He felt no need
to “stand up to the Soviets” merely for the sake of posturing. There was
something “strange, even feminine” about the president that made him attrac-
tive, editorialized the \textit{Eastern Economist} of New Delhi. \(^{60}\) Rather than try
to impress Nehru with the pomp and glitter of Washington, Eisenhower
took the prime minister off to his Gettysburg farm, where the two men
talked intimately for hours. They disagreed on many issues, including arms
for Pakistan, the disposition of Kashmir, and the relative strength of na-
tionalism and communism. But Eisenhower listened affably and never lec-
tured his guest about the moral failings of neutralism. \(^{61}\) Even before the visit,
the \textit{Chicago Tribune} found the president’s policy incomprehensible; “every
Indian kick [it complained] is rewarded by us with another favor. The Ad-
ministration’s behavior is neither manly nor sensible.” \(^{62}\) Nehru told report-
ers that the president was “thoroughly honest” and had “a certain moral
quality.” \(^{63}\) “Of the American Presidents of his time, it was, curiously, Eisen-
hower with whom Nehru got on best,” Gopal observes. \(^{64}\) The attraction is
least curious if the relationship is analyzed in terms of gender.

The Nehru-Eisenhower relationship stood in compelling contrast to the
one that emerged between Nehru and John F. Kennedy. On the basis of
ideology alone, there was every reason to suspect that Kennedy and Nehru
would get along. The president had long supported economic aid for India,
and in 1958 he was one of two senatorial sponsors of a bill that would have
increased significantly the U.S. economic commitment to India. \(^{65}\) For his
part Nehru, urged on by Kennedy’s ambassador in New Delhi John Kenneth
Galbraith, looked forward to meeting the president; much excitement pre-
ceded the prime minister’s visit to the United States in November 1961.
As with Truman and Nehru, however, something failed to work. Kennedy
seemed insecure, in a way that was exacerbated rather than concealed by his
determination to act with vigor in the world. He would not promise to
forbear from testing nuclear weapons or from intervening militarily in Viet-
nam. Particularly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in April 1961, Kennedy felt the need to stand up to the Soviets, to show that he was neither callow nor cowardly—to prove he was a man. "Toughness,"
Henry Fairlie has written, "was one of the most prominent words in the vocabulary of the New Frontier; perhaps no other quality was so highly regarded."

"That son of bitch won’t listen to words," Kennedy said of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. "He has to see you move." Nehru thought Kennedy "brash, aggressive and inexperienced." For the president, the meeting was even more disappointing. Nehru, who flinched visibly with each shot from a welcoming gun salute, was "passive and inward looking" and "simply did not respond" to the president’s attempts to draw him out. Kennedy later called the encounter "the worst head of state visit I have had." Nehru seemed to confirm his long-standing reputation in policy-making circles as a man without vigor, determination, or spine.

In contrast, policy makers noted with approval the "manly" behavior of leaders in India’s neighbor and rival, Pakistan. U.S. officials inherited from the British the idea that Muslims were more aggressive, more direct, and otherwise more masculine than Hindus. "From the very beginning," recalled Elbert G. Mathews, who directed the State Department’s Office of South Asian Affairs from 1948 to 1951, "there was, in the U.S. Government . . . a strong view, based on the reading of Kipling, that the martial races of India were in the north, and much was now Pakistan. And therefore, the sensible thing for us to do was to cozy up to these martial races; they would be a great value to us in the fight against communism." Harold Isaacs summarized ideas about Muslims and Hindus elicited by his interviews: "Even the poor Muslim is a vigorous man, while the poor Hindu is buckling at the knees; Pakistanis seemed energetic Western types, easier to talk to; . . . I hear from people that the Pakistanis are up and coming, good people, good fighters, whereas the Hindus are said to be mystics, dreamers, hypocrites; . . . Muslim faith is more dynamic . . . [has] more masculinity." This is not just the language of gender, but it is hard to resist altogether the impression that these adjectives convey the long-standing concerns of U.S. men about how they and other men are supposed to act, and supposed not to.

U.S. statesmen, generally uncomfortable with Nehru, embraced a succession of Pakistani leaders. George McGhee, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African affairs, was impressed with Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan when he met him in Karachi in 1949. "He was a big, strong, confident man with considerable international stature," McGhee remembered. "I liked him, as a man you could do business with." Loy Henderson had described Nehru as "vain, sensitive, emotional and complicated";
according to a State Department profile, Liaquat’s characteristics included “calmness, imperturbability, industry, energy, [and] perseverance.”

The general Mohammed Ayub Khan, who came to power in a coup in 1958, was a favorite of Eisenhower, despite the president’s sympathy for Nehru. When Eisenhower learned that Ayub was planning to switch the greens on the Rawalpindi golf course from sand to grass, he sent the general enough nursery stock of a grass called Tifgreen to do the job. In the meantime, Ayub played a round of golf with Generals Nathan Twining and Omar Bradley at Burning Tree Country Club outside Washington. “During play Twining kept talking to Bradley about Pakistan and our armed forces in warm terms,” Ayub noted with obvious satisfaction.

On a tour of South and Southeast Asia in 1961, Vice President Lyndon Johnson wrote to President Kennedy that Ayub was “seasoned as a leader where others are not; confident, straightforward and I would judge dependable.” What might be called the gestures of diplomacy reveal much about gender roles and the U.S.-Pakistani relationship. On visits to the United States, Pakistani officials, all of them men, wore suits and ties and openly drank alcohol, in defiance of the Muslim prohibition. Unlike Nehru, Liaquat seemed to relish reviewing the troops at the airport. When prime minister H. S. Suhrawardy came to Washington in 1957, Eisenhower hosted a stag luncheon for him.

It was too much for Chester Bowles. On his second tour as ambassador to India in 1963, Bowles let loose his frustrations in his diary. “For fifteen years,” he wrote, “our relationship with South Asia has suffered from our habit of sending important personages to this area who have no knowledge of the forces at work here. They come convinced that all Asians are ‘inscrutable’ products of the ‘Inscrutable East.’ And then in Karachi they meet Asians they can really understand, Asians who argue the advantages of an olive over an onion in a martini and who know friends they know in London. Here at last,” Bowles went on, “are Asians who make sense, who understand our problems, who face up to the realities, who understand the menace of whatever may worry us at the moment. And so we agree to more F-104’s or C130’s or whatever may be currently required as political therapy to ease wounded Pakistani feelings.”

Most of all, as Bowles pointed out, the Pakistanis respected and valued armaments and were quite willing to take the United States’s side in the Cold War in order to get them. Beginning in the early 1950s, the United States favored Pakistan as the most reliable nation in South Asia. The two countries signed an arms agreement in 1954, and the Eisenhower administration induced Pakistan to join two defense organizations: the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact (later the Central Treaty
Organization, or CENTO) in 1955. There were strategic reasons for these alliances. But it was also true that U.S. officials felt most comfortable standing with real men against the menace of communism. Pakistani leaders, who ate meat, drank liquor, and knew the value of a well-tuned military machine, were real men.

Indian men were not. Westerners had long represented Hindus as cowardly and morally phlegmatic. Gandhi and Nehru were effeminate, soft on communism, and too squeamish to take a forceful stand against evil. Ironically, this won for India’s chief female leader, Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi, a measure of Western respect. Gandhi was India’s prime minister from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. Even before she took office she was admired for her toughness; as the British high commissioner in India put it in 1960, “Indira is the best man in India.”

Despite policy differences with the Gandhi government, U.S. policy makers grudgingly admired the prime minister’s backbone. Henry Kissinger noted that Richard Nixon disliked Indira Gandhi personally but “had an understanding for leaders who operated on an unsentimental assessment of the national interest. Once one cut through the strident, self-righteous rhetoric, Mrs. Gandhi had few peers in the cold-blooded calculation of the elements of power.”

Notes

1. Columbia Oral History Interview with Chester Bowles (1963), Chester Bowles Papers, box 396, folder 177, 480, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.
2. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York, 1969), 420.
4. Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, rev. ed. (New York, 1983), 87.
5. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretations of Cultures (New York, 1973), 5. The image is not inconsistent with Said’s rendering of Orientalist discourse, which he refers to at one point as “an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient in Western consciousness.” Orientalism, 6.
13. Ibid., 124.
14. Richard Cronin, *Imagining India* (New York, 1989), 147. The connections between colonialism and patriarchy, including the representation of India as a woman’s body, are explored by Laura E. Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-Building* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992), 88-101.
18. Robert Minturn, Jr., *From New York to Delhi* (New York, 1858), 234.
20. Roger Hilsman memorandum for the record, 22 November 1962, Hilsman Papers, box 1, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.
23. Eustace Seligman to Dulles, 4 November 1954, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memoranda Series, box 3, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.
24. Eisenhower to Dulles, 16 November 1953, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, file 611.90D/11-1653, National Archives II, College Park, MD.
27. “Common Sense” in *Major Problems in American Foreign Policy*, ed. Thomas G.


31. Susan Jeffords, The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War (Bloomington, IN, 1989), xii.

32. Krishnalal Shridharani, My India, My America (Garden City, NY, 1943), 198, 201.


34. Shridharani, My India, My America, 178.


36. Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology, 38.

37. Charles Allen, ed., Plain Tales from the Raj (New York, 1985), 144. In 1948, the journalist John Frederick Muehl traveled in Maharashtra state with a circus troupe. He noted that “the percentage of homosexuality in the troupe was enormous. . . . Indians are generally quite tolerant of inversions, and it was not at all uncommon to see two men keeping house together and behaving quite like a married couple.” John Frederick Muehl, Interview with India (New York, 1950), 168.


44. Greenbie, The Romantic East, 95.


76. Johnson to Kennedy, 23 May 1961, President’s Office Files, Special Correspondence Series, box 80, Kennedy Library.