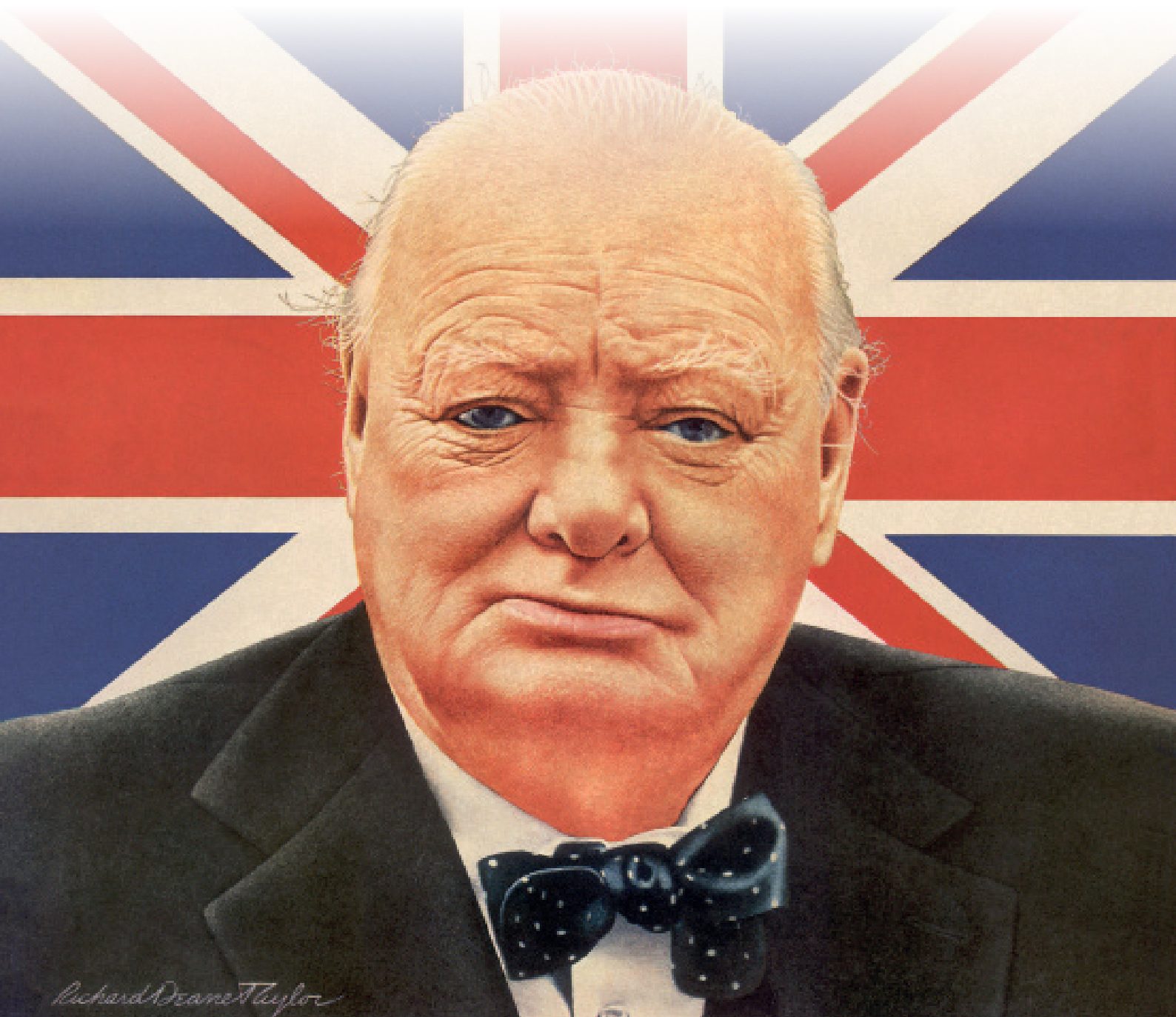


Defender of the West

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A response to attacks on Churchill's life and legacy
Lord Roberts of Belgravia and Zachary Marsh



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Executive Summary

In the year since Donald Trump's election as President of the United States, ruptures have developed within the MAGA movement, with newcomers seeking to impose their own agendas on the American conservative scene. Individuals such as Nick Fuentes (over a million followers on X) have nurtured a cocktail of ideas including Holocaust denial, antisemitism and white supremacy.¹ These ideas and individuals have been succoured by figures on the American ultra-MAGA right. Alongside fringe views pushed by other high-profile figures, such as Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens and Darryl Cooper, this is causing increasing challenges for individuals and institutions on the mainstream MAGA right. This was demonstrated by the high profile fall-out at the Heritage Foundation – the organisation whose 2025 Project is credited with underpinning much of Trump's policy agenda – over its defence of Carlson's recent and controversial interview with Fuentes.

Though still rare in the UK, some of these narratives have spread to segments of the British online right – including one individual who stood as a Reform UK Parliamentary candidate last year. This spread of ideas from the United States to the UK mirrors the way other movements, such as the Black Lives Matter campaign, have emerged from the US to find fertile ground in institutions on the progressive left.

One element of this historical revisionism involves the denigration of the legacy of Churchill. In an unholy alliance with the political left, on which it has become commonplace to criticise Churchill for 'racism' or 'imperialism', the new revisionists on the right view Churchill as a warmongering idealist who pursued personally glory at the expense of Britain and wider western civilisation – or even as 'the chief villain of the Second World War.'

This new wave of criticism is driven by more than a desire to historically critique Churchill's legacy as part of an ongoing historical debate. Its proponents share a broad isolationist foreign policy outlook that is deeply sceptical of international intervention, even to the extent of questioning the choice that Britain made to confront Nazi Germany. To them, historical revisionism of Churchill's life and legacy is deployed to denigrate what they see as "modern establishment" foreign policy approaches, of which he was a fervent proponent. Adherents of this view have rightly identified that this brand of foreign policy is deeply unpopular with Western publics and the establishment, in large part due to the historical resonance of World War Two and the resulting Churchillian post-war foreign policy order.

1. <https://x.com/NickJFuentes/status/1831233295641657840>

However, many of these attacks on Churchill fail to stand up to basic scrutiny and assessments of historical accuracy. Accusations that Churchill was the force behind the war guarantee to Poland in March 1939 ignore the fact that Churchill was only a backbencher outside government at the time and remained so for another six months. Suggestions that it was Britain, as opposed to Germany, that initiated civilian bombing ignore its use by the Nazis from the outset of the war at Wieluń and Rotterdam and Hitler's promise to erase British cities. Criticisms that Churchill lost the British Empire ignore the fact that no British colony ever achieved independence under either of his premierships and that Churchill's devotion to the imperial project arguably sustained the Empire for several years beyond which his peers would have allowed it to continue.

The attempt to portray Churchill as a war-obsessed moralist fundamentally misinterprets both Churchill's outlook and the historical record. In many respects Churchill was a consummate realist. He advocated rearmament throughout the 1930s as deterrence, not war-readiness, in response to the resurgence of Germany. Churchill consistently argued his decision to support war in 1939 and to continue the conflict in 1940 was premised on the continuation of a British policy to avoid the domination of the continent and the channel ports by a single European power. He understood that Hitler could not be trusted to keep his word, as it proved, and that continuing the war was the only way to prevent Britain's ultimate reduction to a 'client state'.

Concerningly, some of the new anti-Churchillism on the right also overlaps with the resurgence of antisemitic tropes on the American fringe right. Its leading proponent, US podcast historian Darryl Cooper – who Tucker Carlson said 'may be the best and most honest popular historian in the United States'² has both downplayed the significance of the Holocaust, arguing the Nazis had 'no plan' for how to manage what he terms 'local political prisoners'. He has accused Churchill of being installed 'by financiers, by a media complex'. The propagation and acceptance of these arguments tarnish the mainstream legitimacy of new right-wing movements seeking credibility in the political mainstream.

The political and foreign policy philosophy that underpins these criticisms is equally incoherent. In viewing international commitments as a zero-sum game that detract from the more important priorities of the homeland, the new "revisionist right" isolationists fail to understand how domestic politics can be enhanced through foreign policy involvement. In particular, despite conceiving of themselves as realists, those who argue we should leave Ukraine to its fate to focus on domestic issues fail to acknowledge the role of deterrence in maintaining the balance of power between competing states.

This is not to say that all of those who champion isolationism and the withdrawal of our support from Ukraine repudiate Churchill – still less that they support the abhorrent antisemitism gaining ground in parts of the American right. There is, however, a risk that such arguments provide a bridgehead for the revisionist fringe – and that, just as we have seen in

2. The Carlson Show; Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe, 2024, [Link](#)

the United States, that such arguments then move rapidly from the fringe to the mainstream.

These ahistorical perspectives on Churchill and the foreign policy worldview that he helped to define risk discrediting the modern right amongst western publics. They are historical inaccurate and promote a foreign policy outlook that is dubiously founded. As the US revisionist right and populist right-wing voices in the UK evolve, the leaders of their movements must ostracise those who would elevate these platforms – at great harm to both right wing politics and the West.

Introduction

‘There are times when I incline to judge all historians by their opinion of Winston Churchill -- whether they can see that, no matter how much better the details, often damaging, of man and career become known, he still remains quite simply, a great man.’³

Sir Geoffrey Elton, former Regius Professor of Modern History, University of Cambridge

Winston Churchill was a towering figure of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He changed parties twice, served in the British cabinet across four decades, led the Conservative Party for fifteen years and served nine of those as Prime Minister. He played a formative role in the creation of the early welfare state, the modernisation of the British Navy and, most famously, stewarded the United Kingdom to victory in the Second World War.

Inevitably, throughout his life and since, Churchill faced considerable criticism from his detractors. Historically, much of this condemnation has come from the Left, attacking Churchill as a racist and imperialist and for his handling of the Welsh miners strikes of 1910-1911. Running down Churchill has become fashionable again in recent years. Former Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell once famously denounced Churchill as a ‘villain’.⁴ Left-leaning academics, including Dr Priyamvada Gopal – a fellow, ironically, of Churchill College, Cambridge – have attacked Churchill for making ‘racist pronouncements’ and his support for the British Empire.⁵ Such claims were previously addressed by Policy Exchange in its report ‘*The Racial Consequences of Mr Churchill: A Review*’.⁶

For decades there has also been a narrower body of critics on the right – in academia and the commentariat. Some British writers in the late twentieth century, including Professor Maurice Cowling, Alan Clark and Professor John Charmley, criticised what they saw as a lack of realism in Churchill’s policy towards Nazi Germany and how his handling of the war supposedly hastened the demise of the Empire.

Drawing on some of these themes, criticism of Churchill on the American right also have a long and influential heritage. In the United States Pat Buchanan, the former Republican presidential hopeful, released his book *Churchill, Hitler and The Unnecessary War*, in 2009. In it he echoed the narratives of Cowling, Clark and Charmley, criticising the British Government for involving itself and offering a guarantee to go to war for Poland in 1939 and denouncing Churchill’s prosecution of the war for ostensibly leading to the Empire’s collapse.⁷

3. The Churchill Project, ‘Churchill and His Military Commanders – Part 1’, 4 February 2016, [link](#).
4. BBC News, ‘Winston Churchill ‘villain’ over Tony-pandy riots, says John McDonnell’, 14 February 2019, [link](#).
5. The Tab, ‘Not everything is up for debate’: Priyamvada Gopal on the truth about free speech in Cambridge’, [link](#).
6. Policy Exchange, ‘The Racial Consequences of Mr Churchill: A Review’, 28 February 2021, [link](#).
7. Pat Buchanan, ‘Churchill, Hitler and the Unnecessary War: How Britain Lost its Empire and the West Lost the World’, PRH Christian Publishing, 2009.

In recent years, however, a new and altogether different strand of anti-Churchill criticism has emerged. Arising in the United States, and firmly associated with the emerging isolationist ultra-Right, these critiques have their roots in certain clusters within the MAGA movement, though do not necessarily reflect the views of the MAGA mainstream. As an important contrast, for example, President Donald Trump has chosen to publicly display a bust of Churchill in the Oval Office during both of his administrations.⁸

But these fringe critiques are becoming more popular. A notable case in point arose in September 2024, when former Fox News presenter Tucker Carlson hosted Darryl Cooper, a US podcast historian, on his show, in an episode that has over a million views.⁹ In the interview Cooper denigrated Churchill as ‘the chief villain of the Second World War’¹⁰. Cooper criticised Churchill on a wide variety of points, including his unwillingness to pursue peace with Hitler, Britain’s use of bombing raids on civilian German populations and Churchill’s personal character. Several of his comments downplayed the significance of the Holocaust.

These comments gained significant traction amongst certain sections of the online right in America, while prominent American pundit and controversialist Candace Owens criticised the subsequent media attacks on Carlson.¹¹ The debate around Cooper’s viewpoints sparked further interest in two articles published by the Mises Institute, one of which described Churchill as ‘a Man of Blood and a politico without principle’.¹² Subsequently several prominent anonymous online accounts have embraced this Churchill criticism.

As a sign of just how connected the US and UK political ecosystems are, these arguments have begun to be picked up by elements of the online right in the UK, tied up with a broader narrative that Churchill’s leadership led the country down the wrong path. Former Reform adviser Jack Anderton has criticised the legacy of the Second World War as the weakening of Britain, arguing ‘our economy stagnated, we lost an empire, and we are pushed around by America’.¹³ Ian Gribbin, a Reform Party candidate in the 2024 General Election, argued in now-deleted comments that ‘Britain would be in a far better state today had we taken Hitler up on his offer of neutrality’.¹⁴ The Lotus Eaters podcast, which has over 500,000 subscribers on YouTube and which is influential amongst young online right circles, has accused Churchill of ‘escalating the conflict’.¹⁵ Zoomer Historian, an anonymous X/Twitter account, accused Churchill of being ‘the chief antagonist of World War 2’ in a tweet with over 600,000 views.¹⁶

At the same time as these figures have attacked Churchill’s legacy directly, a wider commentariat on the modern right has taken aim at the foreign policy legacies of the Second World War and their present political salience, particularly to the war in Ukraine. Tucker Carlson has argued against the use of ‘myths about World War Two... put in the context of modern foreign policy’.¹⁷ Such figures, broadly identifying with the ‘National Conservative’ label, are critical of the permeation of tropes from the Second World War which have been highly influential to public and establishment views on

8. America’s National Churchill Museum, ‘Winston Churchill back in the Oval Office’, 21 January 2025, [link](#).
9. The Tucker Carlson Show, ‘Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe’, [link](#).
10. Ibid.
11. X/Twitter, ‘Candace Owens’, 3 September 2024, [link](#).
12. Mises Institute, ‘Rethinking Churchill’, 23 November 2021, [link](#).
13. Jack Anderton, ‘A Self-Interested British Foreign Policy’, 24 June 2024, [link](#).
14. BBC News, ‘Reform UK candidate apologises over Hitler neutrality comments’, 10 June 2024, [link](#).
15. Lotus Eaters, ‘Churchill: The Myth Behind The Man’, 11 September 2024, [link](#).
16. X/Twitter, ‘Zoomer Historian’, 15 April 2025, [link](#).
17. The Tucker Carlson Show, ‘Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe’, [link](#).

foreign policy. They view public opposition to perceived ‘appeasement’ and non-interventionism as naïve and running counter to what, in their view, ought to be a more prudent and self-interested ‘realist’ approach to international affairs.

This movement appears to have identified the continued salience and emotional resonance of the Second World War as a core impediment to bringing their own foreign policy perspective into the mainstream.

The following chapters address the claims and statements of these new revisionists in detail. They consider first the accuracy of the historical claims levied against Churchill, and then the validity of the form of isolationist ‘realism’ many of these figures espouse.

Chapter 1: Addressing the historical criticisms of Winston Churchill

This new school of criticism of Churchill on both sides of the Atlantic has been wide-ranging, although principally focused on his war leadership in the Second World War and the unyielding attacks on the policy of appeasement which preceded this. These criticisms cluster around a number of core themes – that Churchill sought out and escalated conflict in the Second World War; that his tactics and strategy were questionable; that his actions cost Britain her Empire; that he was a Zionist; and that his personal failings came at considerable human cost.

It is the essence of good historical study and a robust national intellectual life to be able to challenge shibboleths, critique heroes and make revisionist arguments. But the difference between evidenced historical argumentation and fabrication or distortion is vital. Many of the claims in the new assault on Churchill are unevidenced. Many lack any historical proof and in several cases contradict, ignore or manipulate core elements of the historical record.

Chapter 2: Churchill as the aggressor in the Second World War

Perhaps the most widespread theme of this new body of criticism levied at Winston Churchill is his perceived role in having provoked and prolonged conflict during the Second World War. Within this broader claim several specific allegations are levied.

Churchill 'loved war'

A 2021 article from the Mises Institute by Dr Ralph Raico, a former history professor at Buffalo State College, asserts that 'war, of course, was his [Churchill's] lifelong passion'.¹⁸ Raico goes on to argue that 'All his life he was most excited—on the evidence, only really excited—by war. He loved war as few modern men ever have'.¹⁹

Raico cites Churchill's writing from 1925, in which he argued that 'the story of the human race is war'. In doing so, Raico ignores the wider context of Churchill's remark which is implicitly critical of conflict, going on to note that 'before history began murderous strife was universal and unending'.²⁰ Yet Raico is not alone in suggesting that Churchill was a warmonger. Darryl Cooper, when appearing on *The Tucker Carlson Show*, argued that 'Churchill wanted a war, he wanted to fight Germany'.²¹

Churchill never denied having a personal intellectual interest in warfare but was consistently unequivocal in denouncing conflict and the harm it caused. In a letter to his wife Clementine in 1909, he noted that:

'Much as war attracts me & fascinates my mind with its tremendous situations – I feel more deeply every year – & can measure the feeling here in the midst of arms – what vile & wicked folly & barbarism it all is.'²²

Churchill was also particularly concerned by the damage a war in Europe would cause. In 1901 he argued that 'a European war cannot be anything but a cruel, heartrending struggle'.²³

Cooper's specific claim that Churchill deliberately sought war with Germany in 1939 is entirely as odds with Churchill's views throughout his 'wilderness years' between 1929 and 1939. During this time Churchill advocated a deterrence policy, arguing that British rearmament was the best way to prevent the outbreak of future conflict. His critique of appeasement was that it would make war more likely rather than prevent it. In a speech to the House of Commons in March 1938, for example, he argued 'war will be avoided, in present circumstances, only by the accumulation of deterrents

18. Mises Institute, 'Rethinking Churchill', 23 November 2021, [link](#).

19. Ibid.

20. The Churchill Project, 'Churchill on War: Part I', 30 April 2015, [link](#).

21. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

22. The Churchill Project, 'Churchill on War: Part I', 30 April 2015, [link](#).

23. Ibid.

against the aggressor'.²⁴ The fact that Churchill favoured a policy of deterrence over appeasement, of which he was deeply critical, in no way correlates to support for war. He had lost too many friends from his early twenties onwards to ignore its evils.

The British Government should not have offered a guarantee to Poland in 1939

Churchill's opponents levy criticism at Britain's decision to guarantee Polish independence, and therefore ultimately enter the war, in 1939. Cooper argues that Churchill 'was primarily responsible for that war becoming what it did, becoming something other than an invasion of Poland'.²⁵ Jack Anderton, a former Reform Party campaigns and social media adviser, has argued on his website that Britain 'had no such treaty or agreement with Poland as we did with Belgium in 1914' and was therefore not obliged to enter the conflict.²⁶

In reality the decision to offer a security guarantee to Poland in 1939 can in no way be attributed to Churchill. The decision was taken by Neville Chamberlain's cabinet in March 1939 when Churchill was still a backbencher. He only returned to Government six months later on the day that Britain declared war on Germany. Contrary to Anderton's assertion, Chamberlain's government had in effect made an agreement with the Polish Government. In a speech to the House of Commons on the 31st March 1939, Chamberlain, announcing the guarantee, declared that the British Government had 'given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect'.²⁷ Whilst Britain's promise may not have amounted to a formal, ratified accord between the two countries, its communication to the Polish government therefore made it more than a unilateral pledge.

Churchill was wrong to refuse 'a deal' with Hitler in 1940

Perhaps the most frequent argument used by Churchill's critics to portray him as an aggressor was his refusal to seek terms with Hitler following the fall of France and the evacuation from Dunkirk in June 1940. Ian Gribbin, a Reform Party parliamentary candidate in the 2024 General Election, commented in 2022 on the Unherd website that 'Britain would be in a far better state today had we taken Hitler up on his offer of neutrality'.²⁸ A Reform UK party spokesman at the time supported Gribbin, saying 'if you'd sued for peace in the 1930s, as most of the establishment wanted us to do in the first place, the country would have had fewer people dead. Historically he has a point...'.²⁹ In his interview with Tucker Carlson, Cooper stressed the generosity of Hitler's proposed terms, saying he offered proposals 'that said you keep all your overseas territories, we don't want any of that. We want Britain to be strong'.³⁰ Cooper also criticises Churchill's supposedly foolish insistence on prolonging the war, arguing 'the reason I resent Churchill so much for it is that he kept war going when he had no way to go back and fight this war, all he had were bombers'.

These arguments make two closely related critiques. Firstly, they

24. America's National Churchill Museum, 'I Have Watched This Famous Island..., 1938', [link](#).

25. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

26. Jack Anderton, 'A Self-Interested British Foreign Policy', 24 June 2024, [link](#).

27. Hansard, 'European Situation', 31 March 1939, [link](#).

28. BBC News, 'Reform UK candidate apologises over Hitler neutrality comments', 10 June 2024, [link](#).

29. The Jewish Chronicle, 'Reform UK candidate says Britain should have stayed neutral in WW2', 10 June 2024, [link](#).

30. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

suggest that Churchill's policy to refuse negotiation with Hitler and continue the war was not in Britain's interests. Secondly, particularly in Cooper's case, they suggest that Churchill's policy lacked realism and failed to acknowledge that Britain had effectively been beaten.

However, Churchill rightly foresaw that British neutrality would be untenable once an unhindered Germany defeated the Soviet Union in the east. As he remarked to his private secretary, Sir Anthony Montague Browne, in 1955:

*'And what makes you think that we could have trusted Hitler's word— particularly as he could have had Russian resources behind him? At best we would have been a German client state, and there's not much in that.'*³¹

Churchill understood that Hitler's persistent treaty breaches throughout the 1930s meant that any agreement would be entirely undependable. Hitler had already violated the 1919 Treaty of St Germain when he imposed Anschluss with Austria, and the Munich Agreement when he overran the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. He had broken the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935 and almost every other treaty he had signed. Most spectacularly, he later broke the Nazi-Soviet Pact when Hitler unleashed his invasion of Russia codenamed Operation Barbarossa in June 1941.

Far from being an outlier, Churchill's position towards Hitler after the fall of France was consistent with over a century of British foreign policy. As Professor Andrew Lambert argues in his book, *No More Napoleons*, British policy had been to consistently resist domination of the continent – and the vital channel ports – by any European power.³² Professor Paul Schroeder's argument that appeasement of a resurgent Germany had been consistent British policy in the nineteenth century fails to acknowledge the threat Nazi Germany posed to the Low Countries and the specific economic conditions of appeasement in the 1930s.³³ Churchill himself argued that the historical precedent was for British policy to 'oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent, and particularly to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of such a Power'.³⁴ In this regard Churchill's approach was consistent with longstanding policy, in opposing Nazi hegemony in Europe that would have been a direct threat to Britain's strategic and commercial interests.

Cooper's claim that Churchill failed to acknowledge defeat in 1940 is an obvious logical fallacy. Over the next five years Britain continued to successfully resist – and in conjunction with their allies, ultimately defeat – Nazi Germany. Whilst the British Armed Forces had been seriously depleted by the summer of 1940, they were nowhere near as reduced as Cooper's assertion suggests. Under Churchill's leadership, Operation Dynamo was able to safely evacuate more than 338,000 British, French and Belgian soldiers.³⁵ Although depleted, the Royal Air Force remained a highly capable force, as evidenced by the Battle of Britain in 1940. Britain continued to assert naval superiority over Nazi Germany.

Churchill, unlike Cooper, understood that the principles at stake during

31. The Churchill Project, 'Winston Churchill on peace with Hitler', [link](#).

32. Andrew Lambert, 'No More Napoleons: How Britain Managed Europe from Waterloo to World War One', 2025, Yale University Press.

33. Paul Schroeder, 'Munich and the British Tradition', March 1976, *The Historical Journal*, [link](#); Sidney Aster, 'Appeasement: Before and After Revisionism', September 2008, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, [link](#).

34. International Churchill Society, 'The Real Reasons for Churchill's Success', [link](#).

35. Imperial War Museum, 'What you Need to Know about the Dunkirk Evacuations', [link](#).

the Second World War justified significant sacrifice. He realised that a Britain reduced to a 'German client state' would not be worth preserving, and that there was both a moral and political imperative to resist Hitler's domination. As he extolled to the cabinet in summer 1940, 'if this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each one of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground'.³⁶ Sir Martin Gilbert, Churchill's official biographer, has described the rejection of any negotiation with Hitler at the War Cabinet meeting on the 26th May 1940 as one of the 'high points of his wartime leadership'.³⁷

36. Foreign Policy Research Institute, 'Winston Churchill and the Finest Hour: Looking Back 80 years', 18 May 2020, [link](#).

37. Sir Martin Gilbert, 'Churchill in 1940: High points and low points', 1 October 2016, [link](#).

Chapter 3: Churchill's 'escalatory' tactics

Other criticism on the revisionist right has focused on Churchill's supposed escalation of the war and the tactics he employed, including violence against civilian populations.

Churchill escalated the Second World War to new theatres

Specific criticism is levied at Churchill's handling of the Norway Campaign in 1940, in addition to his decision to dispatch HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* to the Pacific theatre in 1941.

Again, some of this is seeping into the UK debate. Lotus Eaters, a UK-based contrarian right-wing podcast, discussed Churchill in an episode entitled 'Churchill: The Myth Behind The Man' in September 2024.³⁸ One of the hosts, Josh Ferne, argued in the episode that Churchill, by sending 'only two ships against the Japanese' 'massively underestimated the military capabilities of the Japanese'. His colleague Harry Robinson criticised Churchill for 'escalating the conflict by involving Norway in it'. Neither individual is a historian or has a background in history.

The claims made on the Lotus Eaters podcast regarding the fate of HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* are dubious. Churchill had dispatched the ships to the East in October 1941 – two months before Japan entered the war with the bombing of Pearl Harbour. As Professor Christopher M. Bell has argued, the ships were intended to be a deterrent to Japanese aggression rather than as a fighting force to engage the Japanese.³⁹ Nor, as Ferne claims, were 'only two ships' despatched. HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* formed part of a larger Force Z and were escorted by five destroyers. Churchill himself understood that the force was no longer independently viable without additional support following Japan's surprise declaration of war. He commented that, rather than fighting, 'obviously they must go to sea and vanish among the innumerable islands'.⁴⁰ ; Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, in command of Force Z, also made a series of tactical errors. These included underestimating the threat bomber aircraft posed to warships equipped with anti-aircraft guns, a position widely held in the Royal Navy at the time.

It is also difficult to attribute the fall of Singapore in February 1942 to Churchill personally, except insofar as he was the serving British Prime Minister. A key factor in the rapid capitulation of Singapore was the

38. Lotus Eaters, 'Churchill: The Myth Behind The Man', 11 September 2024, [link](#).

39. The Churchill Project, 'Did Churchill Under-rate Warship Vulnerability from the Air?', 6 September 2017, [link](#).

40. International Churchill Society, 'Prince of Wales and Repulse: Churchill's "Veiled Threat" Reconsidered', 3 March 2010, [link](#).

sustained failure to create defences on the landward side of the island. Churchill was shocked to learn in January 1942 from General Archibald Wavell that 'until quite recently all plans were based on repulsing seaborne attacks on island'.⁴¹ He was astounded that no attempt had been made to create landward defences, and that his commanders, including the pre-war Committee of Imperial Defence, 'had not even mentioned the fact that they did not exist'.⁴² In his fourth volume in *The Second World War, The Hinge of Fate*, Churchill nonetheless accepted responsibility for this failure which he could not have controlled, arguing that 'I ought to have known. My advisers ought to have known and I ought to have been told, and I ought to have asked.'⁴³ Decisions made by the Committee of Imperial Defence long before Churchill became Prime Minister some 21 months prior decided the fate of Singapore, and not an absence of forethought on Churchill's part.

The Norway Campaign of 1940 was not Churchill's finest hour – a fact he himself acknowledged, describing the action as a 'ramshackle campaign'.⁴⁴ However, it would be wrong to ignore the strategic imperative of action in Norway, the immense operational difficulties and the extent to which the campaign's failure was the result of other actors. Within weeks of becoming First Lord of the Admiralty again in September 1939, Churchill had proposed a more limited operation to stymie German access to vital Swedish iron ore and access to the Atlantic by mining the waters around the port of Narvik. The cabinet's refusal to support this plan meant that by 1940, in the face of German advances in Scandinavia, a wider operation was necessary. The Norway campaign of April 1940 was further hampered by Chamberlain's insistence on keeping the Admiralty, Army and Airforce operating from separate ministries, which led to poor coordination and contradictory orders which saw the British operation lose momentum to the Germans. Nonetheless the positive consequences of the campaign on the overall war effort should not be overlooked – Nazi Germany lost half of her destroyers in the campaign, which proved key to maintaining British naval superiority.

None of this means Churchill is or should be immune to criticism in this area, but it would also be wrong to lay blame for the Norway Campaign entirely at his door. Further, Churchill did not give up on Norway after the initial losses. His appreciation of its strategic importance and desire to compensate for previous errors, many of which were not under his control, led him to support Norwegian stay behind networks that would constantly harass German positions and drain their resources. The likes of Kompani Linge, supported by the Special Operations Executive's so-called Shetland Bus, were central to weakening German positions and drawing attention away from the main European theatres.⁴⁵

The use of strategic bombing on German cities has been another key source of recent criticism of Churchill's wartime leadership, echoing older historiographical debates in this area. Cooper described the raids as 'rank terrorism' and argued that they amounted to 'the greatest scale of terror attack you've ever seen in world history'.⁴⁶ Harry Robinson, from the Lotus Eaters podcast argued Churchill escalated the conflict 'by allowing unrestricted saturation bombing

41. International Churchill Society, 'Churchill and the Fall of Singapore', 10 November 2015, [link](#).

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill: Walking with Destiny', 2019, Penguin.

45. Kevin Jackson, 'How the "Shetland Bus" helped Norway resist Nazi Germany', BBC News, 1 May 2025, [link](#)

46. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

of civilian targets which led to Hitler coming over to do the Blitz'.⁴⁷ Hitchens has claimed that 'British bombers deliberately destroyed life on a frightening scale'.⁴⁸

The most inaccurate element of these criticisms is that the British Government, and by extension Churchill, initiated the use of widespread bomber attacks and in so doing, in the words of Robinson, provoked the Blitz as a response. In reality, Nazi Germany were the first movers in regards to the sustained bombing of civilians. This had begun even prior to the Second World War, with the infamous German bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War, which the New York Times at the time described as 'wholesale arson and mass murder'.⁴⁹ From the outset of the Second World War, Hitler and the Nazis employed heavy and sustained aerial bombardment of civilian populations as a strategy, notably at Wieluń, Poland in September 1939 and as part of the 'Rotterdam Blitz' in May 1940.

The claim that Britain was the first of the two countries to use the bombing of civilian populations against the other stems from British bombing raids in May 1940. Whilst both sides had previously had strict policies against the bombing of civilian targets, in response to Rotterdam the British RAF initiated bombing raids against specific civilian infrastructure targets that were supporting the German war effort, such as oil refineries. Although poor technology meant that there was reduced accuracy for such attacks, these were intentional strategic bombing missions. On the 1st August 1940 Hitler issued Fuhrer Directive 17, initiating the airborne invasion of Britain 'in order to bring about her final defeat', even leaving open the possibility of terror attacks as a method of reprisal.⁵⁰ During the Battle of Britain that followed, poorly directed German bombing raids repeatedly hit civilian targets, killing over 1000 in the first month.⁵¹ In response the RAF completed further strategic bombing raids against Tempelhof airfield and Siemens factories in Berlin, which, like the preceding German raids, caused civilian casualties due to low accuracy. Hitler's response to the raids condemned the British as 'night pirates' and threatened to erase British cities. The resulting Blitz was the first sustained use of bombing against civilian populations by either country against the other. As Sir Arthur Harris, Commander-in-Chief RAF Bomber Command argued:

*'The Nazis entered this war under the rather childish delusion that they were going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb them. At Rotterdam, London, Warsaw and half a hundred other places, they put their rather naive theory into operation. They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind.'*⁵²

Between June 1940 and June 1941 the RAF dropped a total of just 18,000 tons of bombs on Germany – compared to 40,000 dropped by the Nazis during the Blitz.⁵³

Churchill not only did not initiate the widespread bombing of civilians in the Second World War but also served as a 'brake' on its use.⁵⁴ He questioned the use of saturation bombing within Government and commissioned an independent review of bombing policy by judge Sir

47. Lotus Eaters, 'Churchill: The Myth Behind The Man', 11 September 2024, [link](#).

48. Daily Mail, 'Debunking Churchill: It's time we faced the unpalatable truth that Winston's vanity and recklessness cost countless British lives and lost us our empire, writes Peter Hitchens, 16 September 2018, [link](#).

49. BBC History Magazine, 'Guernica', 27 April 2017, [link](#).

50. Adolf Hitler, Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Directives, Operation Seelöwe, Summer and Autumn 1940, Führer HQ, 1 August 1940, [link](#).

51. International Churchill Society, 'Churchill, Hitler and the Battle of Britain', 22 December 2019, [link](#).

52. Aviation Quotations, [Link](#)

53. The Churchill Project, 'Debunking Tucker Carlson's Darryl Cooper Interview', 30 September 2024, [link](#).

54. The Churchill Project, 'Churchill's Ambivalence Over the Bomber Offensive', 14 June 2024, [link](#).

John Singleton, which recommended a more targeted and strategic approach to bombing raids.⁵⁵

55. Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill: Walking with Destiny', 2019, Penguin.

Chapter 4: Churchill and the British Empire

Another theme in the criticisms made of Churchill is that, by bringing Britain into the Second World War, Churchill hastened the decline and demise of the British Empire.

Anderton argues that as a result of the Second World War ‘our economy stagnated, we lost an empire...’.⁵⁶ Will Lloyd, writing for UnHerd, has argued that this was a personal failure of Churchill’s. He argues ‘Churchill did not have God, but he did have the British Empire. The goal of his life, and his political creed, was its defence. His defence failed’.⁵⁷ Zoomer Historian, an anonymous YouTube account with over 250,000 subscribers and over 88,000 followers, has argued more broadly that ‘Churchill did not save Western Civilisation. He destroyed it’.⁵⁸

Lloyd is right to acknowledge that Churchill was deeply committed to the British Empire. This was entrenched by his service as a young British officer, including in India between 1896 and 1898, where, like many of his contemporaries, he became convinced of the moral case for the Empire’s ‘civilising mission’. Throughout his career he consistently opposed decolonisation, not least by leading the campaign against the 1935 Government of India Act. As Prime Minister in 1942, he made clear he had no plans to surrender the empire as a result of the war:

‘We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. For that task, if it were ever prescribed, someone else would have to be found.’⁵⁹

He backed these words with action in August 1942 when he supported the arrest of the leaders of the Indian National Congress which, through their ‘Quit India’ campaign, endangered the ability of Britain to protect the dominion from being overrun by Japan. It is therefore difficult to suggest that Churchill had any intention of reforming the Empire, and in fact was an outlier by the 1940s in the zeal with which he sought to maintain it. Churchill’s excellent relationship with many dominion leaders, including Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, New Zealand General Bernard Freyberg and South Africa’s Prime Minister Jan Smuts, played a vital role in keeping the Empire and Commonwealth together through the pressures of the war.

It should also be noted that Churchill kept his promise – no British colony ever gained its independence during either of his two premierships. The only territory to gain its independence under Churchill

56. Jack Anderton, ‘A Self-Interested British Foreign Policy’, 24 June 2024, [link](#).

57. UnHerd, ‘Winston Churchill needs better defenders’, 18 May 2022, [link](#).

58. X/Twitter, ‘Zoomer Historian’, 15 April 2025, [link](#).

59. Andrew Roberts, ‘Churchill: Walking with Destiny’, 2019, Penguin.

was the former Italian colony of Libya, over which the British had shared a dual mandate with France since its occupation in 1943. In 1947 he denounced the decision to grant Indian independence, arguing Britain retained 'unimpeachable sovereignty'.⁶⁰ Whilst not a single British colony gained independence during his second ministry between 1951 and 1955, six did so between 1955 and 1960. The vociferousness with which Churchill defended the Empire in the face of shifting social attitudes means it is hard to argue that without him its demise would have been quickened. In fact the weight of opinion among historians and his own parliamentary contemporaries was that he did not fully adapt to or accept the unsustainable position much of the Empire was in.

⁶⁰. Ibid.

Chapter 5: Churchill, the Holocaust and Zionism

As part these broader attacks, a smaller number of predominantly American far-right critics have interwoven criticism of Churchill with rhetoric that diminishes or even denies the gravity of the Holocaust and seeks to portray Churchill as a tool of Zionism.

There was 'no plan' for Soviet POWs or the Holocaust

In his interview with Carlson, Cooper made several comments that downplay the extent of Nazi atrocities in the east, including statements that appeared to diminish the significance of the Holocaust. He argues that:

*'Germany... when they went into the East, in 1941, they launched a war where they were completely unprepared to deal with millions and millions of prisoners of war, local political prisoners and so forth, that they were going to have to handle – they went in with no plan for that. And they just threw these people into camps. And millions ended up dead there.'*⁶¹

Cooper's comments were defended by podcaster and commentator Dave Smith who referred to Cooper on X as 'a national treasure'⁶² and, when this was read out to him on Piers Morgan Uncensored, accepted this was his view and argued 'there have been lots of people who have had let's say alternative views on the Second World War and that doesn't mean you're some type of Holocaust denier'.⁶³

Cooper's comments about prison camps in Eastern Europe are ambiguous. In regards to Soviet POWs, far from having 'no plan', the Nazis pursued a policy of deliberate murder and starvation.⁶⁴ However, references to 'local political prisoners' and a death toll of 'millions' imply that his comments include the Holocaust. Again, the idea that the Nazis had 'no plan' is in direct contradiction to a vast amount of historical evidence, and a return to the sort of position advocating by the infamous and disgraced historian David Irving. The Nazi policy of Lebensraum had always dictated the expulsion of the Jewish population of Eastern Europe and Hitler has consistently spoken of Jewish ethnic cleansing, calling for the 'annihilation of the Jews' as early as 1922.⁶⁵ In January 1942 at the Wannsee Conference 15 high-ranking Nazi officials, led by SS General Reinhard Heydrich, met to formulate a plan for a coordinated 'Final Solution'.⁶⁶ Cooper's claim that these widespread deaths were the unintentional result of poor planning are therefore factually inaccurate, serving to minimise the scale of these horrors.

61. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

62. X, Dave Smith, [Link](#)

63. Piers Morgan Uncensored, 'Churchill Revisionist Branded "Low-Rate Historian" After Tucker Carlson Interview', 9 September 2024, [link](#).

64. Holocaust Encyclopaedia, 'Nazi persecution of Soviet prisoners of war', [link](#).

65. Kevin P. Sweeney, 'We Will Never Speak of It Evidence of Hitler's Direct Responsibility for the Premeditation and Implementation of the Nazi Final Solution', 2012, Constructing the Past, [link](#).

66. Holocaust Encyclopaedia, 'Wannsee Conference and the "Final Solution"', [link](#).

Churchill was a Zionist

Cooper also criticises Churchill for his supposed Zionist beliefs, describing Churchill as ‘a dedicated booster of Zionism’.⁶⁷ In his interview with Carlson he goes on to allege that Churchill was ‘bailed out by people who shared his interests in terms of Zionism’ and that he became Prime Minister because ‘to an extent he was put in place by people, by financiers, by a media complex...’.⁶⁸

Churchill was, throughout his life, an opponent of antisemitism. As early as 1905 he condemned Russian pogroms.⁶⁹ Churchill supported demands for a Jewish homeland and visited Jewish settlements in Palestine in 1921. He repeatedly condemned and highlighted the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. In July 1944 he backed the Jewish Agency’s proposal to bomb the railway line to Auschwitz Birkenau, writing to his foreign secretary Anthony Eden to ‘get anything out of the Air Force you can, and invoke me if necessary’ – an order that was rejected by the Americans.⁷⁰

Churchill did receive funds from Jewish friends and supporters. Sir Ernest Cassel, a lifelong family friend, helped him furnish his first library in 1905.⁷¹ Most notably he was left £20,000 in the will of the banker Sir Henry Strakosch in 1943. However he was not alone in receiving such gifts. Field-Marshal Smuts, for example, also received £10,000.⁷² There is no evidence that Churchill’s views were in any way affected by the generosity of his friends; he was one of the most autonomous politicians in British history when it came to his political philosophy.

It is ludicrous to argue that outside forces were able to install Churchill in May 1940. Indeed all outside forces – the House of Lords, the Conservative party hierarchy, the Church of England, *The Times* newspaper – were keen to keep him out of Downing Street. Churchill became Prime Minister following the Norway Debate and the Labour Party’s refusal to support Chamberlain continuing as Prime Minister, who then resigned. Discussions on his replacement were had by only a small number of people, including King George VI. It was the refusal of Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, the other potential candidate for the role, that enabled Churchill to become Prime Minister. In fact many key figures in the media, including the BBC’s John Reith and *The Times*’ Geoffrey Dawson, had been longstanding critics of Churchill’s opposition to appeasement.⁷³ Cooper’s argument therefore not only lacks historical merit but articulates several explicitly antisemitic tropes.

67. The Tucker Carlson Show, ‘Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe’, [link](#).

68. *Ibid*.

69. International Churchill Society, ‘The Road to Zion’, 2021, [link](#).

70. The Churchill Project, ‘“Winston Churchill Never Spoke or Wrote about the Holocaust”’, 14 March 2025, [link](#).

71. The Churchill Project, ‘Great Contemporaries: Sir Ernest Cassel: “A Few More Years of Sunshine”’, 23 April 2020, [link](#).

72. New York Times, ‘20,000 to Churchill By Strakosch Will’, 6 February 1944, [link](#).

73. The Churchill Project, ‘Who tried to silence Churchill’s 1930s Warnings about Nazi Germany?’, 5 June 2018, [link](#).

Chapter 6: Churchill's personal failings

In addition to criticising Churchill's decision-making, several individuals have criticised his wider character and suitability for high office.

Churchill was humiliated in the First World War

In his interview with Carlson, Cooper argues that Churchill was seeking 'redemption' in the Second World War for the fact that he 'was sort of humiliated by his performance in the First World War'.⁷⁴

Criticisms of this nature attempt to reduce Churchill's involvement in the First World War to the infamous Gallipoli campaign, for which he was ultimately responsible. However, doing so ignores the many important achievements of Churchill during the war. As First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 he paid a pivotal role in preparing the British navy and ensuing its dominance in the coming conflict, both by securing Britain's oil supply and by committing to naval superiority through a guarantee to match Germany's naval expansion two-to-one.⁷⁵ Churchill's personal leadership at Antwerp helped to stall the German advance and shore up vital channel ports to the west.⁷⁶ Churchill, like many other MPs, also opted to serve as an officer on the front line of the conflict in 1915-16. Returned to government in July 1917 as Minister for Munitions, Churchill expertly handled strikes that would have hampered production. Munitions supply chains became so effective under his leadership that he was able to replace twice over the guns and planes lost to the German offensive in April 1918.⁷⁷ To reduce Churchill's legacy in the First World War to simple 'humiliation' ignores these vital achievements. It would also be wrong to brand Churchill's strategy as Gallipoli as a total disaster. His later successor as Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, in fact believed Churchill to have been right on the broad strategy of the campaign and his resulting respect for Churchill's boldness was crucial to Labour's support for Churchill throughout the Second World War.⁷⁸

Churchill was a drunk

Cooper also repeats the frequent criticism that Churchill was overly reliant on alcohol, claiming to Carson that 'he [Churchill] was also a drunk'.⁷⁹

There is no doubt that Churchill was a heavy drinker, although it should be noted that the drinking culture of the 1940s was very different to today. It has been suggested that Churchill's regular alcohol consumption amounted to 'approximately six glasses (1½ 750 ml. bottles) of champagne or wine

74. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

75. Churchill Archive, 'Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty, 23 October 1911 - 24 May 1915', [link](#).

76. The Churchill Project, "'The World Crisis' (3): Antwerp—Folly or Success?', 13 February 2024, [link](#).

77. America's National Churchill Museum, 'World War I and its Aftermath', [link](#).

78. John Bew, 'Citizen Clem: A Biography of Attlee', 2016, Riverrun.

79. The Tucker Carlson Show, 'Darryl Cooper: The True History of the Jonestown Cult, WWII, and How Winston Churchill Ruined Europe', [link](#).

daily along with 5 to 6 ounces of whisky or brandy spread over a 12 to 15 hour period'.⁸⁰ Crucially however, there is no evidence that Churchill's drinking impaired his function, which is the primary definition of alcoholism. He often worked late into the night and, despite his relatively advanced age by 1940, shouldered the stress of war leadership with remarkable energy and resilience. In fact, much of Churchill's reputation for imbibing alcohol was the result of his own humour. When his friend Professor Lindemann suggested Churchill's lifetime drinking would only partially fill a room, he quipped 'how much to do; how little time remains'.⁸¹

Churchill's pursuit of glory clouded his judgement

Several critics have argued that Churchill's vanity, obsession with reputation and pursuit of personal glory contributed to rash and poor decision making. Peter Hitchens has argued that 'his vanity and self-deception – themes running through his conduct of the war – came at a very high price'.⁸² Will Lloyd, in an article for UnHerd, argued 'ultimately, everything was subordinate to the small boy's dream of glory and prestige'.⁸³

It cannot be denied that Churchill was interested in prestige. As early as 1897 he wrote to his mother that 'fame, sneered at, melodramatised, degraded, is still the finest thing on earth'.⁸⁴ Yet he also showed a high level of self-awareness and a degree of humour about his own pretensions, remarking 'of course – as you have known for some time – I believe in myself'.⁸⁵

However, it is harder to suggest that Churchill's sense of destiny and element of recklessness was an actively harmful impulse. In the Second World War, for example, it was a vital component of his wartime leadership and served as a source of inspiration to the public and the British and imperial armed forces. Churchill travelled 110,000 miles outside the United Kingdom between 1940 and 1945 in unpressured aircraft at risk of attack, often to visit troops in North Africa, Italy and, later in the war, Western Europe. His refusal to leave London during the Blitz endeared him to a city under siege and maintained public resolve. Instead, he regularly visited the East End, where the damage was most severe, to comfort and support residents who had had their homes destroyed.⁸⁶ His resolute belief that Britain could and would prevail, complimented by a carefully curated public image designed to show that, as a war time leader, he practiced what he preached, was vital to the war effort. Even his critics came to acknowledge that his unshakeable confidence was an asset. Lord Crawford, a longstanding political opponent, argued in early 1940 that Churchill 'delivers the massive killing blow, encourages the country, inspires the fleet – the more I see and hear of him the more confident I am that he represents the party of complete... victory!'.⁸⁷ A man without hubris – and without a sense of destiny – would have struggled to do the same.

Churchill was 'a politico without principle'

This accusation, made by Raico in his essay for the Mises Institute, is implicitly echoed by many of Churchill's new critics, who view him as a man bent on promoting his own career and profile over the interests of

80. The Churchill Project, 'The Myth of Churchill and Alcohol: A Distortion of the Record', 18 May 2018, [link](#).

81. Ibid.

82. Daily Mail, 'Debunking Churchill: It's time we faced the unpalatable truth that Winston's vanity and recklessness cost countless British lives and lost us our empire, writes Peter Hitchens', 16 September 2018, [link](#).

83. UnHerd, 'The man who broke Boris', 10 June 2022, [link](#).

84. Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill: Walking with Destiny', 2019, Penguin.

85. Ibid.

86. Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill: Walking with Destiny', 2019, Penguin.

87. Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill: Walking with Destiny', 2019, Penguin.

his country.⁸⁸

This charge is particularly difficult to substantiate. Throughout his career Churchill was remarkably consistent in many of his core beliefs, even in the face of firm opposition. As previously discussed Churchill was a lifelong opponent of antisemitism, with his defection to the Liberals in 1904 motivated in part by his desire to oppose the Government's Aliens Bill, which he argued appealed 'to racial prejudice against Jews'.⁸⁹ His career was shaped at several points by a sustained defence of the British Empire, even as it became increasingly unpopular, even within members of his own Conservative Party. Most famously Churchill showed great consistency in his opposition to Hitler and Nazi Germany. Within two months of Hitler's ascent to the Chancellorship in January 1933 Churchill began to warn of the need for Britain to rearm.⁹⁰ Throughout the 1930s his opposition to appeasement and support for rearmament placed him at odds with the politic establishment and the British public at significant reputational cost.

88. Mises Institute, 'Rethinking Churchill', 23 November 2021, [link](#).

89. Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill: Walking with Destiny', 2019, Penguin.

90. International Churchill Society, 'First speech on the need to rebuild Britain's defences', [link](#).

Conclusion

This report has demonstrated the newly flimsy evidential base of this newly emergent school of revisionist right-wing criticism of Winston Churchill. Their attempts to denigrate his legacy to legitimise their own foreign policy outlook do not survive serious scrutiny. Amateur historians, with little regard or understanding for chronology or responsible curation of source material, have presented a highly dubious revisionist history of Churchill that is at odds with the historical record and even the serious academic critiques of his leadership.

Their underlying foreign policy position misinterprets realism, falsely viewing international involvement as a zero-sum game that cannot enrich or secure domestic politics. At present, although gaining ground rapidly in the United States, these views are still generally heard only amongst an online right-wing fringe commentariat in the UK. Leaders of the right in both the US and UK should be alive to the threat these views pose both to the credibility of their broader ideas and their legitimacy with the wider public.



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