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Three Minutes, Three Questions: The Man Behind the Years

An Interview with John Cook, Pimlico, London 15th February 2025 by CJ Bathurst

John Cook, 76, I've known him for years, but not sure I really know him. Grumpy, foul-mouthed and blunt, he keeps most things to himself but there's something else, something unexpected — something softer. His flat is small, dingy and cluttered, with an overwhelming stench of cigarette smoke etched into everything. The wallpaper is yellowed with age and nicotine and empty bottles sit on the table alongside old newspapers and overflowing ashtrays.

Today, I'm here for a short interview—three minutes, three questions. But before we start, John has a different priority. "Fancy a nip of Brandy?" he asks "its Napoleon", holding up a half-full bottle grinning. "Come on lad and don't tell your mum." I laugh and down the shot, trying not to grimace as it's truly disgusting. He sees it though and grumbles something under his breath and pours himself another drink. His hands shake slightly as he sets it down. Despite his frailty—his round glasses on a narrow nose, paper-thin frame and stringy long hair, his presence is unmistakable. John is not easily ignored.

Before we get to the interview, I suggest taking him out for a coffee. Getting ready is an ordeal, he hasn't been out in over a year. His breathing is laboured by the time he lowers himself into the wheelchair. "Bloody hell, Robin," he mutters, using the nickname he gave me years ago—Christopher Robin. I don't mind. It started as a joke, but over time, it became part of our interactions. As we're heading out, he suddenly remembers, "Oh, here's that camera for you!" and hands me his old Minolta. I pause—I've never used a film camera—but I thank him, assuring him it'll make me look the part – the Photojournalist I want to be. We chat about photography on the way and he offers me his developing unit, then immediately backtracks, deciding it would be too awkward for me to carry.

At the café, he orders a black coffee, no sugar and spends the first five minutes complaining about the prices. But I can see it in his eyes—he's enjoying being out. As he sips his coffee, he studies the people around us. "The world moves too bloody fast and yet everyone is fat" he grumbles. I smile. That's John in a sentence – blunt, slightly offensive, but real".

Then, he pulls a crumpled newspaper from his coat, open to a West Ham match report. "They played like absolute muppets last week. No grit, no fire." He scoffs, launching into a rant about modern football so I try to start the interview but he's in full flow now. "Football's different now," he groans. "Too much money, too many damn suits running the show." I glance at my watch as say "time to begin".

I start "If you could relive one moment in your life, what would it be?" Of course, he doesn't hesitate. "May 10, 1980. FA Cup final". I roll my eyes. But he continues "Trevor Brooking scored the winner against Arsenal and we lifted the trophy. Bloody marvellous" he punches the air "I was in the stands at Wembley, never felt a rush like that again. I'd go back to that moment in a heartbeat."

If you could give your younger self one piece of advice?" He exhales puffing out his lips. "Don't rush through life. The small moments matter more than you think. You see life as a race, but it's the little things—watching football with a mate, whisky with my dad, taking a girl to Calais for the day. I'd tell my younger self to slow the bloody hell down. You don't get those moments back." "When I was your age, I thought life was about getting somewhere—a better job, house, car. But the best bits? They weren't the big things. They were the laughs, the nights out, the moments you never planned."

What's something people don't understand about growing old? His eyes sharpen. This one hit home. "You don't feel old in your head. You're still "you"—just in a body that's falling apart." He grips the handle of his cup, his fingers tight and white at the knuckles. "People see an old relic and think he's always been this way. I used to be fast, you know. Played football every weekend. Ran to catch the train, ran just for the hell of it! Now if I drop something, I seriously debate whether I really need it! But in my head, I'm still the same bloke. That's what people don't get. They see wrinkles and white hair and think you must have always been this way. "There's silence for a moment. I let it sit. "Getting old isn't the worst part," he finally says. "It's people treating you like you're already gone."

The Three Minutes Are Up. John glances at the clock on the café wall. "That's it then? Three bloody minutes? Feels like we only just got started." I grin. "That's the point." He considers this, then nods. "Good way to do it. Say what matters, leave out the crap." As I help him with his coat, he grumbles about the buttons, but I can tell he doesn't really mind.

Back at his flat, he sinks into his chair, rubbing his face. "Here," he says, fishing into his pocket and pressing a £20 note into my hand. "Buy your mum a present. Thanks for the outing, Robin," he mutters. As I leave, I think back to that *something softer* I noticed about him earlier—and now I see it clearly. He's kind. He tries to hide it, but it's there. Behind me, I hear him reach for his brandy. "Did I mention how much West Ham pisses me off?" he chuckles. I smile. Thank you for sharing, John.

Word Count: 966

In Shakespeare's Aristotelian tragedy *Othello*, the role of "wife" binds women under a shared societal expectation, creating an illusion of similarity between them. While Desdemona and Emilia appear to occupy the same role, their experiences, beliefs, and personalities diverge significantly. Although both endure mistreatment at the hands of their husbands, their responses reveal distinct worldviews: Emilia's proto-feminist pragmatism standing in stark contrast to Desdemona's idealistic loyalty. To a Jacobean audience, this divergence would, in all probability, have highlighted the limitations of rigid gender roles, exposing the fragility of assuming unity among women based solely on marital status.

At the outset of the play, Desdemona receives seemingly better treatment from Othello than Emilia does from Iago, yet both characters are confined by patriarchal expectations of loyalty and obedience. Desdemona's declaration, "but here's my husband," in response to her father's disapproval, reinforces her devotion to Othello. The possessive pronoun "my" and the alliterative emphasis on "here" and "husband" underscore her steadfast allegiance, even at the cost of her social standing. As the daughter of a respected Venetian, her choice reflects not only love but also a submission to the role society has assigned her: wife first, daughter second.

Similarly, Emilia acquiesces to Iago's demand for Desdemona's handkerchief, despite apparent unease. Her line, "I nothing but to please his fantasy," portrays her as painfully aware of her role as a tool for her husband's manipulation. The word "nothing" diminishes her sense of self, reinforcing her function as a pawn in Iago's schemes. "Fantasy" implies frivolity, suggesting she recognises the irrational basis of Iago's desires but feels powerless to resist. While her actions may stem from fear rather than loyalty, certainly considering Iago's constant verbal abuse, her submission still illustrates the societal expectation of the time period for wives to serve their husbands' will, regardless of personal consequence.

As the play progresses, Othello's perception of Desdemona deteriorates under Iago's influence. He begins to mirror Iago's disdainful treatment of Emilia, calling Desdemona a "strumpet" in Act 4, Scene 2. This alignment in language reveals a chilling parallel in how both men perceive their wives once trust erodes. The derogatory noun, used frequently by Iago, signals the collapse of respect and the shared vulnerability of Desdemona and Emilia under patriarchal control. Their marginalisation echoes the experiences of various female characters in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, who, although oppressed by both race and gender, similarly find themselves silenced and disempowered. In both texts, women are forced into submission, their agency erased by the authority of their oppressors.

Despite their shared oppression, Desdemona and Emilia respond to their circumstances in starkly different ways. Desdemona remains the archetypal "Madonna", pure, faithful, and idealistic. Emilia, however, gradually rejects the submissive ideal, revealing a more critical stance on gender inequality. Their exchange on infidelity illuminates this divergence. When Desdemona swears "by this heavenly light," Emilia wryly replies, "I might do't as well i' the dark." Her dark humour mocks the sanctity Desdemona attaches to marriage and morality, while also exposing the hypocrisy of male infidelity. Later, Emilia boldly asserts, "the ills we do, their ills instruct us so," framing male misdeeds as a rationale for female defiance. Her use of "instruct" is laced with irony, suggesting that women learn subversion through the very systems meant to control them.

These differences in worldview are further shaped by age and experience. Emilia's cynicism reflects a life worn down by Iago's cruelty, whereas Desdemona's naivety speaks to youthful idealism and a

lack of exposure to betrayal. Their contrasting archetypes, Emilia as the Shrew and Desdemona as the Madonna, serve not just to contrast their personalities but to critique the limited roles available to women in a patriarchal society.

Ultimately, while Emilia and Desdemona share the title of “wife,” their experiences and philosophies sharply diverge. Shakespeare constructs their relationship to reveal both the unifying and alienating power of gender roles. Though they are similarly oppressed and ultimately killed by their husbands, they differ in their understanding of that oppression. Thus, their similarity is ultimately superficial, grounded not in shared beliefs or behaviours, but in a societal structure that reduces their identities to their marital status.

702 words

Louisa R, Y12

Aged 17

In Wuthering Heights, Catherine "becomes a prisoner of gentility".

Considering Stoneman's view, explore how this is shown in Catherine's transformation.

In Emily Brontë's 1847 Gothic novel, 'Wuthering Heights', Catherine is presented as a complex character of intense passion. Her headstrong nature is challenged by the expectations of upper-class society. As a result, her character is forced to undergo a rigorous transformation to conform to the values of gentility, and she becomes entrapped by the social conventions that she rebelled against as a child.

Catherine is immediately presented by Brontë to have a turbulent nature that completely contradicts the refined manners of the gentry. 'Wuthering Heights' is an epistolary novel, and arguably, Catherine is introduced as one of the multiple narrators through the diary entries that she wrote as a child. Catherine's perspective is essential structurally as it confirms Nelly's retelling of her rebellious character, as well as providing an insight into her true personality. This is made evident in the entry "H. and I are going to rebel – we took our initiatory step this evening". Notably, Catherine's diary entries are literally marginalised as they were written in the margins of "Testament[s]." Contextually, religion was highly important in the nineteenth century. Catherine's disregard towards the religious norms of the time by defacing biblical texts demonstrates her rebellious personality. This rebellion is further highlighted in the semantic field of militaristic language, such as "rebel" and "initiatory step", showing how Catherine subverts the gender norms of the period with the use of masculine symbols. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, the military was an exclusively male profession. In this sense, Catherine defies the expectation that she will enter the gentry as a compliant and delicate young lady. Similarly, Brontë herself was judged as unfeminine by her teacher, Monsieur Heger. The juxtaposition between Catherine's personality and the stereotype of an upper-class Victorian woman emphasises how Catherine eventually entering the gentry was not due to desire, but instead necessity and entrapment.

The idea of gentility is thrust into Catherine's life when she and Heathcliff explore Thrushcross Grange, exposing Catherine to the upper-class lifestyle that she is expected to conform to. The verbs that Heathcliff uses to describe their entry into the Grange – "crept", "groped", "planted" – suggests that him and Catherine were not welcome. Certainly, Thrushcross Grange is a metaphor for civility and culture, distinct

values of the gentry, acting as a foil to *Wuthering Heights*, which represents unsophistication and nature. As an inhabitant of *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine does not naturally belong in the social propriety of the Grange. Thus, Catherine's shift from *Wuthering Heights* to Thrushcross Grange is portrayed as violent, as shown in Catherine's dog bite which forces her to remain at the Grange, immersing her in upper-class society. This is demonstrated in Heathcliff's explanation "the devil had seized her ankle." By metaphorically calling the dog a "devil", Heathcliff emphasises how painful and unnatural it is for Catherine to be stuck at the Grange. Moreover, the Lintons' dog literally imprisons Catherine by holding her "ankle", rendering her unable to move. Following her homecoming from the Grange, Catherine's lavish clothes become a metaphor for her transformation, suggesting that she has fully conformed to upper-class society. This is shown in the listing "plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes". Transformation is similarly represented through clothing in Khalil Hosseini's 'A Thousand Splendid Suns', in which Laila is forced to discard her assertiveness and succumb to the life of a stereotypical woman, as shown in her donning the burqa. This suggests that women in literature throughout time are consistently subject to the expectations of society, in Catherine's case, to conform to gentility.

Moreover, Catherine marrying Edgar further imprisons her within the constraints of gentility by alienating her from Heathcliff. Catherine declares that "it would degrade [her] to marry Heathcliff" due to her status in the upper class. This decisive statement contrasts with the unconvincing description of her love for Edgar as "like the foliage in the woods", a metaphor for how her attraction to him is variable and merely transactional as he "will be rich". In contrast, "Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath", a metaphor for how her love for him is solid and constant. Additionally, the "rocks beneath" foreshadow how Catherine and Heathcliff will be buried next to each other at the end of the novel, suggesting that their love transcends the limitations of life. This highlights how Catherine becomes imprisoned by gentility as she is obliged to marry Edgar in accordance with societal expectations, denying her happiness with Heathcliff. This entrapment is manifested in her multiple fits throughout the novel, causing her to become "doomed to decay", the dental alliteration emphasising her poor physical and mental state. Hence, Catherine was forced to marry Edgar due to the hierarchical Victorian society, such entrapment resulting in the bodily harm that eventually caused her death.

Furthermore, Catherine is only able to escape the prison of gentility through death. Nelly describes Catherine in death as in "perfect peace", the alliteration highlighting how Catherine has finally escaped the constraints of society and returned to a more content state. Khanis supports this in "the conflict caused by Cathy's marriage is resolved only by her death." Likewise, in Kate Chopin's 'The Story of an Hour', Louise Mallard escapes her marital prison through death. 'Wuthering Heights' is a non-linear narrative, and Lockwood's earlier account has already described that Catherine's ghost

had a “child’s face.” Indeed, Catherine was happiest in her childhood. Her ghost being a “child” is a metaphor for her soul reaching for the freedom of her youth, which contrasts with the path of gentility she followed as an adult. This reflects the Romantic convention that unless you hold onto your inner child, you lose your freedom. When Catherine conformed to societal expectations and left her childhood behind, she became imprisoned.

Overall, Catherine indeed “became a prisoner of gentility”. Her transformation from an untamed child to a woman whose life became dictated by the constraints of societal expectations demonstrates how trapped she became. The idea that she could only escape in death emphasises just how flawed society was.

Word count: 995

The view.

The wind feels cold. I know it does because my hands are pale. It's as if my veins are a creeping glittering frost, freezing my fingers, and turning them blue. But frozen hearts don't beat, and these hands they cannot feel. Yet, I know they are cold because they are shaking, although that may be from gripping the railing too. My face, I know it must be flushed from the cold wind - a bloody hail mary. My soul, my being, my vital organ has become a parasite in its own body. It's drawing up, giving all it can one last time, from every muscle, every bone. Leeching out all its life to speak, to try, to think. Devouring itself from within, only to inexorably lie destroyed and defeated - shame faced flushed cheeks.

The wind is in my hair too. It whispers in my ears; blonde curls around my neck, knotted with neglect, weather, and tears. But the tears are gone. I know they're gone because I cannot taste them. I think that they were frozen too. Now the rain that takes their place, runs down my face and falls back to the rippling mirror of the sky below. Empty and senseless like all the rest. My head, my head is pounding and drumming with a choral, violent urgency. Beating upon me like it is trying to help restart the emptied chambers deep below. So bestial, so futile an effort that it's almost hilarious. It can't revive that shell of a heart any more than I can make these hands let go.

Yet I don't think the pounding noise is even truly my own, it's encompassing me. Roaring from behind in the screeching cars; the grinding tires and pulsing hearts; in the rising cries of blaring sirens. And flanking me on either side, the towering city blocks - their dark shapes aglow with reverberating, clamorous chatter. A world I do not know. Sometimes when you can no longer move forward, escape is a bridge.

The stars. They do not scream or cry or drag me kicking into the glare outside; they twinkle softly, floating careless in the black waters. They are innocent wishes from little girls; they are the pin pricks, the breathing holes, letting out the hot air of our choked breaths and burning exhausts.

One shape stands out reflected up at me from below, a shining white arc. Glimmering upon the waters, she watches with her tilted smile. Radiating perfection despite her scars and blemishes, wrought by the wrath of celestial rocks. Her rays are cold, but they are tender, and her silent voice calls gently. Her alluring smile draws me down, leaning towards that soft, ethereal countenance, and away from that of, she who scorched me with her exposing morning beam.

But dark clouds surround her, obscuring, taking her from me. Her silvery rays are now blurred, bright, coloured flashes - red, and blue. Her whispers are lost in the sirens that

ISA Essay Competition 2025

Year 12-13: Fiction Writing

By Grace T

are wailing, screaming at me. A voice replaces her, and with words I cannot hear, she calls me too, reaching now, grasping for the hand on the rail, searching for something, for the girl inside the clouded eyes blinking reflexively in the harsh wind, for me.

But my white frosted fingers, no longer shaking or cold, are slackening their grip on the icy metal rail. Into warm arms I sink; in her embrace she carries me, down. One salty drop trickles slowly into the corner of my mouth. They've turned off the lights, and they've shut down the sirens; the darkness rushes back in – a cold, enveloping blanket. The stars above me are still shining, sparkling. Bright.

A voice holds me tightly, *no...stay with me please.*

Word Count: 627

Assess how far the sources support the view that Churchill handled diplomatic relations successfully from the years 1939-1951.

The sources will help determine whether the view that Churchill handled diplomatic relations successfully is accurate or not. Sources A and B do not agree with this view at all, making the impression that Churchill was too stubborn, bad at negotiation, and thought he was superior, which did not make a good character to handle relations between countries. Source C states that he was more friendly, had good connections with both the USA and Stalin, however both could be true at the same time, making some argument that interactions were handled successfully but not giving evidence of good professional relations, or any evidence of issues being resolved. All in all, Churchill did not handle diplomatic relations successfully, despite his friendships with Stalin and good rapport with the USA, any ability to make compromises and come to agreements was not well displayed.

Source A strongly suggests that Churchill did not handle diplomatic relations successfully after the war, describing Churchill as a “warmonger” and telling the reporter in detail how ineffective he was at successfully navigating diplomatic relations. This source describes the delivery of the Iron Curtain speech as a “dangerous act” that was deliberately supposed to “sow the seeds of discord among the allied states”, stating that Winston Churchill did not handle diplomatic relations successfully, as if it was successful, there would never be a “calculated” move to make allied states not trust each other. Churchill is also described as causing “difficulty to [the] collaboration between allied states”, which would weaken the relations between the countries and is opposing the success of diplomatic relations to its core, as collaboration is key to good communication and the allied states working together after the Second World War. Stalin described the USA and Britain to be forcing their rules upon countries that they thought of as inferior, issuing upon the non-English-speaking nations an “ultimatum” to “recognise [their] domination voluntarily”, or else war would be inevitable. This power dynamic is not a good start to have successful relations between countries that are supposed to be collaborating. The source is taken from comments that Joseph Stalin made to a newspaper reporter, in 1946. At this time after the war, Stalin and Churchill were in an unlikely alliance, having become friends after working together to defeat Hitler in the Second World War, which only ended a year previous to the Iron Curtain speech. However Stalin was not a fan of the Iron Curtain speech, as it described the political boundaries between West and East Europe, and he viewed this as an act of disrespect and warmongering to the people of Europe who listened, naming it as a way for the USA and Britain to enforce control on post war Europe, which is not a sign of successful diplomatic relations. The source may also be biased against Churchill, as Stalin was leader of the Soviet Union, who wanted Eastern European countries to all be in his control, so, he may have publicly spoken up against it because he didn’t want the people who saw him as their leader to think that it was true and that there was a political divide, as that would cause them to be scared and not want him as a leader. The tone of the source is trying to invoke emotion and dislike towards Churchill, the uses of the words “dangerous” and “warmonger” being effective, but perhaps being a slight

exaggeration in order to make the readers take his side. However, the source does have limitations, as it does not tell us that Stalin was actually doing a similar thing to the countries he wanted under his control, he also gave them an ultimatum, which detailed that if they didn't continue to be communist, they would get invaded, shown in the uprising in Poland just two years prior. This source is useful, as it shows the opinions on the Iron Curtain speech from the leader of a country that Churchill was supposed to have good diplomatic relations with, however it is also not useful as the trustworthiness of the source is not confirmed, so we do not know if this was a general consensus, or just Stalin trying to make himself sound like he was in need of pity.

Source B does not support the view that Churchill handled diplomatic relationships successfully, instead outlining his inability to negotiate with the rest of the Grand Alliance during the Yalta conference near the end of World War Two. Churchill is described as both possessing a "vigorous sense of purpose and courage" as well as being "generous and impulsive", meaning that he was able to overcome obstacles with greater ease than other men, however he was quick to act on his thoughts and was very attached to his point of view, which we already know from his leadership in the First World War, specifically at Gallipoli. From observing his behaviour at the Yalta conference, Eden describes that "Churchill liked to talk, he did not like to listen". This would make him unable to handle diplomatic relations successfully as he lacked the skills to collaborate with other leaders and come to joint conclusions. We can trust this information as Churchill acted similarly in regards to the North Africa campaign, where he didn't listen to his military guidance and went ahead with defending the Mediterranean. Eden also says that "The spoils in the diplomatic game do not necessarily go to the man most eager to debate", spelling out that Churchill was not good at diplomacy, just because he was quick to speak, and good at debating, it doesn't mean he was successful, and instead he should have waited his turn to speak and listened to the other leaders that he was supposed to be working with and forming a plan for post-war Europe with. This source comes from the memoir of Anthony Eden, the foreign secretary for Churchill during the Second World War, published well after the war in 1965. Eden would have sat in on many conferences, not just Yalta, so we know from him and other sources that Churchill didn't act like this just on occasion, he was consistently unsuccessful at handling diplomatic matters. The fact that this was written decades after the war also suggests that this is truthful, as the situation was well over and emotions regarding the conferences were no longer heightened, so there is probably no exaggeration in the events that occurred. There is also a likely lack of bias, as Anthony Eden has no reason to be lying about his encounters, the two men worked together for a number of years and now Churchill was out of any positions of power, so there would be no motivation to lie about him. Limitations of this source are that Eden only witnessed what happened at formal conferences, whereas Churchill was also known to make agreements behind closed doors and have better personal relationships with individuals like Stalin, so Eden didn't see the full extent of Churchill's capability at handling negotiations, such as the percentages agreement, which was a successful collaboration between him and Stalin. This source is useful, as it shows the behaviour of Churchill within the walls of the conferences, and how he interacted professionally with the other leaders of

the Grand Alliance, and his lack of negotiation skills, making him ineffective at handling diplomatic relations.

Source C does support the view that Churchill successfully handled diplomatic relations, as it shows him having a positive and 'special' relationship with the USA and Roosevelt, even if it wasn't entirely political. In this source, Churchill states that although he was away from his family at Christmas, he still felt welcomed by America and connected to the people, both through his American mother and the "friendships developed" during his life, describing the importance of the connections that the USA and Britain had to each other. In this speech, he also emphasises the similarities between the two countries, that they "pursue the same ideals" and "kneel at the same alters", getting the American people on his side and having their support, as they view the people from either countries to have similar ideals and being on the same team. The speech was given by Churchill publicly addressing the White House on Christmas eve, during his three week long trip to discuss strategy with Roosevelt, a few weeks after the Pearl Harbour attack. At this time, the American people would have felt threatened and scared, so the speech is given in a way that makes the American people feel protected and safe as they have the United Kingdom as their ally, he knows that the people of America are looking for comfort and that is what Churchill strives to provide them. This makes him look successful at diplomatic relations as he is there for his allies and can communicate with the people from their country. He sacrifices his Christmas to help another country, which proves to the world that he is serious about working with other people and not always viewing Britain as the superior to everyone. The tone of his speech is emotional, trying to invoke comradeship and a connection between the countries, to have the Americans on his side and so they know that they also have the protection of the UK. However, the limitations of this source are that we have the full details of his relations, and that we already know the UK and the USA had a special relationship, maybe having bias towards each other. Just because Churchill delivered this speech to the White House, it doesn't mean that behind closed doors, the conferences actually went well, with good collaboration and negotiation, it could have not gone right between the two leaders, but we wouldn't know if it was successful or similar to the Yalta situation described in Source B, where he was not a good team player. Also, even if he did work well with Roosevelt regarding their military strategy, it doesn't mean he was good to other countries, like Source A described, he wasn't necessarily good to anyone else but the USA. This source is not very useful, although it proves that Churchill was supporting the US after the Pearl Harbour attack, it doesn't mean that the diplomatic relations were successful between the two countries, as we don't know what the result of the collaboration was.

In conclusion, the sources disagree with each other but could all disagree with the view that Churchill handled diplomatic relations effectively, because although he had a good friendship and connection with the USA and Stalin, it doesn't mean that success came from it, as in conferences, agreements may not have been made even though everyone was such great friends. Sources A and B describe Churchill as a "warmonger" and a "handicap to the conference table", making war "inevitable" as no one could work with Churchill and he did not view countries other than his and the USA worthy of opinions, however Source C outlines

Churchill as a nicer character, where Churchill describes the USA as having a “commanding sentiment of comradeship”.

The Sources

Source A: In an interview with a Russian newspaper, Stalin gives his thoughts on Churchill’s ‘iron curtain’ speech, March 1946.

I appraise it as a dangerous act, calculated to sow the seeds of discord among the allied states and to cause difficulty to their collaboration. The essence of the affair is that Mr. Churchill now assumes the position of a warmonger. And Mr. Churchill is not alone in this; he has friends not only in England but also in the United States of America... In essence Mr. Churchill and his friends in England and the USA have presented the non-English-speaking nations with something like an ultimatum: recognize our dominance voluntarily and then all will be in order; in the contrary case, war is inevitable.

Joseph Stalin, comments made to ‘Pravda’ reporter, March 1946.

Source B: Anthony Eden, Churchill’s Foreign Secretary during the Second World War, describes Churchill’s negotiations during the Yalta conference in February 1945.

The account was published in his memoirs in 1965. Winston Churchill's strength lay in his vigorous sense of purpose and his courage, which carried him undismayed over obstacles daunting to lesser men. He was also generous and impulsive, but this could be a handicap at the conference table. Churchill liked to talk, he did not like to listen, and he found it difficult to wait for, and seldom let pass, his turn to speak. The spoils in the diplomatic game do not necessarily go to the man most eager to debate.

Anthony Eden, *The Reckoning: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden* (1965).

Source C: Part of a public address given by Churchill at the White House in December 1941.

Following the Pearl Harbor attack earlier that month, Churchill flew to America to discuss military strategy with Roosevelt. He spent three weeks (including Christmas) at the White House. I spend this anniversary and festival far from my country, far from my family, and yet I cannot truthfully say that I feel far from home. Whether it be by the ties of blood on my mother’s side, or the friendships I have developed here over many years of active life, or the commanding sentiment of comradeship in the common cause of great peoples who speak the same language, who kneel at the same altars, and to a very large extent pursue the same ideals – whichever it may be, or all of them together – I cannot feel myself a stranger here in the centre and at the summit of the United States.

Christmas greeting of Winston Churchill, delivered from the White House, December 24th 1941.

Should market forces determine the price of oil?

By Leo S

Commodities are vital for creating goods. Goods are essential to economic welfare as capital goods allow for services to be produced which can therefore be consumer goods. Consumer goods satisfy consumer needs and wants which leads to an increase in economic welfare. Commodities such as oil are essential to providing heat, transport, and electricity. The free-market forces determine the market equilibrium of these important commodities, but should market forces be left to determine the price equilibrium of such important resources? For example, the British government monopolized the 'natural monopolies' because commodities are essential to economic welfare and should not be determined by market forces.

Typically, commodities are pure monopolies or oligopolies because of the high entry and exit barriers to the market. As presented by the need for a license to enter the market, which are man-made barriers to entry into the commodity market for natural gas. The high entry and exit barriers consequentially lead to a lack of competition and therefore monopolistic competition.

Monopolies have positive and negative aspects; for instance, monopolies benefit the greatest from economies of scale which therefore provisions an efficient allocation of resources. Exploiting economies of scale leads to an increased profit margin that also benefits the investors. Also, the incentive price function will attract new investors and more investment results in capital deepening and widening; investment into better and a broader ranges of capital goods means that there are improvements to productive efficiency. The full employment of the factor of production, capital goods, leads to better quality of a consumer good at less cost incurred to the producer therefore alleviating the cost incurred to the consumer.

However, monopolies do not elevate the cost to the consumer because they have the producer sovereignty of price setting or quantity setting. Adam Smith's theory of 'The invisible hand' (self-interest) being the free-market force results in prices or quantity being set to profit maximize which is a greater price to the consumer, compared to the market structure of perfect competition. For instance, the 'organization of the petroleum exporting countries' (OPEC) sets their prices or quantity supplied together, in collusion, to maximize profits together, avoiding the prisoner's dilemma of reduced profits. On the other hand, there are also some benefits of producer sovereignty to the consumer such as a steady price. OPEC 'reduced fluctuation in price' is good for businesses that depend on the good since they can forecast their costs of production, and it also gives stability to the consumer. The relatively inelastic price for consumers is beneficial because it means that an increase in demand is not going to drastically affect the price of oil, so the consumer is able to afford oil, even if there is an increase in demand.

Although, the monopoly power that OPEC exhibits means that the price for the consumer tends to be higher than the market equilibrium price of a competitive market. Therefore, the argument for 'natural' monopolies to be state owned is that they can exploit to the positive aspects of economies of scale, but they would have the country and its citizens' best interest, which would be a low and stable price. Although, the free market allocation of oil is relatively stable and inelastic. Furthermore, the problem with the state-owned monopoly is that they would have to set a price ceiling to achieve a low price. The effect of a price ceiling can have unintended consequences such as shortages that are permanent because the price ceiling is below the market equilibrium price. The other option for the government owned monopoly is subsidies, but they distort the market leading to a misallocation of resources, which is inefficient. Furthermore, the political position of a government can impact the supply of oil. A government is partial to politics and if it is in the best interest of the government's politics to reduce the supply of oil, as a climate change initiative, the consumers are vulnerable to higher prices which may be unaffordable. Most importantly, state owned monopolies, of commodities, want to maximize their profit when exporting their commodity, to benefit their economy. This further excludes countries that do not have a natural oil supply which can lead to regional inequality.

Oil is a vital resource that is needed as a capital good to be a factor of production, in the manufacturing of consumer goods. Oil provides heat, transport, and electricity, which is essential for economic and social welfare. The argument for the state to own natural monopolies is second to the free market. The free market efficiently allocates the scarce resource (oil) and the government benefits from the corporate tax without interfering with the market mechanism. Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' theory of individual interest being a driving market force has been shown to efficiently allocate resources, since the 'invisible hand' determines the market price equilibrium in a free market. Although, the concentrated market structure is more expensive for the consumer than the fragmented market since the firms in the concentrated market can exercise their producer sovereignty. But the natural barriers to entry and the man-made barriers to entry create a concentrated market, of monopolies. Furthermore, monopolies benefit from economies of scale which lead to an efficient allocation of resources. Moreover, if the oil industry was state owned, it would still be a monopoly and have the same outcome for the consumer. Therefore, the price of oil should be determined by market forces.

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