

ANNUAL WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL LECTURE DELIVERED
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I have chosen to focus on whether the decision making of some of our great leaders in the Second World War was affected by illness. Let me start with Winston Churchill.

On 10 May, 1940, at a moment of national peril and after cross party soundings he became Prime Minister. An overwhelming majority of Members of Parliament from all political parties had made it clear that he was the man to lead a wartime coalition. They knew Churchill was highly emotional, some of his critics thought him mentally unstable. He had many enemies as well as friends. The House of Commons is, however, an intimate place and the strengths and weaknesses of an MP are well known. Even though they desperately wanted Churchill's inspirational qualities and judged this was his all-important quality, the collective wisdom of MPs would not have chosen as wartime leader anyone with a debilitating mental illness.

Sixteen days later, over a period of five days at the end of May, Churchill's own judgement literally saved the world from Hitler. Only a handful of people at the time understood the reality of those five days, because Churchill thereafter denied the existence of any talk of a negotiated peace. They are brilliantly recaptured by John Lukacs¹ who shows how Churchill used every political skill in his repertoire to prevent Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, who was the person many

¹ John Lukacs, *Five Days in London* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999)

Conservatives wanted to take over from Neville Chamberlain, from responding to a peace initiative brought to him by the Italian Ambassador on Saturday, 25 May. Halifax told the War Cabinet “it was not so much now a question of imposing a complete defeat upon Germany, but of safeguarding the independence of our own empire.” Halifax’s plan, which had the support of the French Prime Minister, was somewhat disingenuously referred to as ‘Monsieur Reynaud’s plan’. Halifax, having stepped aside for Churchill, was in a very strong position when he argued for broadening out his conversation with the Italian Ambassador the day before into a general conference about peace and security in Europe. His bottom line was that the terms of any settlement could not be destructive of British independence. Halifax was not ready to give up the fleet or the RAF in any negotiations but was prepared to sacrifice part of the Empire, such as Malta, Gibraltar and some African colonies, “to save the country from an avoidable disaster.”²

The War Cabinet at that point consisted of only five people. The Prime Minister, his deputy and Leader of the Labour Party, Clement Attlee, the former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax and Arthur Greenwood the deputy leader of the Labour Party. Churchill, after the first meeting wisely added Archibald Sinclair for the subsequent meetings of the War Cabinet. He was a Liberal, a reliable ally for Churchill having always opposed appeasement. Attlee was clear throughout that Halifax’s strategy would be very damaging. Yet this was no academic discussion. The evacuation of Dunkirk only started on 27 May and not until the Cabinet had determined their line not to start negotiations with Italy did the miracle of the evacuation become clear.

² David Reynolds, *In Command of History, Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 169-174.

Some 7,000 came off the beaches on 27 May; then 17,000 on 28 May and 50,000 a day from 29 May to 1 June.

What Churchill instinctively and rightly knew was that in any negotiation Mussolini would be a front and that Britain's adversary would be Hitler. Once negotiations started they would have led to an irresistible call for an immediate ceasefire. Then after a ceasefire had been conceded, he, Churchill, would never have been able to restart the war even when faced with humiliating terms from Hitler for ending the war.

The War Cabinet record is one of passionate but controlled rational debate, where critically Churchill won over Chamberlain to his viewpoint. It is a massive testament to the practical strengths of Cabinet government. It was an act of political vandalism that Cabinet Government virtually disappeared for ten years under Tony Blair's Prime Ministership and it is a vital national interest that it was restored under the coalition government in 2010.

Winston Churchill's personality was the elemental force that made him such an inspirational war leader. He loved the whole ambiance of war. He was his own Minister of Defence; he intervened over strategy, military appointments and wore to a frazzle the Chief of Staffs over long and alcoholic dinners. General "Pug" Ismay, Churchill's military Chief of Staff, sent a description of the Prime Minister in action to General Auchinleck, in the desert of North Africa, in April 1942. Auchinleck, having just been on the receiving end of Churchill's criticism was told:

"You cannot judge the P.M. by ordinary standards: he is not in the least like anyone that you or I have ever met. He is a mass of contradictions. He is either on the crest of the wave, or in the trough: either highly laudatory, or bitterly condemnatory: either in an angelic temper, or a hell of a rage: when he isn't fast asleep he's a volcano. There are no half-measures in his make-up. He

is a child of nature with moods as variable as an April day, and he apparently sees no difference between harsh words spoken to a friend, and forgotten within the hour under the influence of friendly argument, and the same harsh words telegraphed to a friend thousands of miles away – with no opportunity for ‘making it up’....”

The medical reports on Churchill as Prime Minister are amongst Lord Moran’s papers in the Wellcome Library and provide, with the mass of wartime biographies, a reasonable basis for determining whether he had just periodic depression which he called ‘Black Dog’ or Bipolar Disorder, which used to be called manic depression. I found no obvious manic episode in his time as Prime Minister to justify a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder. The one period in which there can be some questioning of whether Churchill’s mood as Prime Minister might have become manic, certainly swinging to at least hypomania, was in May and June 1940. His daughter, Mary, wrote of this time “he knew the deadly nature of the onslaught which was being proposed just across the Channel’ and, above all, he knew our nakedness”....”He drove himself and he drove others with a flail”...”he must have become extremely overbearing and tyrannical to many of those who served him.” On 27 June 1940 his wife, Clementine, recognizing a significant change in her husband’s behaviour and a deterioration in his manner wrote to him after some hesitation a moving but also a brave and important letter.³

“...there is a danger of your being generally disliked by your colleagues and subordinates because of your rough sarcastic & overbearing manner – It seems your Private Secretaries have agreed to behave like school boys & ‘take what’s coming to them’ & then escape out of your presence shrugging their shoulders – Higher up, if an idea is suggested (say at a conference) you are supposed to be so contemptuous that presently no ideas, good or bad, will be forthcoming. I was

³ Mary Soames, *Clementine Churchill* (London: Cassell, 1979), p.291.

astonished & upset because in all these years I have been accustomed to all those who have worked with & under you, loving you.”

What his wife was describing was not the manic phase of Bipolar Disorder, but a description of a gathering hubris, always incipient within Churchill. That these symptoms did not progress through 1940 to 1945 to become what I have described elsewhere as Hubris Syndrome⁴ owes not a little to a candid and loving wife. The fact that she used the wounding word “contemptuous” in her letter about his behaviour is revealing for contempt was for the ancient Greeks the most unattractive aspect of hubris often followed by nemesis. Another constraint came from within himself, helped by his sense of humour and respect for history, as well as his love of the House of Commons and parliamentary democracy. In my judgement four other British Prime Ministers did acquire Hubris Syndrome in office. Lloyd George after 1919, Chamberlain around 1938, Margaret Thatcher after 1987 and Tony Blair after 2001.

It is important to recognize the value of exuberance in leaders. As a Frenchman once wrote, “Passions are the only orators which always persuade. They are like an act of nature, the rules of which are infallible; and the simplest man who has some passion persuades better than the most eloquent who has none.”⁵ Churchill was a passionate exuberant personality. Woundingly once described in the mid-1930s as a “beached whale” he was fortunately for us all not finished. As he said of himself, we are all worms but I do believe I am a

⁴ David Owen, *In Sickness and In Power: Illness in Heads of Government during the last 100 years* (London: Methuen, 2008).

⁵ Francois de La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*, trans. Stuart D Warner and Stephane Douard (South Bend, Ind: St Augustine’s Press, 2001), p.4.

glowworm. Such people do not easily fit conventional classification, whether of illness or intelligence.

Few less fitted conventional classifications than General Patton. For anyone of the generation who remembers the film "Patton" which in 1970 earned for George C Scott an Oscar for Best Actor following his portrayal of General George S Patton Jr, it is hard to separate myth from reality. He was by the end of the war, despite numerous indiscretions and barely forgiveable incidents, a conquering hero appearing at official functions in full-dress uniform, his helmet shining with its four stars, pistol in his belt and carrying a riding whip". Throughout his life he was an ancestor worshiper "whose veneration of his forefathers verged on obsession".

Coming fifth in the Stockholm Olympics pentathlon he served under General Pershing in Mexico and in World War I. "He saw himself as the modern embodiment of his heroic Confederate antecedents, and because of the enormously successful façade he created, the tender, romantic side of Patton was virtually unknown in his lifetime outside his circle of friends and admirers."⁶ But "Blood and Guts", as he was called, also had many detractors. The historian Paul Fussell characterized him as one of World War II's "masters of chicken shit", a headline grabber obsessed about personal glory, arrogant, profane, volatile, for whom the lives of his men were expendable.

Patton, like General Montgomery and many famous Generals before and since, had many hubristic traits. From the day he landed in North Africa on 11 November 1942, his birthday, as head of the U2

⁶ Carlo D'Else, *A Genius for War. A Life of George S Patton* (Harper Collins, 1995), p.2.

Expeditionary Force and took Casablanca from the French his career took off. During that period he grew evermore self confident and arrogant until in Sicily he slapped two soldiers in hospital and publicly abused them. Undoubtedly this was a supreme act of contempt. In my judgement it also showed he was suffering from Hubris Syndrome. On 3 August 1943 he slapped an infantryman, and kicked him in the rear and on 10 August 1943 he slapped an artilleryman across the face while continuing to curse him and then strode back and hit him again. Between the two incidents, both of which took place in hospital where Patton was visiting the wounded, revealingly Patton wrote a memo to all Commanders in the Seventh Army.

“It has come to my attention that a very small number of soldiers are going to the hospital on the pretext that they are nervously incapable of combat. Such men are cowards and bring discredit on the Army and disgrace to their comrades.....those whom are not willing to fight will be tried by court-martial for cowardice in the face of the enemy.”⁷

The two slappings became common knowledge among American troops in Sicily. General Omar Bradley, who never liked Patton, nevertheless when given a written report on the second incident from a surgeon at the hospital had it locked away explaining he could not go over his head to Eisenhower. Three newspaper correspondents, who also knew, never filed their story but arranged to tell it to Eisenhower. Eisenhower, who already knew, because of a report sent through medical channels to his chief surgeon, General Frederick A Blesse, refused to be blackmailed into getting rid of Patton by the three journalists and told them he had reprimanded Patton and left it to them to use their judgement as to whether to publish but told them there would be no censorship if they did file reports. Their gentlemen’s agreement not to file owed more to their respect for Eisenhower than their disapproval of Patton.

⁷ Ibid, Carlo D’Else, p. 532-546.

Despite this controversy, on 16 August, Patton triumphantly entered Messina bringing the Sicily campaign to an end. Soon afterwards he was handed an envelope with a letter from Eisenhower in the strongest terms refusing to excuse his “brutality, abuse of the sick, non exhibition of uncontrollable temper in front of subordinates”. Contrary to popular belief the letter did not call for a personal apology to every soldier and unit in the Seventh Army but contained an instruction “you make in the form of apology or otherwise such personal amends to the individuals concerned as may be within your power.” Eisenhower declined to dismiss Patton believing he was “indispensable to the war effort – one of the guarantors of our victory”.

Patton went on a mission to apologise and met personally both the soldiers he had slapped and also the doctors and nurses from their hospitals. One doctor said afterwards Patton was feigning contriteness and it was “no apology at all”. To the Seventh Army his apology was usually expressed as regret “for any occasions when I may have harshly criticized individuals”. The inspector general’s report reflected the reaction, “Many men were inspired to greater effort, others were disgusted. The proportion of the latter is considered large enough to be cause of serious concern.” Privately, Patton continued to believe his motives were correct though his methods wrong. Eisenhower decided not to write about the affair to his superior General George Marshall in Washington. Only in late November did the story break in Washington when the columnist, Drew Pearson, sensationalised the story on his weekly radio programme. Yet Marshall, as well as Secretary of Defense Stimson and President Roosevelt, all backed Eisenhower’s decision to keep Patton.

Eisenhower severely jolted Patton's hubris with his reprimand, but particularly by only bringing him back to a battlefield command on 6 July 1944, a month after D-Day. Eisenhower showed in his handling of Patton how any Supreme Commander must put the wider interest of victory in battles to come first.

Yet he had no illusion about the inner Patton who he later described in 1946 as "the most brilliant commander of an army in the open field that our or any other service produced"⁸. After saving Patton's career in that August 1943 Eisenhower talked frankly to his wartime naval aide for three years, Butcher, who wrote down the conversation and then published it in his diary, embarrassingly soon after the war. "For half an hour Eisenhower had sat in his room debating the question and with himself. "He cited history to show that great military leaders had practically gone crazy on the battlefield in their zeal to win the fight. Patton is like this....Yet Ike feels that Patton is motivated by selfishness. He thinks Patton would prefer to have the war go on if it meant further aggrandisement for him. Neither does he mind sacrificing lives if by so doing he can gain greater fame."⁹ This blunt analysis shows Eisenhower had no illusions and was ready to recognize that some Generals in the field were often flawed characters but nevertheless could command from their men a readiness to make the supreme sacrifice.

St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians Chapter 6, verse 11 captures the spirit of an invocation to battle. "Put on the whole armour of God, that

⁸ Ibid, Carlo D'Else, p. 818.

⁹ Butcher Harry C, *Three Years with Eisenhower* (London: Heinemann, 1946), Diary entry 21 August 1943.

ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil". Not for nothing do many military leaders feel empowered by God. Certainly Patton did. The qualities of a Supreme Commander are, however, very different. Their skill is to calculate carefully and shoulder full responsibility. Eisenhower demonstrated this when having heard the last weather forecasts he gave the order to commence D-Day at 4 15 am on 5 June. He then sat down pencil in hand and wrote out the words he intended using if he had miscalculated. "Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold. I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone". Neither Montgomery nor Patton would have been likely to have acted in such a way; preparing to handle defeat while embarked on victory.

Perhaps Eisenhower had in mind General William T Sherman, when he talked of Patton and other Generals going crazy. Sherman had his Union command removed from him in Kentucky in November 1861 when the newspapers labeled him "insane". Only recently did Stephen Ambrose and Michael Fellman in 1998 as historians document Sherman's four major depressive episodes and described the 1861 incident as evidence for him suffering from Bipolar disorder. Yet by 1864 Sherman was literally back in the saddle having entered Georgia early that year with his troops. Little had been heard from him in part because he was fighting a very different sort of war, avoiding set piece battles and instead destroying the basis of the South's economy. Suddenly in the summer of that year Sherman captured Atlanta. He had laid waste not just Georgia but the Carolinas, splitting the Confederacy and promoting such unaccustomedly good news that it helped Lincoln to be

re-elected. Sherman's campaign broke the morale of the civilian population in the South. With their cities and their farms destroyed the Confederate soldiers had nowhere to go back to. In this sense Sherman's genius has been described by the Professor of Psychiatry at Tuft's University, Nassir Ghaemi, as a "manic originator" and cited as an example of how a psychiatric illness can be a positive, not a negative, feature of someone's life.

What of General Montgomery? Small, slight, usually wearing a light-coloured pullover, without insignia of rank, over a desert shirt and trousers with a black beret, he was very different in many respects from Patton. I was led to believe by my father who was in the Royal Army Medical Corps at El Alamein that he was "a bit of shit but a hero" and these two key words were inextricably linked. Like Patton, eccentricity in Montgomery vied with genius but though hugely vain and conceited his hubristic traits were subjected to more inner control. Montgomery would never have slapped, kicked or even abused one of his soldiers. His ego was probably even greater than Patton's in that he was so self-righteous and unlike Patton had no sense of humour. Montgomery's powers to alienate even those who managed to get close to him were formidable throughout his life. Yet his legendary insensitivity was a reflection of one of his greatest qualities, a simplicity of thought. He pared down the options before him and in preparing his plan there was a sparseness to his decision-making as in his personal life. In that limited sense, there was little conceptual grandeur and perhaps this seemed to spare him from acquiring hubris syndrome as he rose in rank and status. His certainties did not grow with power for they were absolute from the start of his career. Little therefore changed, he conducted himself before El Alamein as he did after El Alamein and then in France and Germany. Montgomery struggled to have more power but when his bid

to win control over General Bradley failed, as in December 1944, he accepted it. He could even be contrite, writing to Eisenhower, "I am sure that there are many factors which have a bearing quite beyond anything I realize. Whatever your decision may be, you can rely on me one hundred per cent to make it work and I know Brad will do the same. Very distressed that my letter may have upset you, and I would ask you to tear it up. Your very devoted subordinate, Monty".

The best description of Montgomery's mentality that I can find comes from Stephen Bungay in *Alamein*¹⁰.

"Both Montgomery's successes as a general and his failings as a human being arose from the unusual way in which he thought about the world. He was brought up in a world of street religiosity which he accepted, and street rules against which he rebelled. Both were equally formative. Things were right or wrong, and there was a right or wrong way of doing things. He was intelligent, but not an intellectual, as for example Wavell was, which meant that he could analyse situations and understand their essentials, but he was not interested in subtleties and possibilities. He simplified until he arrived at a single course of action: the right one. His master plans were the result of rejecting alternatives. There were no scenarios, or options A, B and C which is what he found when he arrived at the desert (North Africa). His thinking was designed to result in action. At the end of the day, he had to do one thing, and do it with conviction.....Montgomery's world view was binary. It contained no grey".

In my view the greatest political leader of the 20th Century, proven in both the economic depression of the 1930s and as the leader of the most powerful nation in the world through almost the whole of the Second World War, was President Franklin Roosevelt. He overcame paralysis below the waist from poliomyelitis. He had great charisma and not a little hubris, particularly in 1937 when he tried and failed to pack the Supreme Court. In 1945, while attending the Yalta conference, and

¹⁰ Stephen Bungay, *Alamein* (Arum Press, 2002), p.225

after the tough discussions about the future of Poland, an increasingly sick Roosevelt developed pulsus alternans, in which a weak and strong pulse alternate. This is indicative of a very serious heart condition, namely left ventricular failure. Fortunately, after a few days, his pulse reverted.

Yalta was the moment when the Western democracies had to come to terms with Soviet power. It has become all too easy for Europeans to fix blame on an ill Roosevelt for accepting the Soviet presence on the ground in Europe. Senior US diplomats and politicians who were present at Yalta, some of them closely involved in the seven plenary sessions in February 1945, have vigorously defended Roosevelt's performance. Charles E Bohlen, then the State Department's liaison officer to the White House, and acting as the President's interpreter, was never a sycophant, but, in 1969, he wrote about Roosevelt in Yalta: "I do not know of any case where he really gave away anything to the Soviets because of his ill health." He added: "He seemed to be guided very heavily by his advisers and he took no step independently."¹¹ An interpreter is uniquely placed to see the role of advisers, because often, to assist the interpreter and let them know what to expect, they are given advance copies of the speaking notes prepared by officials for the Head of Government. Valentin Berezhkov, Stalin's interpreter, wrote a letter to Arthur M Schlesinger, replying to his enquiry about Roosevelt's health at Yalta, that it "was certainly worse than in Tehran, but everybody who watched him said that in spite of his frail appearance his mental potential was high. Before he got tired, he was alert, with quick

¹¹ Charles E Bohlen, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy* (New York: W W Norton, 1969), 44

reactions and forceful arguments.”¹² He also noted that “Stalin treated Roosevelt with great esteem.” A fitter man than Roosevelt might have taken more initiatives, have been more active in the discussions. But Roosevelt, in truth, got what he and the United States, above all, wanted – Stalin’s pledge to come into the war against Japan within two to three months of the end of fighting in Europe. This was thought to be crucial. Many believe that it was not the nuclear explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended that war but rather when Stalin brought in Russia and only a matter of days later the Japanese surrendered. It is easily forgotten how costly the war in the Pacific was becoming, by then, in terms of US lives. Churchill, understandably, was focusing on Europe but for Roosevelt, Stalin was also important because of Japan. Russia had a naval fleet in Vladivostok and a border with China.

Roosevelt had built an interesting relationship with Stalin through letters, now chronicled in *My Dear Mr Stalin*.¹³ Averell Harriman, the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, in the last years of the war, felt Roosevelt had deliberately developed a capacity to influence Stalin. Decisions over Poland had been left to Yalta because both Churchill and Roosevelt knew, in Tehran, in November 1943, when the Polish frontier had been delineated with matchsticks, that it was not capable of being resolved then. Differences over the future of Poland had surfaced when Eden met Stalin in Moscow as early as December, 1941. What is more, in their heart of hearts, both Roosevelt and Churchill must have known that the agreement Stalin signed at Yalta to free and fair elections in a Poland, already with changed boundaries, would be very hard to

¹² Arthur M Schlesinger, Foreword to *My Dear Mr Stalin, The Complete Correspondence Between Franklin D Roosevelt and Joseph V Stalin*, ed. Susan Butler (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005)

¹³ *Ibid*, *My Dear Mr Stalin*, xi

enforce, and was probably unenforceable. Roosevelt knew, too, that it was Churchill, in a bilateral with Stalin in Moscow on 9 October, 1944, who had forged the first 'realpolitik' carve up over the percentage spheres of influence in post war Europe, in the hope of excluding Russia from the Mediterranean. To look at Churchill's half sheet of paper today scribbled in the Kremlin six months before the end of the war in Europe with Stalin's large tick of approval overshadowing Romania - of which Russia was to have 90%, the others 10% and Greece with Great Britain 90% and Russia with others crossed out 10% - is to realise what real personal power these leaders held.

Russia, having conquered Eastern Europe, paid a very heavy price in terms of human life. It has been estimated that for every Briton or American who died, the Japanese lost 7 people, the Germans 20 people and the Russians 85. Russians still believe, with some justice, that they made the heaviest sacrifice for the overthrowing of Nazism.

After Yalta at the end of March 1945, Eisenhower wrote to Marshall Stalin a military letter as one Supreme Commander to another, and deliberately made no effort to communicate his intentions with the British Chiefs of Staff or Prime Minister Winston Churchill who he had met on 25 March at Rheinberg. The letter was numbered SCAF 252 drafted by General Harold Bull. No direct communication had taken place with Washington but General Bradley knew Eisenhower's views and agreed with them, "I think that to capture Berlin might cost us a hundred thousand casualties. A pretty stiff price for a prestige objective, especially when we've got to fall back and let the other fellow take over."¹⁴

¹⁴ David Irving, *The War between the Generals. Inside the Allied High Command* (Allen Lane, 1981) p.399.

The actual message to Stalin was obscurely phrased and full of intended military dispositions but the intention was clear. Stalin could take Berlin. Stalin telegraphed quickly back his acceptance of the plan with the assurance that Berlin had lost its "former strategic importance" and that he would allocate only secondary forces to it in mid-May. Churchill rang Eisenhower to protest and only then did Eisenhower send a message to clear his line with Marshall in Washington which he did without difficulty. He also wrote to Montgomery about blitzed Berlin. "That place has become, so far as I am concerned, nothing but a geographical location, and I have never been interested in these". All those many commentators who still to this day write dismissively and disparagingly about "Ike" fail to understand the depth of his intellect and often the ruthlessness when roused of his decisions. General Marshall chose wisely and while no Supreme Commander will have all the attributes Eisenhower had more than any of his rivals except General Marshall, a man of all the talents who Roosevelt wisely kept close to him in Washington.

Eisenhower never developed hubris, the feature that eventually destroyed the career of General Douglas MacArthur, a General far more controversial and superficially more brilliant. America to this day is still divided on MacArthur, the greatest soldier in American history if you fought in the Pacific theatre or watched him reconstruct Japan. It is hard not to admire how he won back the initiative in Korea with his amphibious landing behind enemy lines in Inchon undertaken in the teeth of opposition from the American Joint Chiefs. To others he was an egotistical "Caesar", a five star fake, who finally risked World War III with China. Myths surround MacArthur like all great men, but in the end he has to be judged on the merits of his dismissal by President Truman

announced at a hurriedly called 1 00 am Press Conference in Washington to demonstrate, once the news of his ousting had leaked out, that he was being fired and giving him no time to resign. MacArthur heard about it on the radio on 11 April 1951 and only on the 12th did he read Truman's order "I deeply regret it becomes my duty as President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States military forces to replace you as Supreme Commander Allied Powers, Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command, Commander-in-Chief, Far East, Commanding General, US Army, Far East."

Initially with a wave of sympathy that engulfed MacArthur, it looked as if he might become the next President of the United States. Always a brilliant speaker his address to both Houses of Congress, with wild applause and frequent standing ovations, tore at the heart strings of America with his final peroration, "I am closing my fifty-two years of service....Old soldiers never die, they just fade away". But in the subsequent Congressional hearings, MacArthur had no answer to the testimony of the by then greatly respected Secretary of State, General George Marshall, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who said that to involve China as the focus of the struggle "would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy".¹⁵

The evidence is that MacArthur had acquired, by 1950, full blown hubris syndrome. The evidence that his Chief of Intelligence, General Charles Willoughby, subverted the intelligence about China's intention to enter the Korean war if American troops approached China's border and the massing of Chinese troops above the Yalu river is now incontrovertible.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Perret *Old Soldiers Never Die. The Life of General MacArthur* (Andrew Deutsch, 1996) p. 574

It is brilliantly described in the late David Halberstam's book on the Korean war¹⁶. Contempt for Truman and his Administration, contempt for the Joint Chiefs of Staff were the hallmark by then of MacArthur's mind frame. What MacArthur wanted Willoughby made true. MacArthur had told Truman that the Chinese were not going to cross the border, therefore, none of the intelligence that they had crossed in substantial numbers could be accepted. Years earlier General Marshall had spotted MacArthur's weakness. "My staff" MacArthur had begun. Marshall interrupted "You don't have a staff, General. You have a court." Joseph Alsop likened it in Tokyo to the court of Louis XIV, "I have always held that this sycophancy was what tripped him up in the end."¹⁷ For a man who had all his life prided himself on being a disciplined soldier it was a tragedy as great as any of the great Greek myths. His hubris had met in Truman a man ready to be his nemesis. All MacArthur was left with in retirement was the nostalgia for hearing again the sound of the bugles of his youth.

Curbing the narcissism and the hubris of leaders without them losing their other good characteristics has exercised many minds over the last few centuries. It is not just a subject that fascinated the ancients. John Adams in *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, written in August 1765, wrote about "a general knowledge among the people" which he believed meant "they have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefensible divine right to the most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge. I mean the character and conduct of their leaders".

¹⁶ David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter. American and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), p.373-382.

¹⁷ NEED DETAILS

Many people can recite Lord Acton's famous dictum "All power corrupts, absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely". But not many call recall another part of the letter written on 8 April 1887 to Mandell Creighton, author of a *History of the Papacy during the period of the Reformation*. In this Lord Acton also warns us to judge those who hold power by a higher standard than those who do not.

"I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption it is the other way, against the holders of power."

Narcissism haunts military commanders as it does political and business leaders. Narcissus was a boy who could not stop staring at his reflection in a pond from Ovid's epic poem, *Metamorphoses*, in the first century AD. Freud's use of the word, narcissism, tended to change throughout his life but it is all worth studying. In 1910 Freud wrote a psycho sexual biography of Leonardo de Vinci, a connection between the myth of Narcissus and the same sex love of the homosexual. In 1914 Freud in an important essay called "On Narcissism" wrote about primary and secondary narcissism. Primary was "a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature". In 1931 Freud described narcissism in a very short four page paper called *Libidinal Type* about the "normal" personality and defined his three normal types as erotic, obsessive and narcissistic. Most of Freud's writing is about personality types that are far from normal but his insights on personality within a normal framework are hugely significant. Then Erich Fromm wrote about a fourth normal personality type, the marketing personality, about people who adapt to the market, a phenomenon one might conclude of the latter part of the 20th Century, but it was present in ancient Greece along with hubristic traits and hubris linked to contempt. The erotic personality Freud named after Eros, which was one of the

Greek words for love. Erotics now dominate the caring professions, teachers, social work, mental health and nursing.