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THE GREAT DE-ESCALATOR: FDR'S CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FDR-CHURCHILL ALLIANCE IN WWII

Adam Presswood

Mentor: Maire Murphy

The relationship between FDR and Winston Churchill was not as peaceful or as consistent as much of the literature might lead one to believe. The two men differed radically with regard to their views on colonialism and imperialism, and those differences of opinion often resulted in rifts between the two allies. Unfortunately, those rifts usually occurred during pivotal moments of WWII, such as prior to the Torch operation and during the planning for D-Day. Had it not been for FDR's great skill in bringing Churchill back to the table following their disagreements, the course of WWII could have been very different—and with it the fate of FDR's vision for the post-WWII world.

In exploring this aspect of the relationship between Roosevelt and Churchill, this project will focus on the rhetorical and argumentative approaches and strategies that FDR used to mend rifts between himself and Churchill (accessible for research via primary resources such as FDR and Churchill's diary entries and recorded minutes from various meetings that occurred between the two men and their respective staffs). The project will look at two to three case studies and develop a nuanced characterization or typology of approaches and strategies FDR deployed in particular circumstances when dealing with Churchill. The findings from such an analysis have the potential to complicate, or at least deepen, the understanding we have of the FDR-Churchill alliance, give insight into and provide a more detailed vocabulary for talking about FDR's arts of persuasion, and encourage other scholars to see if those findings are useful in explaining how FDR cajoled, encouraged, and otherwise interacted with other people with whom he needed to work closely.