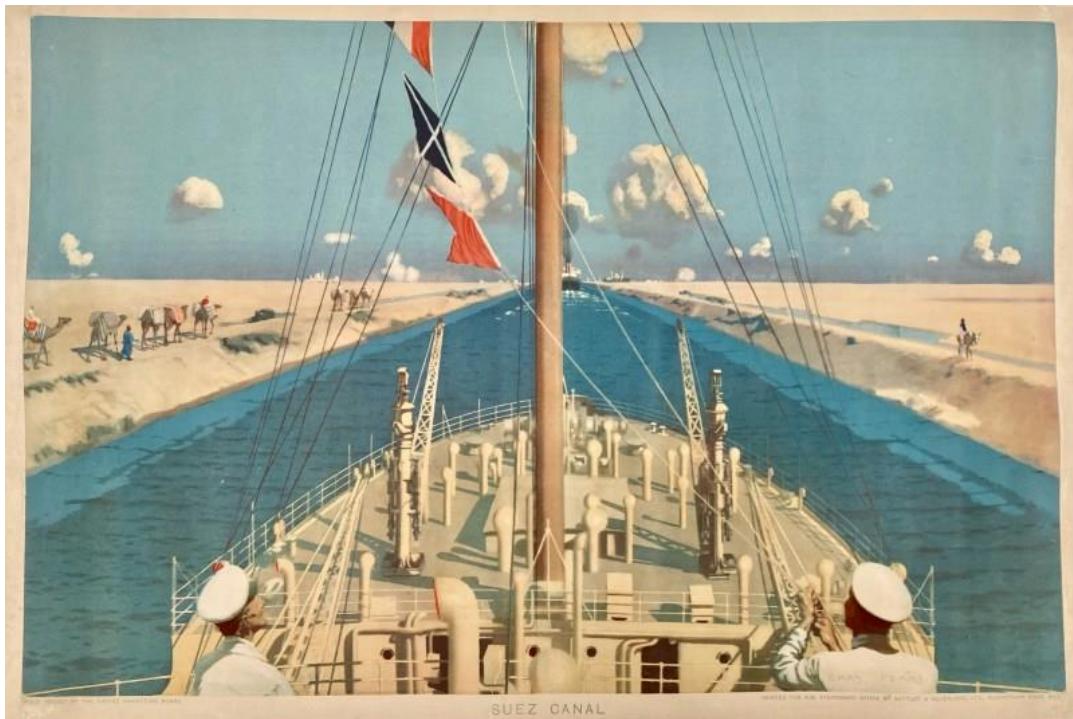


NORWICH SCHOOL

The British Empire

Part Two: Imperial Retreat, 1914-1967

AEW Grant & AP Curtis - 2024



AQA History A Level - Component One: Breadth Study

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The British Empire, 1857 - 1967

We live in a world that empires have made. Indeed, most of the modern world is the relic of empires: colonial and pre-colonial, African, Asian, European and American. Its history and culture is riddled with the memories, aspirations, institutions and grievances left behind by those empires. The largest if not the grandest of these was the empire laboriously assembled by the British across more than three centuries. No less than one quarter of today's sovereign states were hewn from its fabric. For that reason alone, its impact was second to none.

- John Darwin *Unfinished Empire*, 2012

Component 1: Breadth Study

What's assessed

The study of significant historical developments over a period of around 100 years and associated interpretations

Assessed

written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes

three questions (one compulsory)

80 marks

40% of A-level

Questions

Two sections

Section A – one compulsory question linked to historical interpretations (30 marks)

Section B – two from three essays (2 x 25 marks)

Specification: 1J The British Empire, c1857–1967

This option allows students to study in breadth issues of change, continuity, cause and consequence in this period through the following key questions:

- Why did the British Empire grow and contract?
- What influenced imperial policy?
- What part did economic factors play in the development of the British Empire?
- How did the Empire influence British attitudes and culture?
- How did the indigenous peoples respond to British rule?
- How important was the role of key individuals and groups and how were they affected by developments?

PART ONE: THE HIGH WATER MARK OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, C1857–1914

The development of Imperialism, c1857–c1890

- The expansion of the British Empire in Africa; the Suez Canal and Egypt
- Imperial and colonial policy; India's administration and defence; international relations, colonial policy and the scramble for Africa; informal empire
- Trade and commerce; the chartered companies
- The role and influence on attitudes to empire of explorers, missionaries, traders, colonial administrators
- Attitudes towards imperialism in Britain; the development of party political conflicts
- Relations with indigenous peoples; the Indian Mutiny and its impact; relations with Boers and Bantu peoples in southern Africa

Imperial consolidation and Liberal rule, c1890–1914

- The consolidation and expansion of the British Empire in Africa
- Imperial and colonial policy; the administration of India and Egypt; 'native policy'; international relations and colonial policy
- Trade and commerce
- The role and influence on attitudes to empire of: Joseph Chamberlain; Cecil Rhodes; colonial administration
- Imperialism: supporters and critics; National Efficiency; the British Empire and popular culture; representations of empire
- Relations with indigenous peoples; challenges to British rule; the Sudan; the causes and consequences of the Boer War

PART TWO: IMPERIAL RETREAT, 1914–1967

Imperialism challenged, 1914–1947

- Expansion and contraction of empire: the impact of the First and Second World Wars; the Mandates; withdrawal from India and the Middle East

- Colonial policy and administration in India, Africa and the Middle East; relations with the Dominions; the Statute of Westminster; imperial defence
- The development of trade and commerce; the economic impact of war
- The role and influence on attitudes to empire of: Gandhi, colonial administration
- Imperialist ideals; popular culture; representations of empire
- Relations with indigenous peoples; protest and conflict; colonial identity; the development of nationalist movements

The winds of change, 1947–1967

- Decolonisation in Africa and Asia
- British colonial policy and administration; the Suez Crisis and its impact; international relations; the Commonwealth
- Trade and commerce; post-war reconstruction
- The role and influence on attitudes to empire of: nationalist leaders, colonial administration
- Post-colonial political, economic and cultural ties; migration; the residual impact of empire; popular culture
- Relations with indigenous peoples; challenges to colonial rule in Africa and Asia; Mau Mau; the growth of nationalist movements and reactions to them; Rhodesia

Over the two years of the Sixth Form, we will cover the above specification according to the following structure:

- ❖ CHAPTER ONE - CONTEXT: THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN THE 1850S
 - ❖ CHAPTER TWO – BRITISH RULE IN INDIA, 1857 - 1914
 - ❖ CHAPTER THREE – BRITISH RULE IN AFRICA, 1857 - 1914
 - ❖ CHAPTER FOUR – BRITAIN AND THE EMPIRE, 1857 - 1914
- ❖ CHAPTER FIVE – THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE INTER-WAR PERIOD, 1914 - 1939
- ❖ CHAPTER SIX – THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE FIRST WAVE OF DECOLONISATION (1940s)
- ❖ CHAPTER SEVEN – THE SUEZ CRISIS AND RAPID DECOLONISATION (1950s – PRESENT)

Guide to essay writing at A-Level:

The essay is the basic form of expressing yourself as an historian. An essay is, essentially, an argument which argues a case in response to a specific question. It is not simply a factual account or a narrative of events.

1. Read The Question Carefully:

Read the question carefully and identify the key terms. Be clear what the question is asking you and note whether the question gives any dates that you need to focus on. The nature of the question can help you decide your structure.

2. Reading:

Once you understand the question, you then need to go through the information that might help you answer it. Look back through your notes carefully and pick out material that might be relevant. This might also be the time to do some selective reading if there are any gaps in your notes or areas you want to develop. As you read, always have the essay question in the back of your mind.

3. Planning:

Once you have all the material you need, you need to write a plan. Planning your essay is essential – you need to know what you are going to say and how you are going to say it before you start writing your final essay. This takes time and Sixth Formers are often reluctant to do it but it really helps to ensure that your final essay is effective. If necessary, you may need to do a bit more reading at this stage

4. Introduction:

Your introduction is one of the most important and complex parts of the essay. Your introduction should not set the scene (you are not writing a novel) but should directly address the question and set out what you are going to argue. You (and the reader) should know where the essay is going from the outset; the reader should be able to work out the essence of your argument simply by reading the introduction. In summary, an introduction needs to do the following things:

- Define the terms of the question and deal with any ambiguous terms/ concepts etc. – don't let the question push you around!
- Outline what the debate in the question is.
- Outline what you are going to argue in your essay.

5. Structure:

There is a range of ways of structuring an essay. However, there are two common approaches that you can often use at A-Level, depending on what the question is:

'Factors' Essay – this is often used in answering causation or consequence questions. The question will state a factor and ask you to consider how important it was. For example, the question could ask whether X was the most important cause of Y. You would need to consider the importance of X (the

stated factor) in your first paragraph, followed by a range of other factors in other paragraphs. (If you don't think X is the most important factor, your second paragraph should explain what is):

- Introduction
- First Paragraph – explain the importance of the stated factor
- Second Paragraph – explain the most important factor (if not X)
- Further Paragraphs – explain the importance of other factors
- Conclusion

'Two Sides' Essay – this is slightly more straightforward and can be used if the question asks you to assess the successes/ failures of something, or for other questions that simply offer a binary yes/ no answer:

- Introduction
- First few Paragraphs – deal with the points supporting one side of the argument
- Final few Paragraphs – deal with the points supporting the other side of the argument
- Conclusion

6. Paragraphs:

A paragraph should mark a stage in your argument and should itself be structured carefully. The most effective paragraphs have the following straightforward structure:

- Point – the first sentence (sometimes called a 'topic sentence') makes the point that the paragraph is making.
- Evidence – the next few sentences give detailed factual evidence to support the point the paragraph is making.
- Analysis – link the paragraph (the point) back to the overall question and explain the significance of the point you have made.

When planning your essay, it is often a good idea to write down the first sentence of each paragraph so that you have an outline – you can then develop each one later.

7. Conclusion:

This needs to sum up your overall argument and explain, in summary, how the different threads of your essay fit together. The conclusion needs to be consistent with your introduction and everything else that has gone before. At the top end, conclusions also help put the question into a wider context and hint at other questions that have been raised. Conclusions are difficult to write and you will improve as you move through the Sixth Form. Ensure, though, that you leave plenty of time to write your conclusion and don't rush it.

8. Proof Reading:

Once you have written your essay, proof read it to ensure that it makes sense and that the spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate. If necessary, ask someone else to help you.

Style Guide:

Clarity

This is the most important aspect of any piece of writing. If it is not clear what point you are making, the essay or paragraph needs rewriting. Reread sections that you have completed. If you are unsure what they mean, somebody else will be too. Ask other people to read sections and get them to explain back to you what they think you are trying to say. If they are unsure, you need to make some changes.

Precision

You need to ensure that you sound as though you know what you are talking about. To do this, you need to be precise in the points you make. For example, rather than saying 'British rule expanded in Africa over many years', be precise about the dates of his reign. Give dates, names and specific examples as much as you can.

Concision

Try to make your point in as few words as possible. Avoid tautology ('the ice was completely frozen') and don't try to 'pad' sentences out with superfluous words. In addition, don't try to sound clever by using long words when a perfectly good short one would do as this will affect the clarity of your writing.

Formality

Ensure that you always use formal English in your essay. Avoid slang and colloquialisms and also avoid hackneyed phrases ('The British bit off more than he could chew'). Certainly avoid gratuitous abuse ('Cecil Rhodes was a complete idiot') as this will detract from any serious analysis. In addition, avoid using contractions ('could have' rather than 'could've'). Avoid using acronyms that aren't in common currency (e.g. don't use 'S.F.A.' in place of the Scramble for Africa).

Avoid use of the first person

The first person makes the essay sound less formal and you can still express your own view without using it. For example: 'William Gladstone was largely motivated by moral concerns' is a clear expression of your view and there is no need to rephrase it as 'I believe that William Gladstone was largely motivated by moral concerns.' The former is obviously your opinion as you are the one writing the essay and making the argument!

Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation

Ensure that you check spelling, grammar and punctuation carefully. Don't just rely on spell check as this frequently gets things wrong (particularly when dealing with foreign names or words). In addition, check that you have capitalised all proper nouns. It is well worth asking a tolerant friend or parent to read your essay through to check it for any errors.

When to use quotations from historians in an essay:

- Don't just chuck them in for no reason or to pad out your paragraph. They need to serve a particular purpose.
- Avoid including quotations that just refer to factual information (unless it is particularly obscure and only that historian mentions it).
- Instead, you should look for the historians' opinions and arguments, whether they agree with your perspective or not.
- You can also include quotations when they put a point in a particularly pithy and memorable way.
- Try to keep quotations as short as you can
- Integrate quotations into the flow of your own writing – they should sound as if they naturally fit into your paragraph
- Think about whether a paraphrase of the historians' view would work better than a quotation
- Always reference a historian's view whether it is a quotation or a paraphrase to avoid plagiarism

Guide to answering interpretations questions:

The phrasing of the question will always be:

'Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these extracts are in relation to...[issue/ theme linked to a key question of the specification]'

- There will always be a range of interpretations.
- They will collectively cover a theme/ issue spanning a 20-30 year period (individual extracts may be more focused).
- Engage with each interpretation in turn – essentially three separate exercises.

Structure of answer/ analysis of each interpretation:

1. Comprehension:

- Identify in summary the overall argument – one point
- Points to identify the supporting points/ arguments that show how the author comes to their interpretation (you may incorporate these later as you seek to support or challenge the arguments)
 - 'The main argument of X is...'
 - 'X supports this claim by arguing...'
 - 'In addition, they argue...'

2. Challenge/ Corroboration using own knowledge:

- ❖ 5 points from your own knowledge that either corroborate or challenge the interpretation (or parts of the interpretation) given in the extract
 - 'X is most convincing in their claim that... because, from our contextual knowledge it is clear that...'
 - 'X wisely argues/ is astute to identify that...'
 - 'X is correct to identify that...'
 - 'X is correct to mention'
 - 'X's assertion that... is convincing because...'
 - 'However, what is less convincing about X's argument is...'
 - 'X neglects to mention...'
 - 'X could emphasise more...'
 - 'X is incorrect to emphasise...'
 - 'X is incorrect to suggest...'

3. Reach a judgement on the interpretation:

- 'Therefore, X's arguments are relatively (un)convincing, although their claim that... is perhaps too emphatic/ not emphatic enough. Overall, this is the most/least convincing argument of the three extracts.'

4. Repeat the process for the other two interpretations

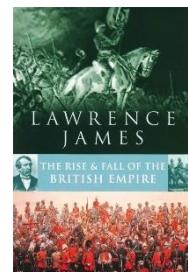
Bibliography:

At Sixth Form, you are expected to be more independent in your studies. A large proportion of your time should be spent reading around the subject to enhance and consolidate your knowledge. Indeed, if you are aiming for an A or an A* it is essential that you read widely and don't just rely on your basic textbook or the information you get in lessons. Fortunately, there is a wealth of excellent historical writing on the British Empire:

General academic surveys of the British Empire – asterisked books are ‘key texts’ - particularly recommended or required reading and there are multiple copies within the department.

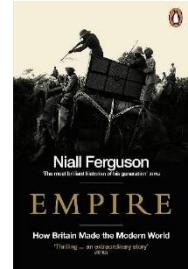
❖ ***Bernard Porter *The Lion's Share (5th edn.)* (Pearson; 2012)**

- An excellent narrative of Britain’s imperial story from 1850 to the present. Particularly good on explaining the international economic and geopolitical context.



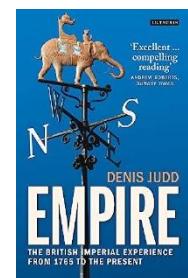
❖ ***Lawrence James *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus; 1995)**

- Covers the whole of the British Empire from c. 1600 – the latter sections will be more useful for this course. A good narrative with a focus on the domestic impact of empire in Britain, as well as events overseas.



❖ **Niall Ferguson *Empire* (Penguin; 2004)**

- A controversial book that accompanied a TV series. His central thesis is that British imperialism produced most of the concepts and values that shape the modern world – a positive gloss on the imperial story.

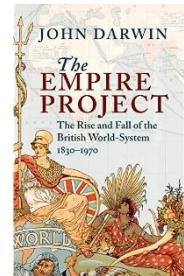


❖ **Denis Judd *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (IB Tauris; 2011)**

- An engaging narrative of the empire from the eighteenth century, taking as its structure a series of defining moments that convey the essence of the imperial period.

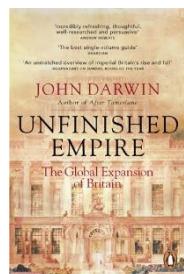
❖ John Darwin *The Empire Project* (Cambridge; 2011)

- A detailed look at the main components of empire from the 1830s to decolonisation. A key feature of this book is the importance it gives to the impact of Britain's geopolitical position.



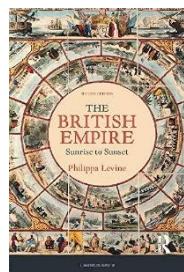
❖ *John Darwin *Unfinished Empire* (Penguin; 2013)

- A superb look at British imperial history from a thematic perspective. Darwin is excellent at identifying what is important in such a vast and potentially confusing topic.



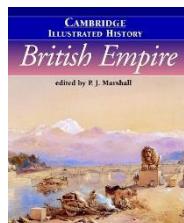
❖ Philippa Levine *The British Empire (2nd edn.)* (Routledge; 2013)

- A brief thematic look at key aspects of imperial history



❖ PJ Marshall *Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*

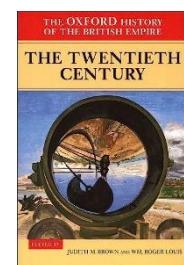
- A good narrative overview followed by chapters covering various important themes by different authors.



❖ *The Oxford History of the British Empire (volumes III and IV)*, edited by

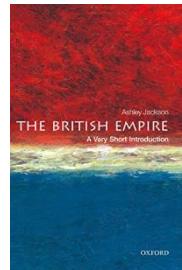
WM Roger Louis (Oxford; 2001)

- A collection of essays covering all aspects of the empire. Volume III focuses on the 19th century, while volume IV focuses on the 20th century. They are an essential companion for serious academic study of this topic.



[The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#) is available online through the school library and has accounts of the lives of all significant individuals covered in this course.

- ❖ Ashley Jackson ***The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction*** (Oxford; 2013)
 - Part of the Very Short Introduction series – this does what it says on the tin and gives a helpful orientation to the topic. Available online through the school library website.



More specialised texts:

The study of the British Empire incorporates the study of a very large number of countries in the world today. There are more specialist works available on India, or parts of Africa, as well as other regions. The history department and library have a selection of resources – please do ask Mr Grant for further details.

On wider context:

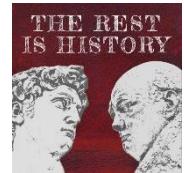
The following are useful if you want to broaden your knowledge of the period. If you are thinking of applying to read History at university, you might benefit from looking at the following:

- ❖ David Cannadine ***Victorious Century*** (Penguin; 2018)
 - An overview narrative of British history in the 19th Century
- ❖ Peter Clarke ***Hope and Glory*** (Penguin; 2004)
 - An overview narrative of British history in the 20 Century
- ❖ John Darwin ***After Tamerlane*** (Penguin; 2008)
 - A compelling account of the rise and fall of global empires since c. 1400 – an excellent introduction to world history

Podcasts:

Podcasts are a fantastic way to give you an overview or a greater understanding of unfamiliar topics. Some of the best are as follows:

The Rest is History: Historians Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbrook are interrogating the past, attempting to de-tangle the present for their new podcast "**The Rest Is History**". They question the nature of Greatness, why the West no longer has civil wars and whether Richard Nixon was more like Caligula or Claudius. They're distilling the entirety of human history, or, as much as they can fit into about thirty minutes.



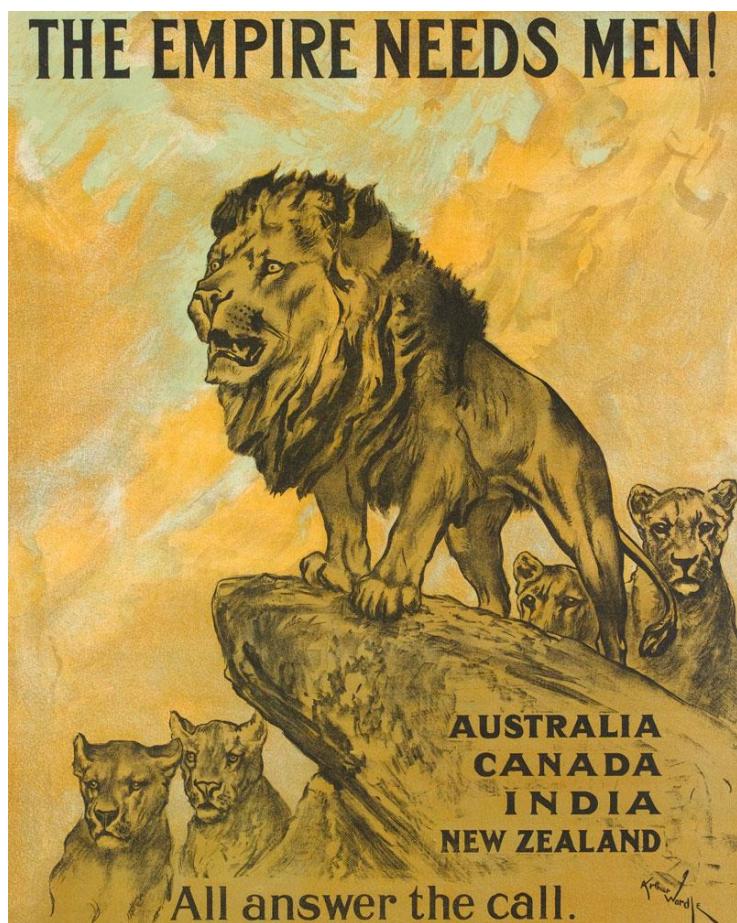
HistoryExtra podcast episodes are released every week, featuring interviews with notable historians on topics spanning ancient history through to recent British to American events. Episodes feature history stories and perspectives on everything from crusading knights to Tudor monarchs and the D-Day landings.

Empire: How do empires rise? Why do they fall? And how have they shaped the world around us today? William Dalrymple and Anita Anand explore the stories, personalities and events of empire over the course of history. The first series looks at the British in India, covering the East India Company, the Raj, Gandhi, Independence and Partition.



In Our Time (Radio 4): The legendary broadcaster, Melvyn Bragg, chairs a regular discussion about a matter of academic interest on Radio 4. The back catalogue is available as podcasts online – many of them have a historical theme and some, such as that on the Indian Mutiny, are directly relevant to our course.

5. The First World War and the inter-war period, 1914 – 1939



The First World War

Read:

- pp. 353-370 in James
- pp. 119-121 in AQA

The War:

Triple Entente (Britain, France, Russia + Italy (from 1915)) vs. Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary + Ottoman Empire)

British control of the seas remained strong – confirmed after the 1916 Battle of Jutland – blockade of Germany. However, unrestricted submarine warfare hugely damaged Britain's trade.

'Western Front' in Europe seen by many to be the main theatre of warfare BUT other theatres on the imperial periphery:

- In particular the British sought to exploit the 'soft underbelly' of the Central Powers, the Ottoman Empire:
 - Ottoman sultan/caliph declared *jihad* in an attempt to mobilise the British Empire's Islamic populations – limited impact
 - Egypt declared a Protectorate in 1914
 - Dardanelles/ Gallipoli (Ottoman Empire) – 1915 campaign
 - Campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine → Arab Revolt led by Hussain, sharif of Mecca & TE Lawrence → a 'scramble for Turkey' to establish areas of influence
- Campaigns against the German colonial empire:
 - Occupation of Togoland and Cameroon
 - South African invasion of German South-West Africa
 - Campaign against German East Africa
 - Australian occupation of German New Guinea
 - New Zealand occupation of Samoa

The Imperial contribution to the British war effort:

- Manpower:
 - Dominions contributed 1.3 million troops (conscription only in NZ and Canada) (Australia: 58,500 dead; Canada: 56,500 dead; NZ: 16,000 dead; Newfoundland: 1,281 dead)
 - Conspicuous examples of sacrifice: ANZACs at Gallipoli; Canadians at Vimy Ridge; Newfoundlanders at the Somme.
 - 1.4 million Indian troops mobilised – no conscription (48,000 dead) – most fought in the Middle East and Africa
 - 1.2 million Egyptians mobilised to fight in the Middle East

- Black Africans used as labourers and porters in Europe but Black troops fought for Britain in Africa.
- 1915 onwards – enlistment in West Indies (15,000 men)
- Racial beliefs and expectations shaped people's roles within the war effort
- Economic:
 - Dominion governments paid for their own armies and munitions
 - Indian government contributed £100 million to the war effort
 - Imperial Preference introduced to encourage economic self-sufficiency within the empire

Organisation of the empire for war:

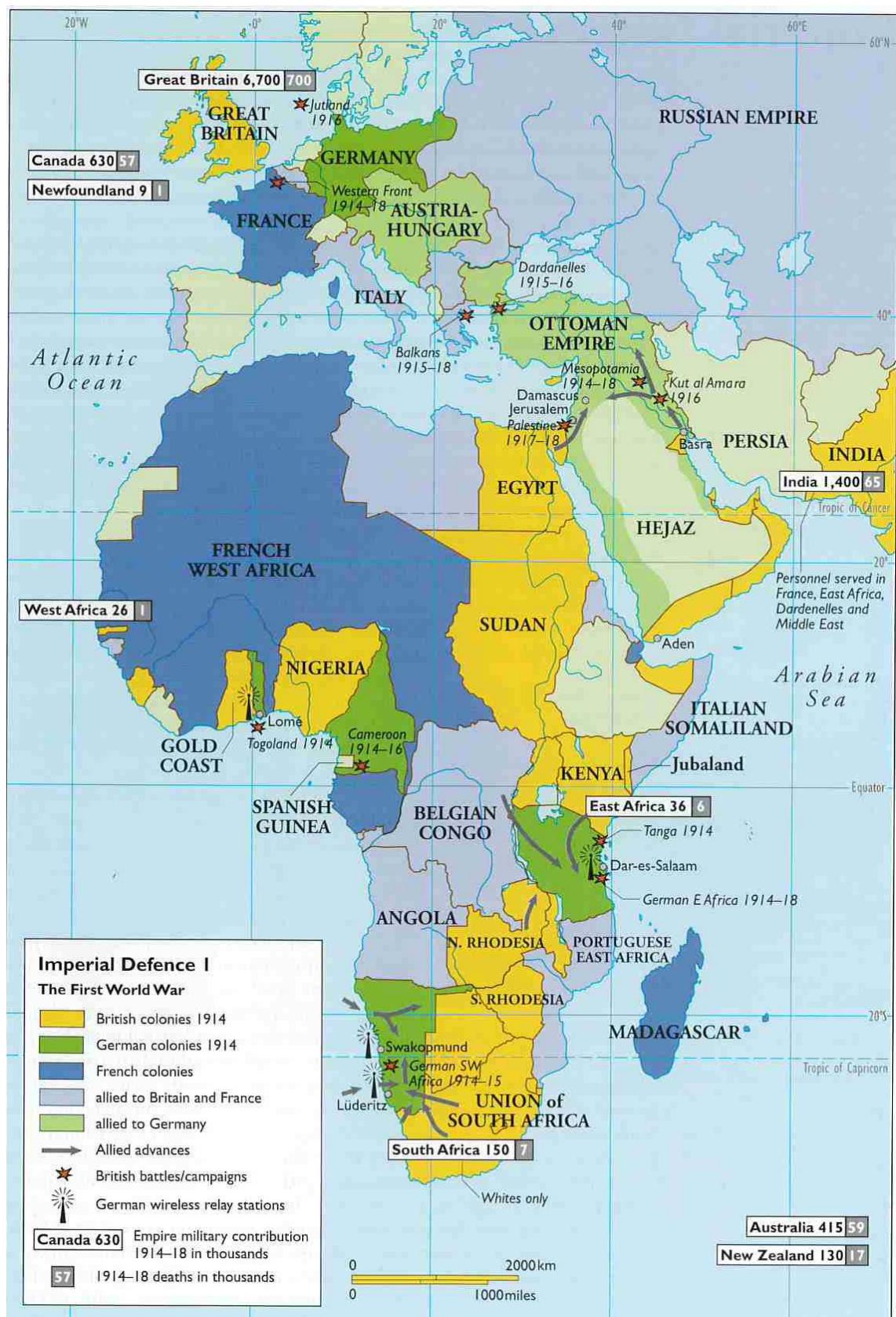
- Creation of coalition in 1915 and replacement of Asquith with Lloyd George in 1916
- Debates over conscription (controversial in Ireland, S Africa and Canada)
- Creation of Imperial War Cabinet from 1917 (inc. Jan Smuts from S Africa and other Dominion leaders)
- Joint Imperial command of the Armed Forces

The crucial watershed in the British conduct of World War I came, both at home and in the empire, with Asquith's replacement by Lloyd George in December 1916. While Asquith clung to the normal peace-time ways of running government, Lloyd George enjoyed addressing the emergency of war. It has been said that the new Prime Minister regarded the Dominions with a sympathetic eye; it might also be described as the hard, envious gaze of the recruiting sergeant. The Empire, in short, was to provide the resources for the more aggressive policy followed by the Lloyd George government. Before December 1916, Britain was at war, assisted by her empire; after December 1916, the empire was at war, arranged by Britain as the agreed leader among equal partners. In short, the empire came to play a much more important role in the war effort.

- Adapted from '**The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-18**' by Robert Holland,
The Oxford History of the British Empire: The 20th century, Judith M Brown and Wm Roger Louis (eds.) (Oxford; 1999)

What does Holland argue about the British Empire in the First World War?

- To what extent was the First World War an imperial conflict?
- What contribution did the empire make to British victory?



Key Individual: TE Lawrence

Read: ODNB entry by Lawrence James



- To what extent can Lawrence be seen as an imperial figure?

The Peace Settlement, 1919-23

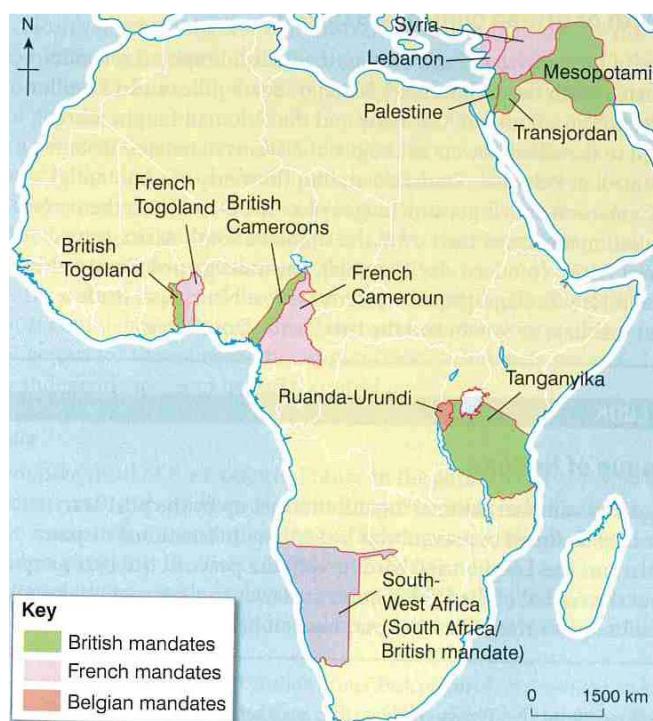
➤ Read: pp. 121-124 in AQA; pp. 371-385 in James

The Treaty of Versailles, 1919

- Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points – hostile to imperialism
- Constituent parts of the Empire (including India) represented at the peace conference
- Dismantled Germany's colonial empire: '**mandates**' of the **League of Nations** to be administered by allied powers:
 - 'B category' mandates: parts of Cameroon and Togoland, and Tanganyika to be directly administered by Britain
 - 'C category' mandates: New Guinea and Samoa to be administered by Australia and New Zealand; German South-West Africa to be administered by South Africa
- Germany disarmed and economically crippled → no longer a strategic threat to Britain in the foreseeable future

Treaties of Sevres and Lausanne, 1920-23

- Ottoman Empire abolished and replaced with new Turkish Republic in Anatolia
- Sykes-Picot Agreement divided Ottoman possessions in the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence:
 - 'A category' mandates: Palestine, Transjordan and Mesopotamia (Iraq) mandated to Britain; Syria and Lebanon mandated to France



➤ To what extent did the British Empire emerge strengthened from WWI?

Summary of outcomes of the First World War for the British Empire:

- Removal of strategic threat from Germany – Britain (together with France) remained the hegemonic power
- Expansion of territory and population (1,800,000 square miles and 13 million people)
- Dominance (with France) in the Middle East
- Greater imperial cooperation and trade
- Huge military power including the newly formed RAF

BUT

- Nearly a million dead from the whole empire
- Huge economic costs: (c. £35 billion = 13x costs of Boer War) + disruption to trade and investments; over \$4 billion borrowed from USA
- Growing confidence and autonomy of Dominions
- Rise of nationalism in India, parts of Africa and especially Ireland
- Conflicting promises of self-government to various people within the Empire
- Hostility towards European imperialism from the USA (Wilson's 14 Points)

1919 – a year of unrest:

- **Context:** Wilson's 14 Points and the promotion of nationalism and 'self-determination'
- **Context:** Fear of communism after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the establishment of Comintern in 1919
- **Context:** Mutinies against delayed demobilization and industrial strikes in the UK
- **Unrest:** Ireland, India, Egypt, W Indies, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan

It was arguable that the war had left the established order weakened and therefore vulnerable to the epidemic of protest and disorder that appeared in 1919. It was also politically convenient for defenders of that order to dismiss all assaults upon it as the products of a gigantic but ill-defined conspiracy. Doing so ruled out any suggestion that the assailants' grievances might be real or even justifiable. Such attitudes, usually combined with an intense fear of communism and its capacity to create mayhem everywhere, were prevalent among Britain's ruling class at this time. There was, therefore, a tendency, most common among soldiers, to classify dissidents of whatever complexion as either dupes or cunning men who manipulated the ingenuous and fundamentally decent masses to further their own ends. Such explanations of the causes and manifestations of discontent often made it difficult for politicians and commanders to examine their sources dispassionately.

- Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus; 1998)

What does James argue about official attitudes towards dissent in the aftermath of WWI?

There was an illusory quality to Britannia's victorious peace. True, the Empire had never been bigger. But nor had the costs of victory, by comparison with which the economic value of these new territories was negligible, if not negative. No combatant power spent as much on the war as Britain, whose total expenditure amounted to just under £10 billion. That was a steep price to pay even more a million square miles, especially as they generally cost more to govern than they yielded in revenue. The cost of running Iraq, to give just one example, amounted in 1921 to £23 million, more than the total UK health budget. Before 1914, the benefits of Empire had seemed to most people, on balance, to outweigh the costs. After the war the costs suddenly, inescapably, outweighed the benefits.

- Niall Ferguson, *Empire* (Penguin; 2003)

➤ Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to the position of the British Empire after the First World War.

The Bolshevik and Wilsonian declarations on national self-determination were accompanied by other intellectual and political trends related to world peace, international cooperation, universal suffrage, and women's rights. All of these emerged before or during, and merged decisively with the end of, the Great War. The war itself was decisive in the perceived destruction of the old world and the creation of the hopes and possibilities for a new one. After the cessation of hostilities, there was a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of the world and a renewed hope for its future prosperity. The destruction of the certainties, social stability, and hierarchies of the old world by the new post-Great War world, in Europe and elsewhere, was an enabling factor in creating a new perception of the world. An earlier, narrower set of knowledge and experiences of interconnection among Indian elites, soldiers or seaman (for it was the lascars who were the largest group of South Asian travellers across the world before the Great War), was far enlarged by the war.

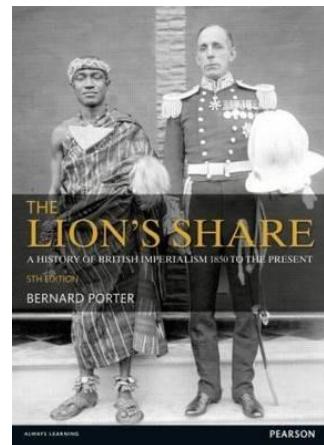
- Adapted from *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds and World Views, 1917-1939* by Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zacharia (eds.) (2015)

What does the above extract suggest about the challenges the British Empire now faced in the post-WWI world?

Reading Porter's *Lion's Share*

Chapter 8:

1. What role did colonial rivalries play in the causes of the Great War?
2. In what way were colonial campaigns during WWI a 'side-show'?
3. What opportunities did the war open up for the empire?
4. What idea of Joseph Chamberlain's was revived during the war?
5. Which 'school of imperialism' found themselves in a dominant position in government again by the end of the war?
6. What dangers did the war present to the empire?
7. Why did the war catch India at 'a tranquil moment'?
8. Why did the British have to make concessions to nationalism in India?
9. What did Edwin Montagu promise to Indians? What did the word 'dyarchy' mean?
10. What contradictory ideas about Indians did the war shape in many British minds?
11. Why, in the aftermath of the war, was the Montagu-Chelmsford report not going to be sufficient?



12. What did Britain promise to Egypt during the war?
13. What problems did the non-neutrality of the Ottoman Empire create?
14. What did Sir Henry MacMahon promise the Arabs in October 1915?
15. Why was the Sykes-Picot agreement an embarrassment to the British?
16. What did the Balfour Declaration of 1917 promise?
17. Why did they make this promise?
18. Why were all these promises deeply ambiguous?
19. To what extent were Britain's new 'mandates' treated differently from other existing colonies?
20. Why did the real challenge to Britain's imperial power come 'from within'?
21. Where in the empire were the British facing challenges after the war?
22. Why could the British Armed Forces not be maintained at wartime size after the war?
23. What happened in 1919?

24. How did the British resolve these problems in the Middle East?
25. What did the British retain control of?
26. What was the 'dual policy' that Britain implemented towards Indian and Irish nationalism?
27. How successful was this dual policy?
28. What was the solution for Ireland in 1921-22?
29. What effect did the war have on the culture and ethos of the younger generation of the British ruling classes?
30. How did the attitudes and morale of the Indian Civil Service change?

The emergence of nationalism

It must be questioned whether it is accurate to describe the various forms of opposition that the British faced in their numerous colonies as ‘nationalist’ at all. Nationalism is a largely secular ideology which spread throughout Europe over the course of the Nineteenth Century. The concept was predicated on the idea that a ‘national’ group had a unique identity with shared linguistic and cultural characteristics. A nation was an ‘imagined community’ and a focus of loyalty and affection. The implication of this was that these communities had a right to ‘self-determination’ and should not be ruled or dominated by any other national group.¹ Benedict Anderson has suggested that European-style national identities were created within the different colonies and highlights the role that imperial powers unintentionally played in developing this through their use of ‘census, map and museum’.² However, Eric Hobsbawm has argued that, ‘a profound conflict separated the modernisers who were also the nationalists (a very untraditional concept), and the common people of the third world’³ and that ‘the very concept of a permanent territorial political entity...i.e. the idea of an independent sovereign state which we take for granted, was meaningless to people.’⁴ Most ‘nationalists’ were highly educated elites (often western-educated) who were imposing a European concept of nationhood on their peoples. The fact that the borders of many modern African nations are those arbitrarily drawn up by nineteenth-century European diplomats is testament to the fact that these were communities imposed on Africa which bore little relation to pre-existing loyalties. Nigeria, for instance, possessed no intrinsic unity and cannot be said to have developed discernably ‘national’ characteristics by the time of independence in 1960; it contained an assortment of different religious communities and a collection of over 250 languages. Consequently, those who were termed ‘nationalists’ in the colonies were often a small minority that bore little relation to the mass movements seen in Europe, and what was labelled ‘nationalism’ was often little more than a diffused sense of resentment by the governed against the governors.⁵

Nationalists, therefore, had to seek support amongst more mundane grass-roots causes if they wanted any chance of achieving their aims.⁶ Arguably Gandhi’s greatest success in India was his marriage of modern, progressive, nationalist aims with traditional attitudes.⁷ However, building a common front against the British was often difficult as nationalists had to compete with other groups which were often religious or traditional in character.⁸ The Marxist-Christian-nationalist-pan-African Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast is an example of how even one individual could personally embody a cocktail of different, sometimes contradictory, ideologies. It is worth noting that, even in India where nationalism had a relatively long pedigree, the British did not face a monolithic independence

¹ The phrase ‘imagined communities’ comes from Benedict Anderson’s book of the same name (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (2nd Edition) (Verso, London, 2006). However, the phenomenon is also described in Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, 1992).

² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, chapter 10.

³ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (Abacus, London, 1995) p. 209.

⁴ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, p. 207

⁵ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1988) p. 171

⁶ John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1991) p. 88

⁷ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, p. 208

⁸ Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*, p. 101

movement. Rather, they had to consider the competing claims of Congress and the Muslim League as well as the situation of pre-existing indigenous elites (specifically, the semi-autonomous princes).

Within many of Britain's possessions the pressures the authorities faced from below were far less coordinated and can perhaps best be described with the more neutral term 'anti-colonial' rather than 'nationalist' which implies a shared ideology: 'there are a variety of nationalist movements behind what to the casual observer may seem like a single wave of nationalism, and these diverse groups are frequently seriously at odds.'⁹

That being said, it has been argued that European-style nationalism inevitably results in the undoing of empires, including that of the British. JR Seeley claimed in 1885 that 'the weakness of being a mere mechanical forced union of alien nationalities [had] brought down most empires'.¹⁰ More recently, Dominic Lieven has pointed out that the development of the national idea and the growing popularity of nationalism throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century seems to have proved fatal to the concept of empires: 'nationalism was the most powerful ideology of the day, empire stood irrevocably opposed to it, and the result was inevitable destruction'.¹¹ Put another way, 'Europe learned to imagine the nation from the tensions that emerged within its old empires and passed the imaginative possibility along to its new colonial conquests'.¹² This interpretation sees the British Empire simply crumbling in the face of nationalist movements everywhere.

AEWG

Reasons for growing nationalism in the inter-war period:

- Population growth → pressures on land
- Growing educated middle class imbued with Western ideas
- Religious revivalism (esp. Islam in Middle East)
- The spread of socialism (limited impact)

⁹ Tony Smith, 'A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonisation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 20, No. 1 (1978), p. 90

¹⁰ JR Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (quoted in Dominic Lieven, 'Dilemmas of Empire 1850-1918. Power, Territory, Identity', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1999), p. 179

¹¹ Lieven, 'Dilemmas of Empire', p. 196

¹² Frederick Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 5, (1994), p. 1540

The British generally held in contempt those who were displaced by the occupation of their lands. They were forced to negotiate with them in order to secure British interests, but they discounted leaders of political parties as self-serving troublemakers. Colonial societies, so the argument ran until at least the 1940s, we're not nations but collections of peoples; colonies were best administered by British rulers in collaboration with their natural leaders. Self-appointed nationalists were seen as a special interest group. Not only did British colonial administrations choose not to recognise the possibility of connections between sporadic protests, which they managed to subdue, and nationalist movements to which they were eventually obliged to transfer power, they also disparaged the significance of any kind of opposition (using terms like banditry or mutiny) and constructed a demonology of principle opponents. Winston Churchill sneered at Gandhi as 'the naked fakir', Sir Charles Arden Clark (governor of the Gold Coast) referred to Kwame Nkrumah as 'our local Hitler', and Sir Patrick Renison (governor of Kenya) called Jomo Kenyatta 'a leader unto darkness and death'.

- AJ Stockwell, 'Power, Authority and Freedom' (1996)

What is Stockwell's view of the British attitude towards protest and nationalism in the colonies?

Irish Independence

Read:

- p. 125 & pp. 168-169 in AQA
- 371-385 in James

1913 – **Third Home Rule Bill** passed → risk of civil war from resistance from Ulster Protestants → not implemented due to outbreak of WWI

1916 – **Easter Rising**, Dublin, against the delay to Home Rule

1918 – General Election returns majority **Sinn Fein** ('Ourselves Alone') rather than more moderate Irish Nationalist Party → declared an independent Irish republic and met as an independent parliament, the Dáil Éireann, in Dublin.

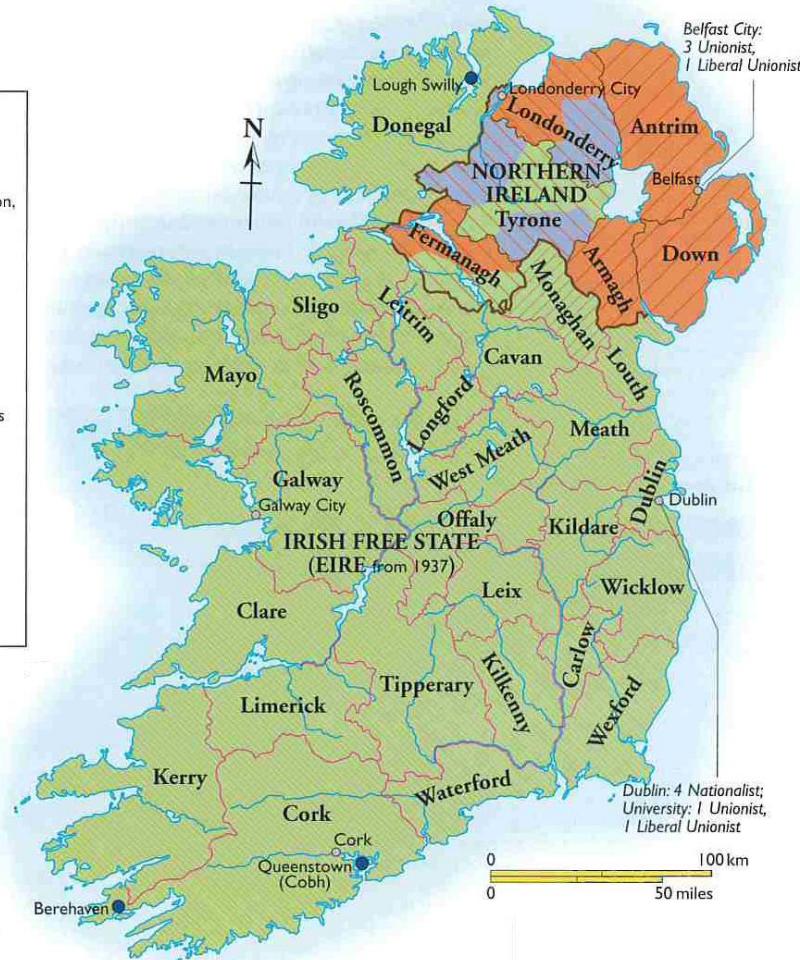
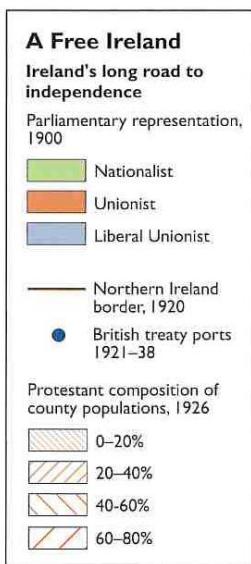
1919-21 – **Anglo-Irish War**: the Irish Republican Army (IRA) launched a guerilla campaign against British rule. The British recruited the '**Black and Tans**' to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary.

1921/22 – Anglo-Irish Treaty:

- The **Irish Free State** would become a self-governing dominion within the British Empire
- The British monarch would remain Head of State
- The northern six counties would have the option (which they took up) of remaining part of the United Kingdom and would have their own parliament at Stormont
- The British would retain control over several '**treaty ports**' for the use of the Royal Navy

Outcomes:

- Ireland partitioned between north and south
- **Eamon de Valera** (one of Sinn Fein's leaders) refused to accept the compromises of the Anglo-Irish treaty and launched the Irish civil war (1922-23) in which the pro-Treaty side won.
- Still unsatisfied, de Valera used the 1931 Statute of Westminster which granted dominions complete autonomy within the empire, to effectively separate Ireland completely. It was renamed **Eire** in 1937, remained neutral in WW2 and refused to let Britain use the treaty ports.
- In **1948 the Republic of Ireland Act** separated Ireland completely from the British Empire, declared it a republic and Ireland left the Commonwealth.
- Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom and, from 1969-1998 'The Troubles' saw sectarian conflict between the Catholic (nationalist) and Protestant (unionist) communities there.



- To what extent did Britain control the process of Anglo-Irish relations in 1918-23?
- Did Britain have any other options?
- What were the wider ramifications of Irish independence for the British Empire?

The Middle East, 1914-1939

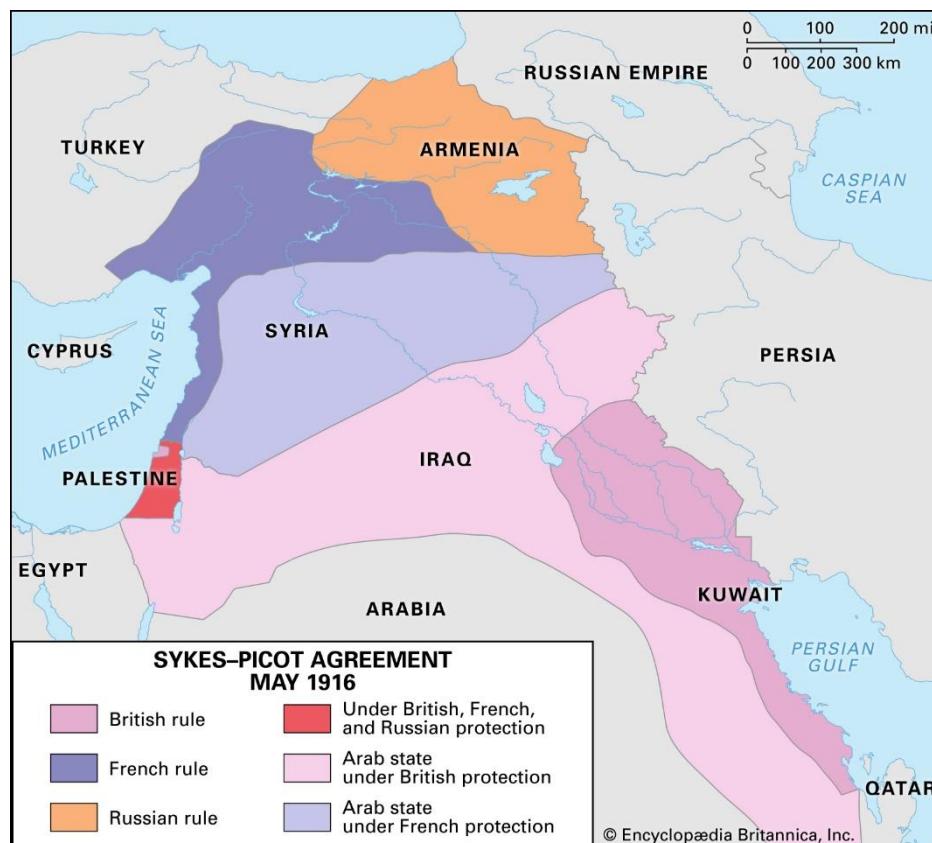
Read:

- Pp. 137-139 in AQA
- Pp. 386-394 in James (on Egypt) & pp. 395-411 in James (on the rest of the Middle East)

During the First World War the British, for short-term gain, had made several incoherent promises throughout the Middle East:

- Promises of Egyptian self-government
- Sykes-Picot Agreement with France
- Balfour Declaration, 1917
- The MacMahon Letter, 1915

Yet, the British also sought to become the hegemonic power in the Middle East. These conflicting ambitions and promises, combined with Britain's already overstretched commitments worldwide, made the British period of dominance in Middle East in the inter-war period extremely difficult.



- Why did the British seek to become/ remain the hegemonic power in the Middle East?
- How successfully did the British accommodate nationalism within their Middle Eastern empire?

Egypt

Continuing importance of Suez: 1920s, British-registered shipping accounted for c. ¾ of vessels. Also, strategic location considering rise of Italian and Japanese power during inter-war period. Plus, continuing importance of Egypt's cotton for Britain's industry.

Gamel Abdul Nasser (b. 1918): 'when I was a little child every time I saw an aeroplane flying overhead, I used to shout: "O God Almighty, may a calamity overtake the English."'

1918 – the *Wafd* (led by **Said Zaghlul**) appealed for Egyptian independence (Wilson's ideals of national self-determination). *Wafd* dominated by *effendiya* landowning class and professionals.

March, 1919:

- Lord Curzon (Foreign Sec.) – miscalculated and ordered a harsh response: leading members of *Wafd* arrested/ exiled
- → widespread unrest: riots and strikes in towns and sabotage of infrastructure.
- British showed much racial contempt towards the Egyptians: ruthless tactics including firing on crowds and using aircraft → 1,500 Egyptians killed in 8 weeks of fighting (comparisons with Indian Mutiny)
- General Allenby brought in to deal with the situation → concessions: *Wafd* leaders brought back from exile



1919, Milner Report – recommended conciliation

1922 – nominal 'independence' granted under King Fuad (anti *Wafd* and pro-British). Britain retained control over defence, the Canal, the Sudan etc.

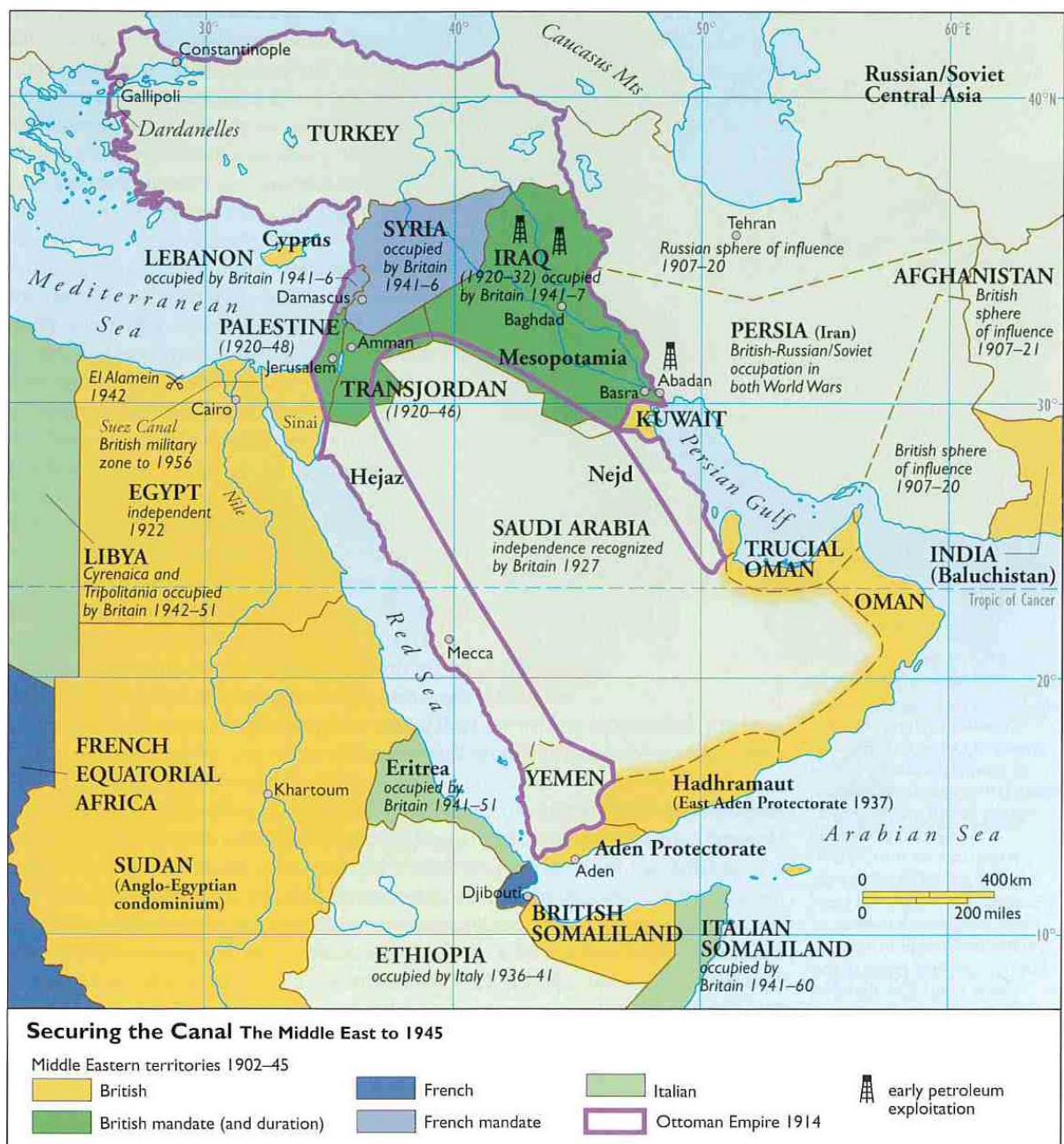
Wafd remained the dominant political group – appeals to patriotism gained support from poorer classes. Some terrorist cells on the fringes.

Nov 1924 – arguments over possession of Sudan → assassination of Sir Lee Stack, Governor-General of the Sudan, in Cairo.

1935 – *Wafd* organised a fresh wave of popular protest + pressures from Mussolini's expansionism in the Mediterranean → a settlement was needed.

1936 – Anglo-Egyptian Treaty – Full independence for Egypt but Britain still retained control of the Suez Canal zone and garrisons and RAF bases in Egypt, and the naval facilities at Alexandria (Context: fear of Italian aggression from Libya)

1939 – Egyptian government reluctant to declare war on Germany: King Faruq sympathetic to Axis → forced by the British in February 1942 to appoint Mustafa al Naha (*Wafd* leader) as Prime Minister – *Wafd* now sympathetic to the Allies. Egypt remained an important strategic location for the British Armed Forces during WWII.



Mesopotamia/ Iraq

Assumption that, like Iran, oil could be found in Mesopotamia

1919 – British administered mandate of the League of Nations – disappointing hopes from Arab nationalists

1919 and 1920 – revolts against British rule (esp. from the Kurds in the north) → Kurdish uprising crushed by British and Indian troops – high costs to Britain (£40 million) and brutal methods. Use of air power to maintain control – cheaper.

1921 – Cairo Conference

1922 – Anglo-Iraqi Treaty – Faisal I (Hashemite Dynasty) confirmed as king of Iraq – Britain retained control of foreign policy and defence and maintained armed forces in the country

1927 – Kirkuk oil fields open – run by Turkish Oil Company (Western financed)

1930 – Anglo Iraqi Treaty – consultation between Iraq and Britain on foreign policy but British mandate officially ended

1932 – full independence nominally granted – although Britain retained much influence through the dominance of the British oil industry + the RAF retained air bases in the country

1941 – British occupation of Basra in the south → Iraqi government asked for help from the Axis → six-week campaign to restore British rule over Iraq

Persia (Iran)

Spheres of influence agreed with Russia in 1907

Reza Pahlevi – British-backed Shah from 1920

Oil discovered in 1908. Drilling for oil began in 1909 (1919: 7.5 million barrels; 1934: 57 million barrels)

The *coup de main* against Iraq [in 1941] and the palace coup in Cairo nine months later were proof that, despite over twenty years of nationalist ferment, British power in the Middle East was still firm. Both were, however, exceptional measures, undertaken in the face of dire emergencies by a country fighting for its life. This was not how it looked to Egyptians and Arabs. Each display of force left a deep sense of bitterness and frustration because it had amply demonstrated the victims' powerlessness. Britain was still the dominant power in the region and would go to any lengths to get its way there.

- Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus; 1998)

Palestine and Transjordan

1897 – creation of the World Zionist Organisation by Theodor Herzl – a form of nationalism in response to antisemitism in Europe

1917 – Battle of Jerusalem – the city falls to British forces (led by General Allenby) – a key possession to safeguard the eastern Mediterranean and the approaches to Suez

1917 – Balfour Declaration:

His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

1919 – Palestine and Transjordan become British administered mandates under the League of Nations. Herbert Samuel – British High Commissioner in Palestine.

1921 – Transjordan separated from Palestine under rule of King Abdullah (brother of Feisal in Iraq). Palestine remained under the control of the Colonial Office.

Jewish migration to Palestine increases overall Jewish population:

- 1918: 60,000 (6.8% of the population)
- 1931: 175,000 (17.7% of the population)



Inter-communal tensions grow between Arabs and Jews, esp. over Jewish purchasing of land

- Anti-Jewish demonstrations in 1920, 1921 and 1929 – nearly 900 Jewish settlers killed or wounded
- 1929-31 – attempts to curb Jewish land acquisition (unsuccessful)
- 1933 onwards – Jewish migration accelerates after Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany
- 1936 – **Arab Revolt** begins → 20,000 British troops sent to Palestine to deal with growing disturbances
- 1937 – Peel Report recommended partition and a reduction in Jewish migration – rejected by both sides
- 1937-9 – growing repression to deal with unrest which restored public order by 1939
- 1939 – White Paper proposals: Jewish immigration restricted to 25,000 per year to ensure Arabs remained in a majority – plans for an independent unified Palestinian state in ten years
- BUT: during WWII 215,000 Jews fled to Palestine from Europe
- Formation of the Haganah and terrorist organisations such as the Stern Gang to defend and assert Jewish rights
- Growing Arab sympathy for Mussolini and Hitler as challengers to British hegemony



Left, Arab women protest in 1930 against the continuing British mandate. Right, Jews protest against the 1939 White Paper.

Africa, 1914-1939

Read:

- pp. 136-137 in AQA (on economic development) & pp. 175-176 in AQA (on developing nationalism)

1919 – acquisition of German territory in Africa: parts of Togoland and Cameroon; Tanganyika; South-West Africa – ruled as League of Nations mandates

Development of Britain's African colonies:

- Non-settler colonies:
 - Limited economic and social development
 - Colonial Development Act, 1929
 - Impact of the Great Depression
- Settler colonies (S Africa, Kenya, Rhodesia):
 - Kenya – settler self-government (from 1919) and dominance → impact on Kikuyu people → Devonshire Declaration of 1923 – potential for ‘Great White Dominion’ in 1920s
 - Southern Rhodesia – settler self-government from 1923
 - South Africa – growing dominance of Afrikaners after 1910 → remaining tensions between pro-imperial faction and republican Afrikaner faction. Jan Smuts dominant figure. White dominance (and marginalization of non-white populations) assured after 1931 Statute of Westminster.
- Africa never more than 3% of British export market in this period. Limited investment in African colonies

The emergence of nationalism in Africa:

- Context: artificial borders + British use of indigenous hierarchies → nationalism slow to form in Africa
 - West Africa:
 - Limited African representation in legislative councils but dominated by appointed traditional elites rather than elected nationalists
 - 1919 – National Congress of West Africa founded in Accra – dominated by educated middle classes from the Gold Coast
 - 1925 – West African Students’ Union founded – Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah early members
 - East Africa:
 - Kikuyu resistance to white settlers in Kenya – Harry Thuku – Young Kikuyu and the East African Association (1921). Joined by Jomo Kenyatta in 1922
 - Impact of Italian invasion of Abyssinia, 1935-6
-
- To what extent did the British develop their colonies in Africa?
 - To what extent was nationalism a significant threat during the inter-war period?

India, 1914-1939

In 1931 Britain officially opened its new capital of India, New Delhi. This was an enormous planned city designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. Built near the site of the old Mughal capital, it was designed to demonstrate the permanence and stability of British rule. At the centre of the city was the vast Viceroy's House, an enormous structure covering four and a half acres, with 285 rooms. It had 6,000 staff and 400 gardeners, fifty of whom were solely employed to chase birds away. On the North Secretariat building were inscribed the condescending words: 'Liberty will not descend to a people: a people must raise themselves to liberty; it is a blessing which must be earned before it can be enjoyed.' Allegedly the bells ornamenting the Viceroy's House were made of stone so that they could never ring to mark the end of the British Raj. The British would only occupy this capital for 16 years and it has spent most of its existence as the capital of the independent Republic of India.



- Read: pp. 134-135 & 169-171 in AQA; pp. 412-427 in James

1914-18 – India made a significant financial and military contribution to the First World War:

- 500,000 extra soldiers
- £100 million

Introduction of protectionism to raise taxes (11% on imports in 1917 → 25% on imports in 1931)

1917 – **Montagu Declaration** – ‘responsible government’ within the empire

1919 – **Government of India Act (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms)** – ‘dyarchy’:

- Viceroy and British officials retained responsibility for reserved areas such as defence and foreign policy
- Legislative Council – bicameral legislature, part-elected, part-appointed with the right to be consulted
- Significant areas devolved to 11 Provincial Councils run by elected Indian ministers – responsible for local government, education, healthcare, agriculture etc.
- Franchise held by a small minority of Indians

1919 – **Rowlatt Act** – harsh powers to arrest and imprison nationalists

6 April 1919 – Gandhi inspired a nationwide *hartal* to protest against the Rowlatt Act → riots, especially in the Punjab

13 April, 1919 – **Amritsar Massacre**: (379 killed according to the British/ over 1,000 according to the INC)

‘1919 was a turning point in the history of India and Amritsar was the pivot’ - James

Dyer thought any act of retreat would quickly cause the Raj to unravel. For him, British power in India was based on conquest, and conquest could only be maintained if violence was continually asserted against the population which could quickly turn into a mob. Any kind of equality entailed a dangerous lack of respect for India's conquerors. After a crisis, such as those of 1857 or 1919, authority could only be restored if Indians were forced to submit themselves, sometimes humiliatingly, before their masters. Any Indian passing along the street where the missionary Miss Sherwood had been attacked was commanded by Dyer to crawl on their bellies. Dyer's response to riots in Amritsar was a retaliation to an existential challenge. The way of life he had been brought up in was wrapped up with the idea of Indian obedience to British commands. If those commands were not obeyed, Dyer would not be able to consider himself a dignified human being. When asked why he did not just shoot to disperse the crowd, Dyer said that ‘the people who gathered would all come back and laugh at me’. Without the killing he said, ‘I considered I would be making myself a fool’.

- **Jon Wilson, India Conquered (2016)**

1920 – Gandhi launches **Non-Cooperation Movement** - to challenge the ethical basis on which the Raj rested – aim for *Swaraj* (self-government)

1922 – **Chauri Chaura incident** – 22 policemen killed → Gandhi called off the non-cooperation

1929-30 – **Simon Commission** – recommended further devolution of responsibilities to Provincial Councils and the creation of a federal system of government

1930 – Gandhi's **Salt March** to Dandi & **Civil Disobedience Movement**

1930 & 1931 – **Round Table Conferences** in London – discussions between the British Government and the Indian National Congress → rejected self-governing dominion status for India

1932-34 – **Civil Disobedience Movement**

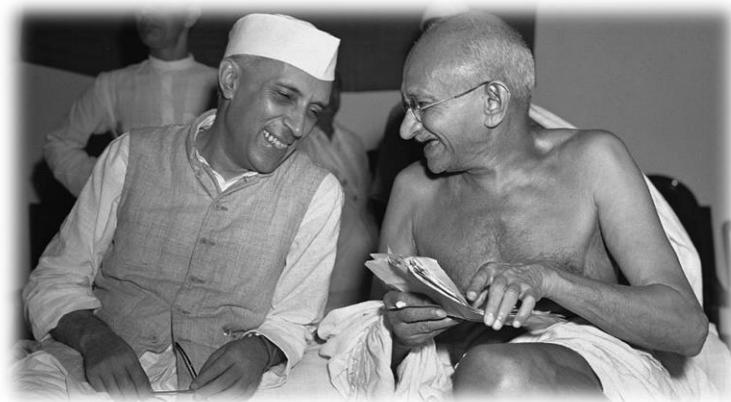
1935 – **Government of India Act** – ‘Federation of India’:

- Provinces became self-governing (although retained a British governor)
- Franchise extended from 7 million to 35 million people
- Rejected by Congress who sought full dominion status and by the Princely States who feared a loss of their autonomy

1936-7 – Elections to the provincial legislatures contested by Congress – these also revealed that India's Muslims were turning away from Congress

1939 – Viceroy declared war on behalf of India. Members of Congress-controlled ministries resigned in protest. Direct rule imposed throughout WW2.

Growing divisions between the Hindu dominated Indian National Congress (led by **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Mohandas Gandhi**) and the All India Muslim League (led by **Muhammad Ali Jinnah**)



- How successfully did the British deal with growing nationalism in India?
- How strong was the nationalist movement in India?
- Was independence inevitable by 1939?

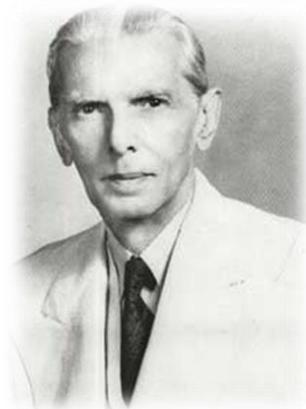
Motilal Nehru (1861-1931) & Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)

- [Read ODNB entries by S Gopal](#)



Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948)

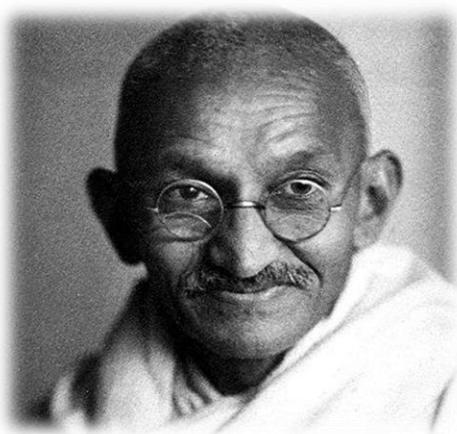
- [Read ODNB entry by Francis Robinson](#)



Key Individual: Gandhi (1869-1948)

Read: pp. 153-156 in AQA

- Background and legal training in Britain
- South Africa: 1893-1913
- 1915 – return to India – joins Indian National Congress
- Impact of the Amritsar Massacre, 1919
- Non-Cooperation Movement, 1920
- Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-31 & 1932-34
- Quit India Movement, 1942
- Opposition to violence, *satyagraha*
- Gandhi's vision for India and dismay at partition
- Assassination in 1948



- How significant was Gandhi to the Indian nationalist movement?

Rather than being ignorant of the need to wield political power, Gandhi sought to exercise it in ways which maximized Indian strength and weakens that of the British. By withdrawing the cooperation and obedience of the subjects, Gandhi sought to cut off important sources of the ruler's power. At the same time, the non-cooperation and disobedience created severe enforcement problems. In this situation, severe repression against non-violent people would be likely not to strengthen the government, but to alienate still more Indians from the British Raj and at the same time create not unity in face of an enemy, but dissent and opposition at home. This was a kind of political judo which generated the maximum Indian strength while using British strength to their own disadvantage. The view that Gandhi was ignorant of the realities of political power and that his methods of resistance were ineffective would have been vigorously denied by every British government and Viceroy that had to deal with him and his movement.

- Adapted from '**Gandhi's Political Significance Today**' by Gene Sharp

Gandhi's beliefs and methods were ultimately failures. Most of his Congress colleagues accepted non-violence as a political tactic against the British Raj, but they did not believe in it as a way of life. Gandhi's philosophical writings on non-violence were often dismissed as ideas too lofty for ordinary mortals. During the Second World War, Congress rejected Gandhi's talk of defending India non-violently against the Japanese. Gandhi wrote about the duties of the citizen and the state, but said little about the political structure of an independent India. He believed in decentralising power as much as possible; India would remain primarily a rural society with its base in agriculture and with minimal industrialization. These ideas made little impression on the framers of the Indian constitution. In 1947, little heed was paid to the Gandhian approach to government.

- Adapted from *In Search of Gandhi: Essays and Reflections* by BR Nanda (2004)

Gandhi's own people tormented him even as he brought them to the threshold of freedom. The worst of these torments was the failure of nonviolence. Shocked by the outbreak of communal violence on the eve of independence, Gandhi set about reflecting on how 30 years of non-violent struggle could have produced such violence. The answer he came up with was that the struggle had never been non-violent. It had been passive resistance, which is non-violence of the weak. As non-violence of the weak, passive resistance is always a preparation for violence. Afraid of British reprisal, Indians had kept repressed within them the violence they had felt all along. That long repressed violence is what had erupted the moment the fair of the British was gone.

- Sudhir Chandra, *Gandhi: An Impossible Possibility* (2020)

The Mahatma's movement of non-violent resistance, with its mass following and universal claims, its toleration of violence and the explicit desire for suffering, must surely be placed alongside the great revolutionary movements of his time. For in many ways, Gandhi belongs in the same group as his contemporaries, Lenin, Hitler and Mao, and should not be seen as a moralist detached from the mainstream of twentieth-century politics. Such an appreciation of his nonviolence allows us only to ignore Gandhi as a figure central to modern history. Yet unlike the last century's impresarios of mass politics, the Mahatma did not simply tolerate violence as a means towards some end but famously prized the suffering it produced in its own right. And this made Gandhi's dealings with violence far more radical than those of his revolutionary peers, responsible though they might have been for much more of it than the old man in the loincloth.

- Adapted from Fasial Devji, *The Impossible Indian* (2012)

When Lord Irwin [British Viceroy between 1926 and 1931] and his British advisers learned the specifics of the [Salt March] plan, they found the idea ridiculous, with Irwin writing 'at present the prospect of a salt campaign does not keep me awake at night.' The British press saw [Gandhi's] plan as 'childishly theatrical' and they hoped that the movement would die out if it was ignored. Such attitudes demonstrated a sense of detachment from the quotidian lives of ordinary Indians. No concessions were forthcoming, so plans were made for the Salt March. Firstly, the route needed to be mapped, so some of Gandhi's trusted followers were tasked with this. They wanted the Salt March to go through villages where Gandhi could promote sanitation, personal hygiene and abstention from alcohol, as well as the end of child marriages and untouchability. In addition, correspondent and newspaper agencies from dozens of Indian, European and North American newspapers, along with film crews, descended upon India to bear witness to the drama and began covering the event. This clearly indicates how Gandhi had become a master of media and stage management, directing his *satyagraha* with precision. He had drawn lessons from previous protests he had initiated, and was determined to set the scope, and prescribe methods and intended outcomes.

- Adapted from *Mohandas Gandhi* by Talat Ahmed (2019)

- ESSAY: 'The British relied mainly on coercion to maintain their control of India in the period 1918-1939.' Assess the validity of this view.

ESSAY: To what extent was the British Empire threatened by nationalism, 1918 – 1939?

Trade and Commerce, 1914-39

- **Read: 144-149 in AQA**

The British had to ask themselves: what advantages did they desire or expect to obtain from their Empire? What devices would they adopt to ensure such benefits? During the twentieth century the British had to make a choice between economic systems: one based on free trade between all countries, and the other concentrating on its trade with the Empire. Before 1914 the dominant view was that the Empire was a particularly valuable part of the international economy, but that no attempt must be made to increase its value artificially. The First World War weakened this consensus, largely because of the huge economic and military contribution the Empire made to the British war effort. But after 1919, the old pre-1914 attitudes returned. It was not until after 1929, in the crisis of the Depression, that the Empire was again seriously treated as an essential prop to the British economy. Finally, the much greater crisis of the Second World War and its aftermath raised imperial expectations to their highest level.

- DK Fieldhouse, *The Metropolitan Economics of Empire* (1999)

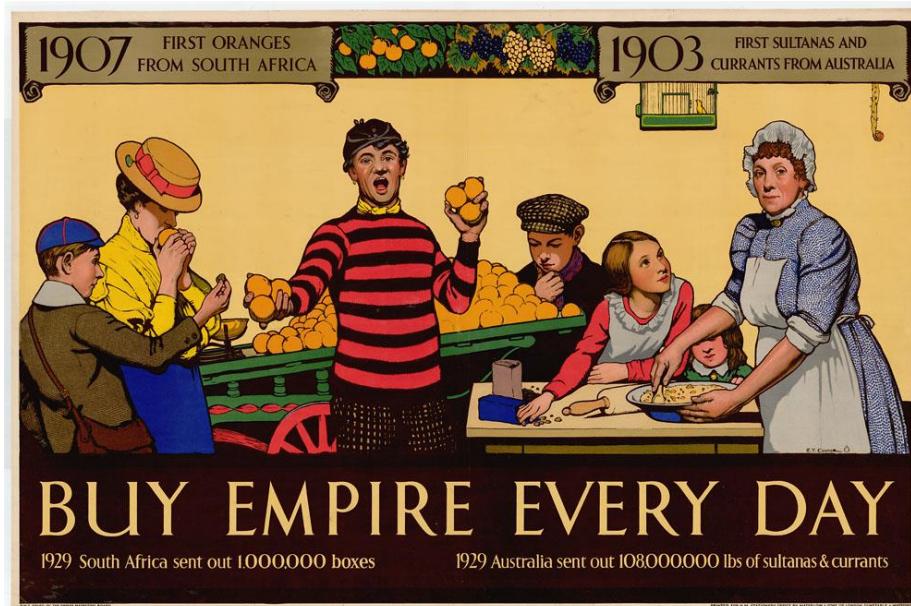
- **What does Fieldhouse argue about changing British attitudes towards economics and the empire in early 20th century?**

The economic impact of the First World War

- Costs of war: over £35 billion (13 x the costs of the Boer War) - \$4 million borrowed from the USA
- Sale of overseas investments to pay for the war
- Production focused on armaments + disruption to trade → exports damaged
- Imperial Preference introduced between Britain and Dominions
- Britain forced off the gold standard

The economic situation between the wars

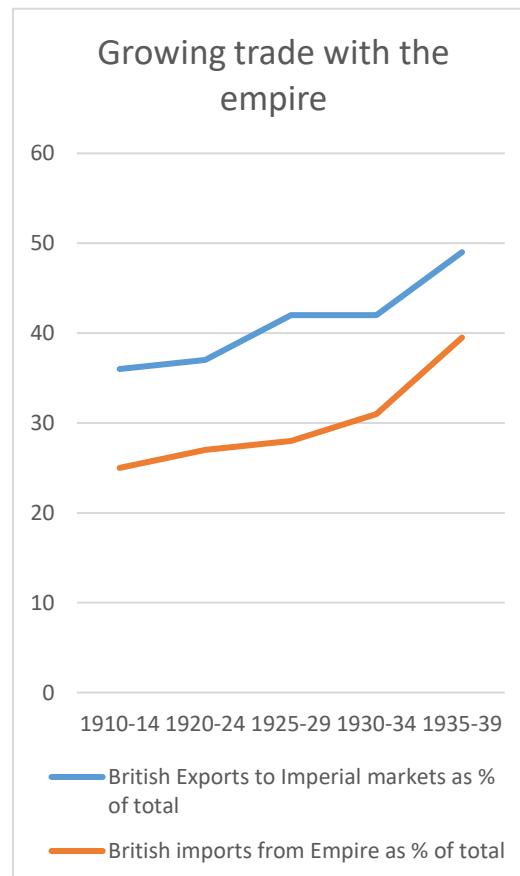
- Increasing competition from other countries in Britain's traditional industries (e.g. competition from Japan in textiles)
- Growing costs of imperial defence and colonial policing
- Decline in agricultural prices in 1920s: damaging for many colonies' terms of trade
- 1920s: return to free trade policies
- 1925: return to the gold standard
- Promotion of imperial trade (Empire Marketing Board, 1926-33)
 - Yet, of 2,400 lorries bought in 1926 in the Gold Coast, only 139 were British made
- Colonial Development Act, 1929 – investment in tropical colonies



Impact of the Great Depression:

- Unemployment at 3 million (20%) by 1931 → $\frac{1}{2}$ the national budget went on welfare payments in 1931
- Britain's older, traditional industries found it difficult to recover
- Collapse of international trade
- Britain forced off gold standard
 - creation of the **Sterling Area** and an implementation of **Imperial Preference** (Ottawa Conference, 1932)
- Britain introduced a 10% tax on imports from outside the empire
- Preferential tariffs between Britain and the dominions
 - Even so, 93% of cotton goods sold in British East Africa in 1938 came from Japan

	1910-14	1920-24	1925-29	1930-34	1935-39
Exports to imperial markets as % of total	36%	37%	42%	42%	49%
Imports from empire as % of total	25%	27%	28%	31%	39.5%



Although Britain suffered in the world slump that began in 1929, she was far less affected than her rivals, including the United States, whose global economic influence shrank rapidly. Indeed, it is important to remember that Britain was the only truly world power of consequence in the 1930s... The overriding purpose of British policy, within the Empire and beyond it, was to restore or enhance her financial influence. This priority gave direction and momentum to important decisions on international policy, from the Ottawa agreement to appeasement; it shaped Britain's other dealings with the dominions and the colonies; and it dominated her aims in South America and China. In pursuing these goals, Britain showed a degree of energy and agility that is hard to reconcile with the view that, by the close of the 1930s, she had become an elderly and arthritic power.'

- Adapted from *British Imperialism* by PJ Cain and AG Hopkins (2001)

What do Cain and Hopkins argue about the Britain's economic position in the 1930s?

By 1933 the sterling area was central to Britain's international economic policy. The Treasury and the Bank of England saw it as the best means of restoring Britain's international trade position and salvaging a world role for sterling and the City of London from the wreckage of 1931. The sterling area was far more than an emergency arrangement in a crisis. It appeared to offer the chance to reclaim some of the global power lost to Britain during and since the war. Optimism about the sterling area was widespread. Officials at the Bank of England anticipated that the gold bloc centred on France would disintegrate and provide new recruits for the sterling area. Once leading financial journalist claimed that London had already recovered her old financial supremacy, and the complete restoration of her role as the world's leading banking centre was only a question of time. Many in London believed in the early 1930s that the sterling area would enable Britain to recover its former financial glory.

- PJ Cain, 'Gentlemanly Imperialism at work' (1996)

Economic Decline? – percentage share of world manufacturing

	1929	1932	1937	1938
USA	43.3	31.8	35.1	28.7
USSR	5	11.5	14.1	17.6
Germany	11.1	10.6	11.4	13.2
UK	9.4	10.9	9.4	9.2
France	6.6	6.9	4.5	4.5
Japan	2.5	3.5	3.5	3.8
Italy	3.3	3.1	2.7	2.9

ESSAY: To what extent did Britain's economic relationship with its Empire change during the years 1914 to 1939?

Britain and the Empire

- Read: 428-450 in James; pp. 161-167 in AQA

Changing political context:

- Representation of the People Act, 1918 – all men and most women over 30 could vote. Britain now largely democratic. (Equal Franchise Act, 1928)
- ‘The Strange Death of Liberal England’ (G. Dangerfield) – decline of the Liberal Party in 1920s
- Rise of the Labour Party: minority governments (Jan- Nov 1924 & 1929-31)
- Era of Conservative dominance (Coalition, 1918-22; Majority, 1922-24; Majority, 1924-29; National Government, 1931-39) – Stanley Baldwin the dominant figure (right)



The Empire in British Politics

- Imperial matters pushed to the background – cross-party agreement on most issues (e.g. Government of India Act, 1935)
- Key individual: **Leo Amery**, Colonial Secretary, 1924-29 – emphasis on imperial consolidation and development
- Exception: a faction of the Conservatives (Churchill) who were very hostile to any relaxation of imperial control (Churchill’s description of Gandhi as ‘a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a faqir of a type well-known in the east.’)

Government and official promotion of the empire

- Empire Marketing Board, 1926
- British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924-5 – 26 million visitors
- British Empire Exhibition, Glasgow, 1938 – 12 million visitors – the empire as modernity
- Public Service Broadcasting – BBC (est. 1923) – imperial ethos (esp. World Service)
- SOAS, founded 1917

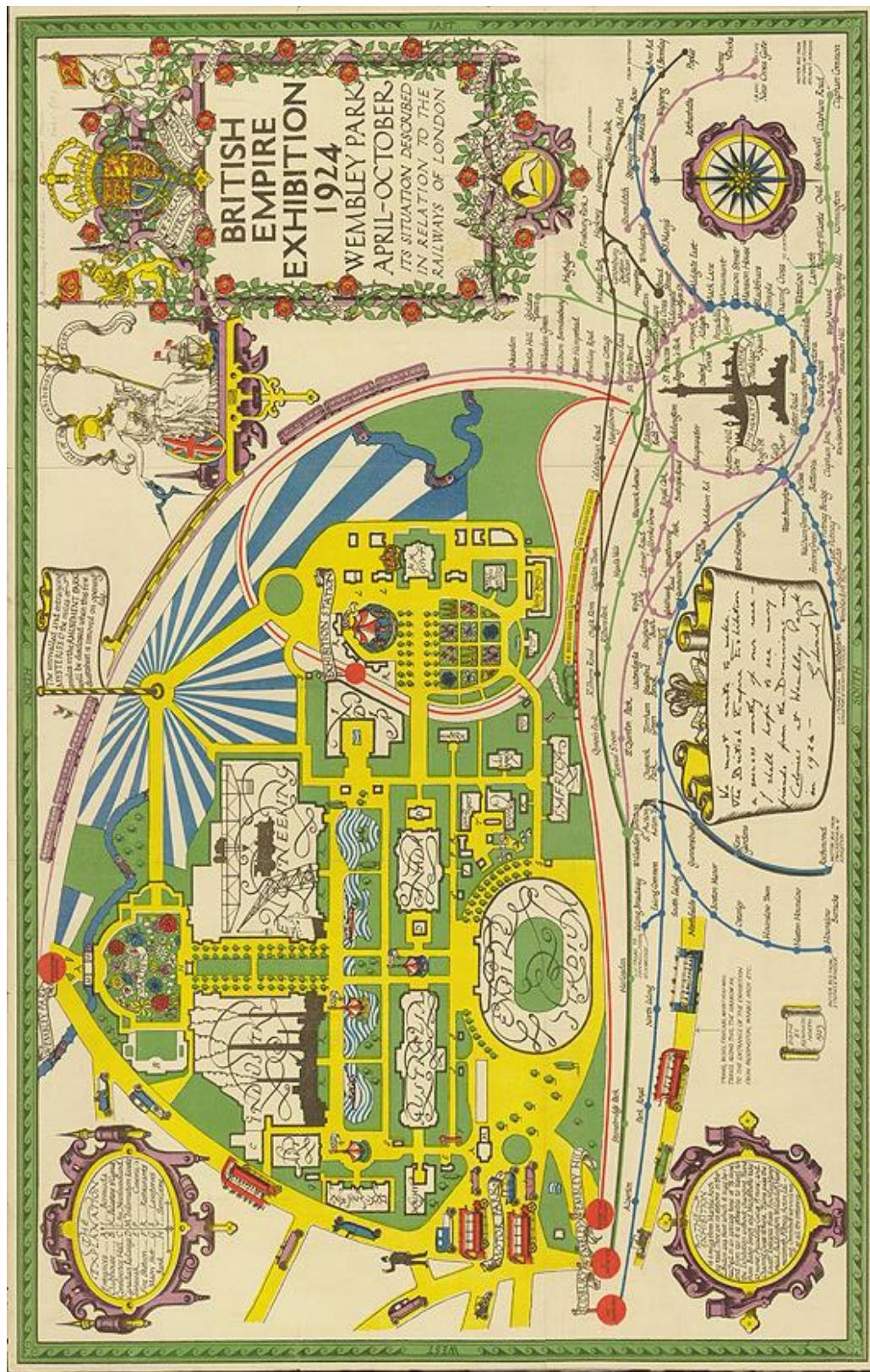
Culture and attitudes relating to empire

- Jingoism and old-style imperialism discredited by the First World War
- Victorians and Victorian values mocked (*Eminent Victorians* by Lytton Strachey, 1918) & *Colonel Blimp* (David Low, 1934)
- In imperial matters, a return to benevolent paternalism and concepts of ‘trusteeship’ – belief in steady progression towards ‘responsible government’. Yet, a continuing sense of European racial and cultural superiority.



- Racist attitudes in Britain: 'colour bars' in operation in Britain + race riots in 1919 in Cardiff and Liverpool in the context of high unemployment and unusually high concentrations of ethnic minorities. Hostility towards sexual relations between black men and white women.
 - Debate about General Dyer and the Amritsar Massacre: *Morning Post* campaign in favour of Dyer raised £26,000 for him
 - Continuing popularity of 'imperial' cultural figures such as Henty and Kipling; films with imperial themes; popularity of Elgar (*Pageant of Empire*, 1924)
 - Continued use of imperial themes in advertising
 - Continuing connections with migrants to settler colonies or colonial/ armed services → growing awareness of empire
 - Continuing and widespread celebration of Empire Day
-
- **To what extent was there continuing popular enthusiasm for the British Empire between the wars?**

ESSAY: To what extent did the Empire remain popular in Britain between 1918 and 1939?



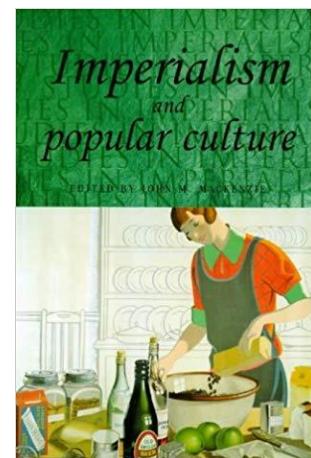
The old imperialism was losing some of its shine. Socialists and nationalists were making their voices heard in Britain as well as in the colonies, and raising all kinds of doubts about the justice of Britain's imperial methods: not only about the excesses, like Amritsar, but also about the assumptions which lay beneath the ordinary day-to-day administration of the empire. There was more talk of the rights of non-Europeans, as well as of their protection; doubts about the morality of even the kindest and best-intentioned paternalism; doubts, long-standing but bolstered most recently by the war, as to whether Europeans, who had just perpetrated such an atrocity among themselves, had any cause to regard themselves as superior in any way to those they were supposed to be 'raising' to their level. Things which were swallowed easily enough before by most people, like the right of white emigrants to settle where the pleased and take over countries from their *indigenes*, now began to stick in some gullets. It began to be noticed that some 'virgin' territories were not so virgin after all, but had people living in them who merited no less consideration just because they were inefficient... And more generally the very possession of an empire was, among more and more people, beginning to be regarded as alien or at least irrelevant to the best ideals of the twentieth century; imperialism losing what pure idealists it had, to socialism or pacifism or isolationism or the League of Nations, or to some other deity which was not so tarnished as yet. To quantify such a change in the climate of opinion would be impossible, still more to speculate on its effect. But there can be little doubt that empire and imperialism had a surlier, less carefree, more anachronistic and defensive image between the wars than before.

- Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share* (Routledge; 2004)

- What does Porter argue about changing popular attitudes towards imperialism during the inter-war period?

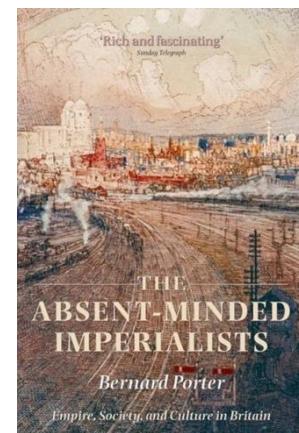
Historiographical Debate: Public Opinion and the British Empire

In the inter-war years, thousands of British families had friends or relatives who had emigrated to, or served in the Empire as civil servants, teachers, missionaries, engineers, driving locomotives, and as soldiers in the British army. All social classes were influenced in different ways. The churches and Sunday schools provided information about the Empire, as missionaries urged audiences to contribute to medical, educational, and evangelical work throughout the Empire. Missionaries popularized the notion that Western medicine was tackling the most feared tropical diseases in the Empire. The Empire came to the British public in new ways such as through the cinema newsreel, and through the press. British people were, for example, well aware of the Amritsar massacre, which generated much debate. As constitutional reform and eventually decolonization became imminent, the British people were aware of Asian and African politicians visiting London for Round Table Conferences. Among these was Mahatma Gandhi, who in 1931 stayed in London's East End and visited cotton mills, universities and schools. By these means the Empire became an integral part of British culture.



- John Mackenzie, *The Popular Culture of Empire in Britain* (1999)

Whatever else it may have been, the British Empire was not a 'people's empire'. Those who say that imperialism pervaded British culture during this period are wrong. There is no direct evidence that the majority of Britons supported the Empire, took any interest in it, or were even aware of it. They were too busy and too poorly educated to care, while the middle classes and upper class imperialists were happy to keep the Empire to themselves. Most people were less affected by empire than by other concerns. The fact of having an empire affected hardly anyone's fundamental view of anything. This is what so bothered the imperial supporters, who thought that the Empire should change people's outlooks. The Empire was merely tolerated, rather than celebrated – and only provided that it did not have a negative impact on people's lives. That was a weakness, as the supporters of empire well knew.



- Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2006)

- What do these two historians argue?
- How did they differ?
- Which interpretation is more convincing?

It is untrue that most Britons were ignorant of or indifferent to empire; but neither was Britain saturated by imperialism. In the twentieth century, the sources of contact between mother country and colony multiplied and, as a result, a range of relationships with the Empire developed. There was never a single ‘imperial culture’ in Britain. In addition, disentangling the ‘imperial’ from the ‘international’ is problematic. The dividing line between pride in the Empire and in Britain’s broader position as a world power was not clear. The monarchy and the military can be seen as twin pillars of popular imperial sentiment. Yet, both appealed to patriotism irrespective of their connection with the Empire. Similarly, the growth of imperial news coverage can be too readily accepted as evidence of enthusiasm for empire when a thirst for mere sensationalism may explain the demand for such reporting.

- Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? (2005)*

- Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to British awareness of and interest in the Empire between 1918 and 1939.

In the inter-war period, the British public were not weary of or antagonistic to empire and all it entailed. Twenty-seven million (the number of visitors to the 1924 Wembley exhibition) was a considerable number, representing more than half the then population of Great Britain. The exhibition also garnered huge coverage in the press. More than 2,000 articles about the British Empire Exhibition appeared in *The Times* from 1923 to 1925. The mass middlebrow culture of inter-war Britain was largely traditional and conservative. Youth literature in the adventure tradition remained replete with militarism and patriotism. The unifying principle of empire as expressed by the exhibition – the monarchy – also continued to be popular. – Matthew Parker, ‘The empire’s last hurrah?’ – in BBC History Magazine, April 2024

- Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to British attitudes towards the empire in the period 1918-1939?

Uniting the Empire

Uniting such a disparate empire was a challenge and, throughout the inter-war period, officials tried to promote an appearance of unity and kinship, portraying the Empire as a harmonious and progressive force. Developments in technology coming out of the First World War were used to try to forge this united ethos.

New Technology:

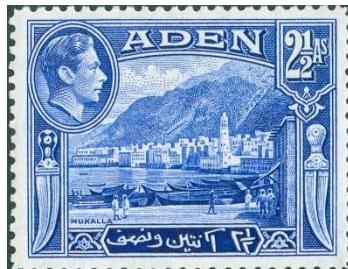
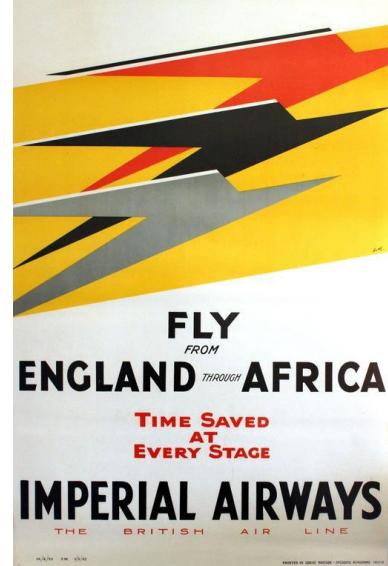
- Civil Aviation – Imperial Airways (est. 1921) – routes throughout the Empire (Empire Flying Boat, 1938)
- BBC Radio – broadcast around the world. From 1933, royal broadcast on Christmas Day
- Film – Britain had 5,000 cinemas by 1940 – promotion of imperial films (e.g. *The Lives of the Bengal Lancers*) – censored by the BBFC to ensure the Empire was portrayed as benevolent and ordered. Although, 9/10 films screened were from the USA.

Royalty:

- Tours by the Prince of Wales throughout 1920s
- Wembley Empire Exhibition, 1924
- Silver Jubilee, 1935
- Coronation of George VI, 1937

Other symbols of unity:

- Sporting tours (e.g. the Ashes)
- Pictorial stamps



- To what extent was there a unified imperial culture in the inter-war period?

Relations with the Dominions – A ‘Third’ British Empire?

The First World War encouraged a greater sense of national identity within the dominions and there was a need to clarify their constitutional status within the empire. Britain had declared war on their behalf in 1914 and controlled their militaries for the duration of the conflict (although an Imperial Cabinet had developed too). However, their support and sympathy could not be guaranteed into the future. The cultural, economic and emotional ties between Britain and the ‘Big Five’ dominions varied considerably:

Australia and New Zealand – huge losses at Gallipoli amongst the ANZACs had helped foster a sense of identity independent to that of the mother country. However, much of the population of both were recent migrants and retained a British identity. Both were economically dependent on trade with Britain and suffered during the Great Depression due to their reliance on agricultural exports. The rise of Japan made both countries nervous and determined to maintain the security provided by the Royal Navy. Furthermore, there was a fear of mass migration from Asia that would dilute the ‘whiteness’ of these countries. It was hoped that the continuing link with Britain would help avert this.

Canada – Canada had been self-governing for the longest of the dominions and was regarded as the most politically developed. Again, losses in WWI such as those at Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele had helped foster a distinct Canadian identity and this led to greater calls for an autonomous defence and foreign policy. Canada contained a significant minority of French Canadians who had always been much less emotionally committed to the British connection. Furthermore, Canada traded much more with the United States to its south than it did to Britain. Nevertheless, Canada’s position within the Empire remained strong, although it was reluctant to involve itself in matters that did not concern its direct interests.

South Africa – Since the Union in 1910, South Africa remained in an uneasy demographic balance and its commitment to the empire could not be relied upon. British South Africans were always in a minority relative to Afrikaners, although the latter were divided between those who had reconciled themselves to the imperial connection, and those who took a more republican approach. The latter were politically organised and, under Prime Minister JB Hertzog (PM, 1924-1939), more assertive in their defence of Afrikaner nationalism and sceptical of the British connection. It is also during this period that Hertzog’s government started to implement stricter discriminatory measures towards the black population of South Africa. (Although the full system of *apartheid* would not be implemented until 1948).

Ireland – The Irish Free State was never committed to its status within the empire, always seen as an unsatisfactory compromise by many since the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921-22. Irish leaders during the inter-war period were determined to remove any lingering constraints on their autonomy and, by 1937, had essentially turned Ireland into a republic. In terms of foreign policy, Ireland was determined to remain neutral in international disputes.

In 1925 the **Dominions Office** was created under the **Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs**, separate to the Colonial Office which continued to oversee non-self-governing possessions.



1926 Imperial Conference

There had been a series of imperial conferences in London which were attended by the Prime Ministers of the different dominions. The 1926 conference attempted to define their constitutional status in relation to one another. Lord Balfour chaired a commission which produced the 'Balfour Definition':

'They are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.'

There was enough ambiguity in this to satisfy most points of view. High Commissioners would be appointed (like ambassadors) to communicate between the different dominions, replacing London-appointed Governors. It also introduced the new term '**Commonwealth**' to describe the imperial structure.

1931 Statute of Westminster

This legally formalized the new relationship between Britain and the dominions. Henceforth, Westminster could not legislate for these countries, nor could London control their foreign policies without their consent. They could make their own international treaties and would only be bound by British treaties with their consent. To all intents and purposes they were now independent countries, although it was assumed that continuing loyalty to the Crown and membership of the Commonwealth would ensure mutual assistance in future.

The dominions, for various reasons, remained comfortable with the policy of appeasement in the late-1930s. The impact of the Statute of Westminster can most clearly be seen in September 1939 when each dominion declared war on Germany separately from Britain (except Ireland which remained neutral throughout the war).

Imperial Preference, 1932 & the Sterling Area

Running counter to greater autonomy, the Ottawa Conference of 1932 introduced Imperial Preference in the context of the Great Depression. A revival of Joseph Chamberlain's ideas from thirty years previously, they did not in this case herald the arrival of a fully-fledged Imperial Federation. (By a quirk of historical fate, the Chancellor of the Exchequer who introduced this was Joseph's son, Neville Chamberlain). It was in large part the impact of economic distress that encouraged the increasingly disparate parts of the empire to cling to each other through preferential trade. The creation of the Sterling Area in the 1930s also ensured that Britain and the dominions were monetarily tied together.

The Balfour Report of 1926 gave birth to, and the Statute of Westminster in 1931 legally enshrined, the concept of equality of status between Britain and the major settlement colonies. But in many ways the notion of equality was no more than a polite fiction. All the White Dominions, save Canada, relied ultimately on the power of Britain and her ability to defend them; Canada escaped this dependence only because she was ultimately protected by proximity to the United States. In matters economic, the Dominions were similarly placed. Between the wars all of them were highly dependent for their prosperity on trade. Britain remained easily the most important trading partner of the Dominions throughout the period, the only exception being Canada, whose trade with the United States was of great importance. Behind trade lay finance: if anything, Dominion dependence of Britain was greater than in trade.

- Adapted from *British Imperialism* by PJ Cain and AG Hopkins (2001)

What do Cain and Hopkins argue about the impact of the Balfour definition and the Statute of Westminster?

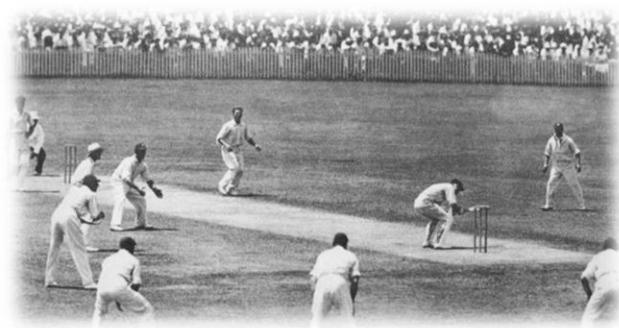
There was something paradoxical about the revived fortunes of inter-imperial trade during the 1930s. The enhancement and revitalization of Britain's commercial and financial relationships with the Empire-Commonwealth were in inverse proportion to her political and constitutional standing within the Empire. While inter-imperial trade increased, British leadership and British rule were increasingly challenged throughout the whole imperial system. To all but the most ardent of imperialists, however, the trade-off between declining imperial political control and power and the maintenance, even the enhancement, of Britain's economic and financial position, was a price well worth paying.

- Denis Judd, *Empire* (IB Tauris; 2001)

What does Judd argue about Britain's relations with the dominions in the 1930s?

The Bodyline Affair, 1932

The 1932 Ashes series saw a crisis develop which threatened to seriously damage relations between Britain and Australia. The English tourists were up against (arguably) the greatest batsman of all time, Don Bradman, who had almost single-handedly won the Ashes for Australia in the 1930 series. The English were captained by the upper-class, Oxford-educated Douglas Jardine. On hearing of Jardine's appointment as captain, one of his former teachers at Winchester School prophesised, 'Well, we shall win the Ashes – but we may lose a dominion.'



Jardine worked out that the only discernable weakness in Bradman's batting was his response to high, fast bowling that aimed at the body (bodyline). A bodyline bowl was extremely dangerous to the batsman who would be hurried into a stroke that could be easily caught by English fielders clustered on the leg-side of the wicket. Jardine told his best fast bowler, Harold Larwood, to use bodyline bowling during the 1932 Ashes series against the Australian team and the tactics were hugely successful: Bradman scored at a rate of half his Test average and England were on course to win the Ashes.

However, during the third Test at Adelaide, the Australian captain, Bill Woodfull, was struck by the ball, and then Bert Oldfield, the Australian wicket-keeper, was hit and fractured his skull. The Australian crowd was in uproar at the use of the bodyline tactics, the press was hostile, and the Australian cricket team furious. Jardine's upper-class insouciance enraged the Australians even more. The Australian Cricket Board sent a telegram to the MCC in London accusing the English team of 'not playing cricket' and being 'unsportsmanlike'. The British seemed not to be 'playing the game' according to the old public school ethos. The controversy blew up further and threatened to seriously damage relations between Britain and Australia, at a time in the 1930s when dominion solidarity was potentially under strain.

Politicians intervened to dampen down the controversy and the emotion gradually subsided. England won the Ashes series but Jardine and Larwood were then quietly dropped from the team. Bodyline bowling was not used again.

- **What did the Bodyline affair reveal about relations between Britain and the dominions in the 1930s?**

- **To what extent did the dominions remain an integral part of the empire?**

The bitter British experiences of the Easter Uprising of 1916, and of the bloody Anglo-Irish wars that preceded the granting of Dominion status to southern Ireland as the Irish Free State in 1921, especially left many Tories and Liberals in Britain determined not to see a repeat of that experience in India. The 'moral authority' of the British Empire, the opponents of a future Dominion status now argued, rested on Britain's hanging tough in India and refusing to concede to nationalist agitation on the nature and pace of political reforms. The clarification of the meaning of Dominion status at the Imperial Conference of 1926, which formalised what the British government had already acknowledge about the autonomy of the Dominions during the peace conferences of 1919, added further difficulties in accepting Dominion status as the stated goal of the political reforms in India. The Dominions were now formally recognised, for all practical purposes, as independent states that could, if they so desired, even secede from the empire itself. Few imperial policymakers at the time were willing to contemplate a similar path for India anytime in the foreseeable future.

- Mrinalini Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India* (2006)

What arguments are made in the above extract?

Strategic threats and the onset of the Second World War

- **Read: 451-481 in James**

The position in 1919:

- establishment of the **League of Nations** – Britain as one of the guarantors of the peace with France
- Germany humiliated in Treaty of Versailles
- Ottoman Empire dismantled
- Japan and Italy unsatisfied with peace settlement
- US isolationism
- Fear of communism – UK involvement in Russian Civil War

1920s – a stable international order – Locarno Agreements etc. 1922 – treaty with Japan not renewed in favour of closer relations with the USA → Washington Treaty fixed US and British battleships at a higher number than Japanese

1930s:

- Impact of the **Great Depression** → political extremism flourishes
- Rise of Japan in Far East (annexation of Manchuria, 1931) BUT racial stereotypes led the British to underestimate the risk from Japan
- Rise of Hitler (appointment as Chancellor, 1933) in Germany
- Stresa Front (Italy, France and Britain) against Germany, 1935
- Germany remilitarization of the Rhineland + Italian invasion of Abyssinia, 1936 – redundancy of the League of Nations
 - ⇒ British and French pursue policy of **appeasement**
- No British and French intervention in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-37
- German *Anschluss* with Austria, 1938
- Munich Agreement, 1938
- Germany invasion of Czechoslovakia, March 1939, and Anglo-French guarantee to Poland
- August, 1939: Nazi-Soviet Pact
- September 1939: Germany and the USSR partition Poland → WWII begins
- Dominions declare war on the side of Britain (except Ireland) + Viceroy declares war on behalf of India
- 1940: invasion of Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium and France → collapse of France → evacuation of the British Army from Dunkirk: Britain ‘Alone’

Unlike their eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century counterparts, Britain's rulers were now circumscribed by the morality of collective security and the opinions of a mass electorate flirting with pacifism. Both ruled out a Copenhagen-style pre-emptive strike against the Italian navy which, at a stroke, would have saved the empire and blocked further aggression by Mussolini and Hitler. The temper of the times as much as the temperament of the country's rulers meant that the empire's strategic weakness was lamely accepted as a fact of life, and policies would be devised accordingly. Imperial decline was now underway.

- Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus; 1998)

British strategic planning in the 1930s:

Whilst pursuing a policy of appeasement, from the mid-1930s the British started reviewing their strategic position throughout the world:

- Difficulties of balancing the budget with defence commitments throughout the world – home defence was prioritised as the threat from Germany seemed to grow, development of the RAF prioritised in particular
- Strategic overstretch – threats in the Far East (Japan), the Mediterranean (Italy) and in home waters (Germany)
- £25 million on strengthening Singapore naval base, constructed between 1923 and 1937 – but limited in its effectiveness
- Rearmament:
 - In 1938 Britain produced 7,940 aircraft compared to Germany's 8,295 and America's 2,195 – Hurricanes and Spitfires + long-range bombers + Radar
- **How well-prepared was the British Empire for war in 1939?**

From 1929 onwards, the British system was caught up in the world's economic and geopolitical earthquake. Almost all the conditions on which its wealth and safety depended now looked much more uncertain. The threat of a great power assault on British interests or territory, a remote possibility before 1930, became increasingly real and imperial defence a more arduous task. The contraction of world trade, and the ever-higher walls of protection, wrecked the hopes of British exporters. Britain's wealth and prosperity, the core of its power, seemed to be dwindling away. In addition, nationalist ideology corroded the 'steel frame' of colonial rule, challenged its systems of political influence and drove it into costly coercion. As geopolitics, economics and nationalism converged, Britain's loose-knit empire, far-flung, ill-defended and so reliant on trade, looked like a hostage to fate.

- Adapted from John Darwin, *The Empire Project* (CUP; 2009)

It would be easy to infer from the catalogue of economic set-backs and disappointed expectations during the inter-war years that Britain was in irreversible decline as an imperial power. Standard interpretations of the period emphasise Britain's economic weakness, her faltering will-power and her diminishing ability to maintain political control inside the Empire and influence beyond it. However, there are grounds for thinking that these judgments are not as robust as their frequent repetition might suggest. The resources at Britain's disposal were less plentiful after 1914 than before, but relatively she still remained a long way ahead of her European rivals, while the United States was only just beginning to emerge as a world power. Britain's position in relation to her various satellites and dependencies remained strong.

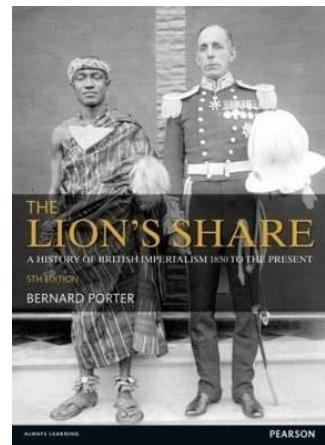
- Adapted from *British Imperialism* by PJ Cain and AG Hopkins (2001)

- Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these extracts are in relation to the position of the British Empire in the 1930s.

Reading Porter's *Lion's Share*

Chapter 9:

1. Why was Britain's victory in 1918 'a pyrrhic one'?
2. Why was Britain's economic position poor in the 1920s and 30s?
3. How did Britain's trade with the rest of the world change during the inter-war period?
4. How did the empire become important for Britain's economy during this period?
5. Why did these changes help arguments against free trade and for imperial preference?
6. In what ways did the empire and colonial markets cushion Britain's relative economic decline?
7. What was Leo Amery's vision for the empire in the 1920s?
8. What was significant about the Halibut Fisheries Treaty of 1923?
9. What were the overall trends in the relations between Britain and the dominions?
10. Why did attitudes towards free trade change in the 1930s?
11. What did Leo Amery hope to achieve in East Africa?



12. Why did the demography of East Africa (Kenya) and Rhodesia complicate these plans?

13. Why and how did views in Britain conflict with views of white settlers and Kenya?

14. Why did the plans for a 'Great White Dominion' in East Africa not come about in the 1920s?

15. Why was Zionism supported by some imperialists?

16. Why did Britain lose control of the situation in Palestine in the 1930s?

17. What were the difficulties with spending money on development in the dependent colonies?

18. What examples of development in dependent colonies were there in the inter-war period?

19. What was the impact of the 1930s Great Depression on the exports of the dependent colonies?

20. To what extent were there advances in health and education in Britain's African colonies during the inter-war period?

21. Why was this period difficult for ambitious imperialists such as Leo Amery?

22. What were the competing imperialist visions (e.g. Curzon's vs. Milner and Chamberlain's) during this period?

23. To what extent was there popular support for the Empire in Britain?

24. What accounts for this level of support?
25. Why were some starting to argue against imperialism completely in this period?
26. What ‘racial barrier’ was breached in this period with regard to the vision of the ‘commonwealth’?
27. Outside India and the Middle East, to what extent was there ‘pressure from below’ against British rule during this period?
28. Why were most non-white subjects of the empire seen as not yet ready for self-government?
29. What was the ‘ideological justification’ for indirect rule?
30. Why was stasis and conservatism preferred by colonial administrators?
31. Why did the Simon Commission do ‘more than anything else to provoke Indian nationalism’?
32. What was the attitude of the Labour Government of 1929-31 (and Viceroy Lord Irwin) towards India?
33. How were the attitudes of the following National (largely Conservative) government different?
34. Why did both Winston Churchill and the Indian National Congress oppose the 1935 Government of India Act?

35. What did most people in Britain assume about the future of the British Empire during this period?

36. Why did many British think their empire was unique compared to other empires in history?
What was different/ special about it?

37. How did Britain continue to view her world role during the inter-war period?

6. The Second World War and the first phase of decolonisation (1940s)

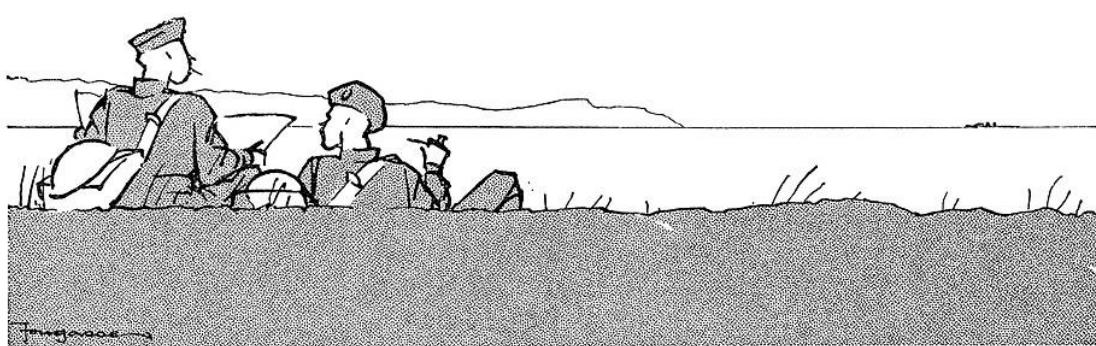


'Finest Hour' – Britain Alone?

- Read: pp. 482-521 in James; 125-127 in AQA



VERY WELL, ALONE



"So our poor old Empire is alone in the world."
"Aye, we are—the whole five hundred million of us."

- What contribution did the Empire make to Britain's war effort in the Second World War?
- What impact did the Second World War have on the British Empire?

Key Individual: Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

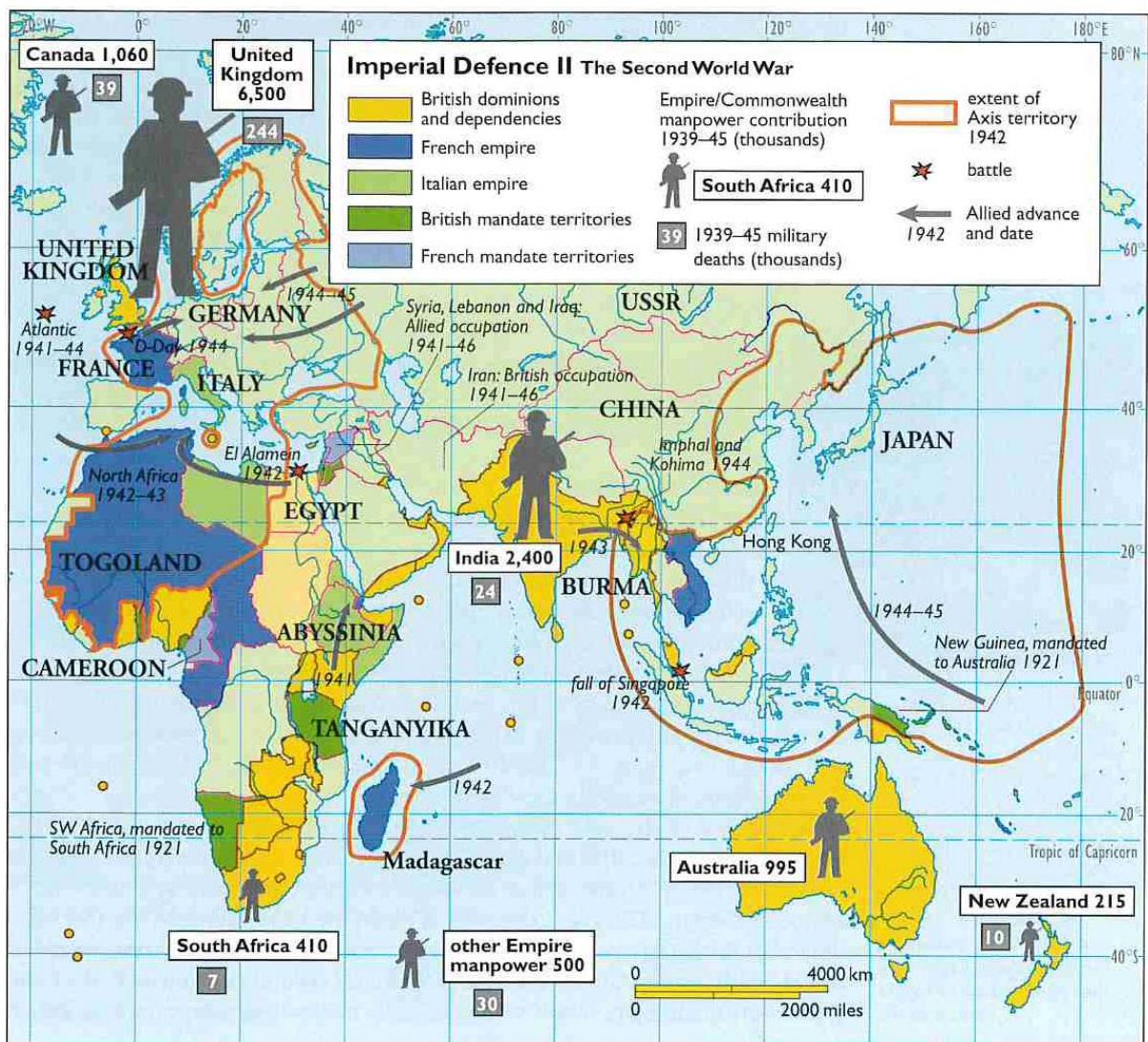
Read: ODNB entry

- Background and military career on NW Frontier & at Omdurman
- Boer War – journalist
- Conservative MP → Liberal MP – Home Sec & 1st Lord of the Admiralty
- WWI – Gallipoli and service in Flanders
- Return to Conservatives → Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1924-29
- Wilderness Years, 1929-39 – opposition to Indian reform/ opposition to appeasement
- PM, 1940-45 during WWII & PM, 1951-55



'What General Weygand has called the Battle of France is over ... the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be freed and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands.'

'But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves, that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour".' – Winston Churchill, 1940

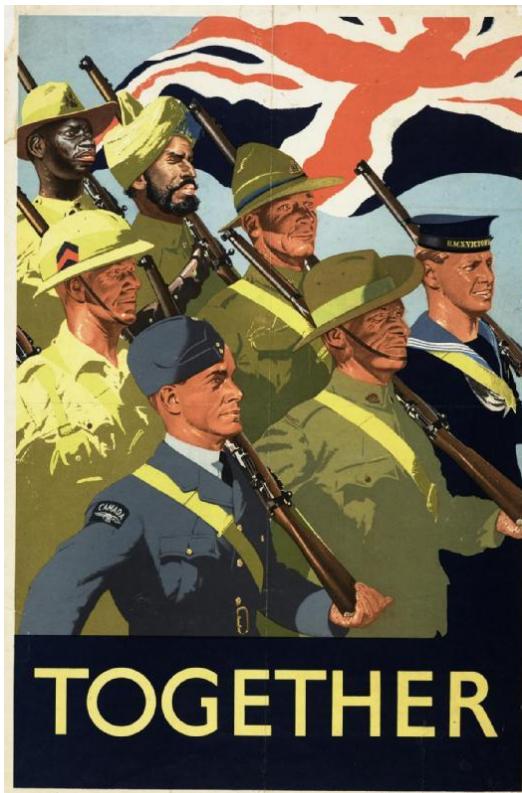


The 'Strategic Abyss' (Darwin)

- Defeat in Europe: 1940 - Britain isolated in Europe after Dunkirk - Battle of Britain/ Blitz of British cities
- Battle of the Atlantic – overstretch of the Royal Navy – HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse sent to Singapore
- Defeat in Asia: Japanese attack on Malaya (Dec 1941) & Fall of Singapore, 1942, and invasion of Burma and India (1942 Quit India Campaign)
- Threatened in N Africa: North African and Mediterranean theatre – Malta and Egypt threatened by Italian and German forces (1942)
- Huge costs of purchasing military equipment from the USA

Victory

- Battle of El Alamein, Nov. 1942 → N Africa position saved
- 1941 onwards – ‘Grand Alliance’ with USSR and USA – Lend-Lease from the USA
- Strategic Bombing of Germany + opening of second front (D-Day), June 1944
- Battle of Imphal and Kohima, 1944
- Victory over Germany and Japan, 1945



The Empire at War

Dominion and colonial support:

- Troops and resources supplied by dominions and colonies – 5 million servicemen in total
- Industrial and food production shifted to colonies
- Colonial Development and Welfare Act, 1940
- Hailey Report, 1944

India:

- Volunteer army of 2 million
- Fighting against the Japanese in eastern India
- Demands for independence – ‘Quit India’ movement
- Bengal Famine, 1943
- Indian National Army – alliance with the Japanese
- Divisions between Congress and Muslim League

The Second World War saw the apotheosis of the British Empire, yet it contained elements of both the best and the worst in the Imperial relationship. During the war it was clearly demonstrated that colonial control depended ultimately on force, albeit applied by Britain in pursuit of national survival. On one level, a seamless robe of force and coercion linked the British response to external and internal challenges. D-Day, El-Alamein, and Imphal thus share an Imperial relationship with the suppression of the 1942 Indian uprising, the British occupation of Iraq, Syria, and Iran, and the shooting by police and military of strikers in the Northern Rhodesian Copper Belt in March 1940 or in the Bahamas in June 1942. The increased authoritarianism of wartime Imperial control was but one manifestation of 'rule by the sword'.

The corollary to this was that, where force failed – as in Asia – the Empire was gravely, if not fatally, injured. The failure by Britain to protect Imperial subjects had a long-term effect... Self-government, the precise meaning of which remained unclear, was promised, most immediately to India, but the principle, though not the timing, was conceded for the colonial empire. 'Partnership' and 'colonial development' became maxims for the future. In part, these promises were prompted by the need to secure internal support for the British war effort throughout the empire and to reassure the Americans that the British Empire was not actually very imperial at all. There were those, however, who conceived a higher purpose for colonial development and self-government. The old Colonial Office hand, Sir John Shuckburgh, identified a 'new angle of vision' towards colonial problems, 'which, if it did not originate with the war, was greatly accentuated by wartime conditions and reactions'. He argued that European colonial administrators had now to 'collaborate with Colonial peoples, not, as in the past, merely to direct them... inter-racial cooperation must be the keynote of colonial policy.' 'We are', he concluded, 'in fact engaged in a race against time; and the prize of victory will not be the perpetuation, but the honourable interment of the old system.' Yet, honourable or not, the 'interment' of the British Imperial system was an inevitable consequence of the 1939-45 conflict. The means by which the immense resources of the empire were channelled into an extraordinary collective war effort unleashed social and political expectations that in the end could not be accommodated, even within a reformed colonial system such as that envisaged by... the Labour government. Paradoxically, the ultimate cost of defending the British Empire during the Second World War was the Empire itself.

- Keith Jeffery, 'The Second World War' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. IV* (Judith Brown & Wm Roger Louis (eds.)) (Oxford; 1999)

- What does Jeffrey argue about the impact of the Second World War on the British Empire?

THE Atlantic Charter

THE President of THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

-
1. *Their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other.*
 2. *They desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.*
 3. *They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.*
 4. *They will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.*
 5. *They desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security.*
 6. *After the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling*
 - in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.
 7. *Such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.*
 8. *They believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.*

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

August 14, 1941

Outcomes of the Second World War

- Read pp. 335-341 in Darwin, *Unfinished Empire* – what are the four key negative outcomes from the Second World War that Darwin identifies for the British Empire?

- c. 400,000 empire dead + 5 million troops stationed throughout the world
- Defeat of Axis powers
- Economic collapse of Europe and economic exhaustion of the UK (including indebtedness to colonies e.g. India)
- Expectations of peace from British (and European) population
- Strategic humiliation of Britain (and esp. France)
- Dominance of USSR and USA in military, economic and ideological terms
- Military commitment to Europe needed to counter Soviet threat
- Discrediting of ideas of empire and racial hierarchy:
 - Soviet ‘anti-imperialism’
 - USA – Atlantic Charter etc.
- Sympathy for self-determination/ human rights etc. and raised expectations of colonial peoples
- Imminent withdrawal from India
- Reorientation of dominions’ strategic needs
- Hugely altered strategic and military context: nuclear age

- To what extent did the Second World War damage Britain’s global position?

The economic impact of the War

- **Read: pp. 149-152 in AQA**

Context in 1945:

- Disruption of shipping and trade supplies during WWII due to U-Boat threat – 54% of the merchant fleet lost
- High levels of government debt (£3,500 million inc. £2,500 million owed to colonies)
- 1/3 of Britain's overseas economic assets sold off to pay for the war
- Massive trade deficit: Exports: £350 million; Imports: £2,000 million → partly caused by an industrial focus on armaments
- Dependence on Lend-Lease from 1941
- Continuing demands for high defence spending (Cold War + imperial commitments)
- Demands for domestic spending (Labour Government)

Post-War:

- Abrupt ending of Lend-Lease, 1945
- US loan of \$3.75 billion in 1946 (Keynes as negotiator)
- Inability to support Greek Royalists against communists → withdrawal in 1947
- Sterling Crisis of 1947 – devaluation of £ to \$2.80 to £1

This position led to a significant reconsideration of the value of individual colonies to Britain in the post-war period. Those where the costs outweighed the benefits would be abandoned, whereas those that could be an economic asset were retained and investment directed towards them:

- Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, 1940 and 1945
- Colonial Development Corporation, 1948

Until the 1930s, the basic principle of imperial rule was that the colonies must pay their own way. There was good reason for this: however rich, Britain could never have afforded to support the economic development of so large an empire from its own resources. If a colony wanted to build a railway or a port it had to borrow money and pay interest on the debt. The result was that the poor colonies stayed poor, unless they struck lucky with gold, diamonds or some other mineral bonanza. It was only after 1940, with the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, that Britain seriously began to provide unrequited aid to its colonies, and even then, it was not until the 1950s that its own economy, weakened by the Second World War, was capable of putting much capital into the colonies. Meanwhile, between 1939 and 1947, the Empire was milked of its foreign earnings and exploited by the bulk buying of its exports at below world prices.

- **David Fieldhouse, 'For Richer, For Poorer?' (1996)**

- **To what extent did the Second World War damage Britain's economic position?**
- **What was the effect of this on the empire?**

ESSAY: How significant were the two world wars in strengthening trade and commerce between Great Britain and its Empire in the years 1914 to 1947?

Labour and the Empire, 1945-51

Unexpectedly, the Labour Party won the 1945 election by a landslide, leading to the collapse of the wartime coalition and the appointment of Clement Attlee (right) as Prime Minister.

The primary attraction of the Labour manifesto was its promise to implement the recommendations of the 1942 Beveridge Report which called for the establishment of a 'welfare state', and included such ideas as full unemployment insurance, a huge programme of council house construction, and the establishment of the NHS. The Labour Government also nationalised large sections of the British economy.



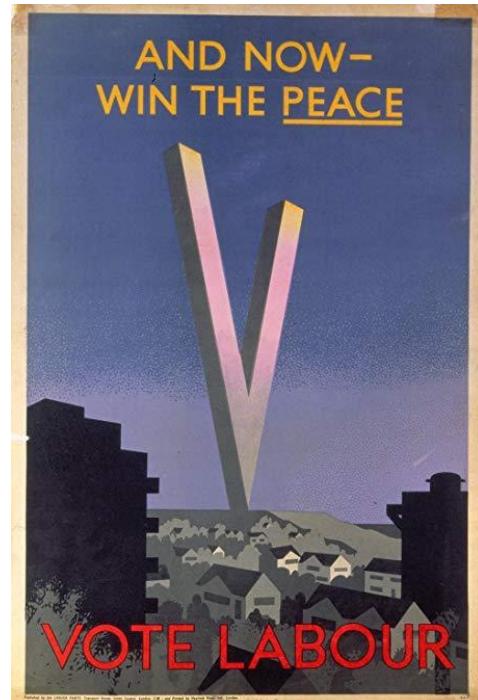
Many socialists were hostile to imperialism. However, it would be wrong to think that the majority of the Labour Party sought to dissolve the empire. Attlee was determined to relinquish parts of the empire which he was certain could no longer be held and his primary imperial policies were withdrawal from the following:

- India and Pakistan, 1947
- Burma, 1948
- Palestine, 1948

Nevertheless, most Labour politicians sought simply to refashion the empire. The empire was seen to be a means for Britain to continue as a great power, and a means to help reconstruct Britain's economy after the privations of the war. In particular, it was not envisaged that Britain's African colonies would become independent in the foreseeable future. Moreover, the Labour Government sought to be more pro-active and interventionist in developing Britain's colonies. As Ernest Bevin, Labour Foreign Secretary, declared, 'our crime is not exploitation; it's neglect.'

Moreover, Attlee and Bevin were determined that Britain should play a global role in the emerging Cold War. (The USA was content for British imperialism to remain if it helped prevent the spread of communism).

- Britain became a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council
- Establishment of NATO in 1949
- Development of British nuclear weapons (first tested, 1952)
- Efforts to defeat communists during the Malayan Emergency (1948 onwards)
- Participation in the Korean War, 1950-53



Strategic contexts: World War Two to the Cold War

- Read: pp. 525-541 in James; pp. 198-200 in AQA

One of the most important considerations in explaining British decolonisation is the changing international situation and the geo-political earthquakes that took place in the middle years of the Twentieth Century. Britain's economic strength, relative to other states, declined from the late 19th century and this was exacerbated by the financial burden of fighting two world wars. However, the Second World War, in particular, damaged Britain's prestige at least as much as its finances. John Darwin is surely correct in placing emphasis on the perilous years 1938-1942 as they are of paramount importance in explaining why Britain's empire dissolved.¹³ Before these years the collapse of the Empire was difficult to imagine. However, the virtual bankruptcy of the British government left it financially (and militarily) dependent on the United States with important ramifications for the future relationship of these two countries. In addition, and of more immediate importance, were the swift incursions into British-held territory; the German advance into Egypt and, most significantly, the Japanese advance in the Far East meant that the British Empire looked set to collapse. From this humiliating situation, full recovery was impossible. Indeed, the fall of Singapore and the loss of Burma to a non-European power were of great encouragement to nationalists and it was in this context that the 'Quit India' campaign was launched. After such humiliations and in the face of such a 'colossal emergency, the British system lacked the means to defend itself unaided and had not the faintest hope of restoring the *status quo ante*'.¹⁴ Despite reconquering the temporarily lost territories after the defeat of the Axis, Britain's prestige and the legitimacy of its rule in Asia could not be restored. Considered from this perspective, it seems that the Indian nationalists merely exploited a situation handed to them by the Japanese; it was Hirohito's military command rather than Gandhi who forced the issue of Indian independence.

Moreover, after 1945 Britain found itself in an international situation where the odds were stacked against the survival of its empire outside of Asia too. Neither the USSR nor the USA saw the maintenance of the European colonial empires as a priority and the onset of the Cold War resulted in meddling in the Third World by the two superpowers who both sought influence there for strategic and ideological reasons.¹⁵ Britain hoped to retain influence once its Empire had morphed into the Commonwealth. However, this hope proved illusory. Britain could no longer impose its will on the rest of the world and its wartime and post-war reliance on the USA enabled the Americans to force the hands of the British if it was deemed necessary. The Suez Crisis is clearly the most obvious example of this when American disapproval left the British with a profound sense of their own impotence. As Burbank and Cooper have put it, 'The Suez fiasco was a sign of something



¹³ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), chapter 11

¹⁴ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 513

¹⁵ Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 333

that had already happened – the loss of coercive capacity and political authority by the colonial powers of Western Europe.¹⁶

Furthermore, one of the most important products of both the Second World War and the Cold War was the swift acceptance that empires were now a thing of the past. The fact that the two superpowers were both ideologically hostile to European imperialism meant that nationalists now operated in an international climate that was very sympathetic towards them. The Soviets had always railed against imperialism and, from Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points through to the Atlantic Charter, American disapproval had long been documented. In addition, the Second World War meant that the racial assumptions which lay behind empire were not simply discredited in Britain, but across the world; the intangible, if potent, force of 'world opinion' could be appealed to by nationalists everywhere. Nation-states rather than rickety empires seemed to be the norm; the Axis having sullied the latter concept completely.¹⁷ In this respect, nationalism can clearly be seen helping cause the downfall of the British Empire. However, it was more the triumph of an abstract concept which gained widespread acceptance as a result of geo-political events, rather than the triumph of specific nationalist movements.

- AEWG

- How did the changing international situation affect the British Empire between 1939 and 1960?

¹⁶ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, p. 427

¹⁷ Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 333

Indian Independence & Partition

- Read: pp. 129-130 in AQA; pp. 542-558 in James

Impact of the Second World War

- Outrage at Linlithgow's declaration of war in 1939 with no consultation
- 2 million volunteer army raised
- March 1942 – **Sir Stafford Cripps** → promise of immediate dominion status post-war
- August 1942 – ‘Quit India’ campaign launched → INC leadership imprisoned
- 1943 - Formation of Indian National Army under **Subhas Chandra Bose** – allied with Japan
- 1943 – **Bengal Famine** (2-3 million dead)
- 1944 – **Battles of Imphal and Kohima** turn the tide against Japan
- Divisions between Muslim League and INC
- India no longer a major market for British goods – trade deficit with India by 1945. By 1945 Britain owed India £1,375 million.
- Indianisation of Indian government: only 500 British civil servants and 500 British police officers by 1946

Partition

- 1947 – Lord Louis Mountbatten appointed as final Viceroy. Deadline: June 1948
- Worsening communal violence → decision on early partition rather than a federal or unitary solution
- Independence moved to 15 August 1947 – dominion status for each within the Commonwealth
- Widespread violence, especially in the Punjab → creation of India and Pakistan
- Princely states forced to choose between new states (Hyderabad annexed by India, 1948)
- Kashmir disputed between India and Pakistan
- 1949 – India becomes a republic but remains within the Commonwealth

The post-war Labour government would not contemplate the Raj's reestablishment in the face of Indian opposition, as it believed this to be impossible in terms of manpower, expenditure, and both British and international politics. Always practical imperialists, the British weighed the ideological and material costs (in India and in Britain) of the Indian Raj against its benefits. After the war had ended in 1945, the British calculated that alliance with a free India in the Commonwealth was preferable to continued dominion. Indeed, an independent India was the only viable option open to the British, given their diminished resources and changed interest in South Asia. This was no failure of British commitment to empire, no recoil from harsh measures in principle. In other parts of the empire they would show themselves prepared to use force to secure imperial priorities. In 1945-6 the British recognized, however reluctantly, that in the particular and unique circumstances of post-war India an Imperial Raj no longer achieved the goals they sought.

- Judith Brown *India* (1999)

- What does Brown argue about British withdrawal from India?

The war flattened out the pretensions of empire, making ceremonial and ritual excesses look archaic, challenging old compacts between the King-Emperor and the landed elites. It mobilised women, workers and the urban middle classes in radical new ways. It heightened nationalism, both in India and in Britain, so that older forms of transnational solidarity became dated and obsolete. The Raj was left in debt, morally redundant and staffed by exhausted administrators whose sense of purpose could not be sustained. Development and democracy were the new political aspirations for politicians in Delhi and in London. Ultimately, the war delivered decolonisation and the Partition of 1947 – neither of which were inevitable or foreseen in 1939. All this is not to undermine the considerable achievement of the nationalists over the long duration, their sustained resistance to the Raj was also essential in knocking down its foundations and creating the possibility of a new order. Both elements interlocked. But ultimately, the timing of decolonisation relied heavily on the damage done to the structures of the state by the war, and by the empire's complete lack of legitimacy when the war ended.

- Yasmin Khan, *India at War* (2015)

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to political changes in India in the years 1914 to 1947.

- What explains independence by 1947?
- To what extent were the British still in control of events after 1945?
- Was partition inevitable? Who was responsible?



ESSAY: 'The 'Quit India' campaign in 1942 was the key turning point in the period 1918-1947 on the road to Indian independence.' Assess the validity of this view.

ESSAY: 'Gandhi's actions were the most important reason for the independence of India and Pakistan in the period 1918-1947.' Assess the validity of this view.

More than any other single individual, Gandhi was responsible for the fall of the British Empire. His conversion to outright opposition to the British was as much religious as political. He had always been a high-minded man seeking to do good. Then in middle life he turned himself into a religious prophet.

Politically, Gandhi solved a dilemma which had agitated Indian nationalists for a generation. Should they adopt constitutional methods of opposition to the British or should they attempt violent rebellion? Both methods appeared futile. Gandhi cut through the knot by proclaiming the principle of unconstitutional but non-violent opposition. Nationalists should be prepared to break the law, to boycott British organisations, to resign posts in the British administration, to hinder the working of government in any way possible, but they should stick to non-violent measures. Tactically it was a brilliant idea. The British had ample troops and weapons to smash any attempt at armed rebellion. But against non-violent resistance the British were powerless.

- **Adapted from Colin Cross, The Fall of the British Empire, 1968**

The Indian Empire established on 1 January 1877 would last for seventy years. In 1947 Earl Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, handed over power to the Republic of India and the Dominion of Pakistan into which the country had been hastily divided. This swift transformation came about mainly through events in Europe and because British rulers had willed it. In 1917, during the worst crisis of the First World War, a liberalising policy had been defined – ‘the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire’. But independence came about more rapidly than intended. Two world wars, the second spreading to the Far East, undermined British power and even the will to rule. Although India was never overrun, the Japanese inflicted such damage on British prestige that they never recovered their political hold.

- **Adapted from John Bowle, The Imperial Achievement, 1974**

Early nationalist forces had first appeared on the Indian political scene in the late nineteenth century. Elitist in character and moderate in their demands, they had presented little real threat to the British Raj. On the outbreak of the First World War, India had presented an image of impressive loyalty. Politicians and princes were conspicuous in their declarations of support for Britain and in the practical help they provided. However the experience of global war between 1914 and 1918 transformed the nature of the nationalist forces ranged against Britain. More broadly based and demanding, they began to challenge the British for power in India. Britain responded by making a series of constitutional concessions in provincial government while retaining control at the centre. It was to take another world war, and a consequent reassessment of her interests in India, before Britain was prepared to bring her imperial presence to an end.

- **Adapted from Simon C Smith, British Imperialism, 1750–1970, 1998**

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to political changes in India in the years 1914 to 1947.

Burma

The British had been humiliated in Burma during the Second World War. British rule in Burma had relied on coercion more than most of their colonies; British rule was deeply resented and had disrupted the traditional patterns of Burmese life. The history of oppression meant that there was little loyalty to the British amongst the majority Burmese population. It was, therefore, extremely difficult to foresee any return to stable colonial rule after 1945.

- Japanese occupation during WWII – significant collaboration
- Anti-Fascist Organisation (AFO), including the Burmese Independence Army, led by General Aung San → opposition to Japanese rule from 1944
- Restoration of British rule in 1945 → AFO rebranded as Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) to oppose British rule
- Limited economic importance of Burma (compared with e.g. Malaya)
- September 1946: Sir Hubert Rance appointed Governor → conciliation with Aung San
- 1948: Burmese independence amidst violence and disorder – outside the Commonwealth



- Why did decolonisation of Burma occur?

Malaya and Singapore

Read:

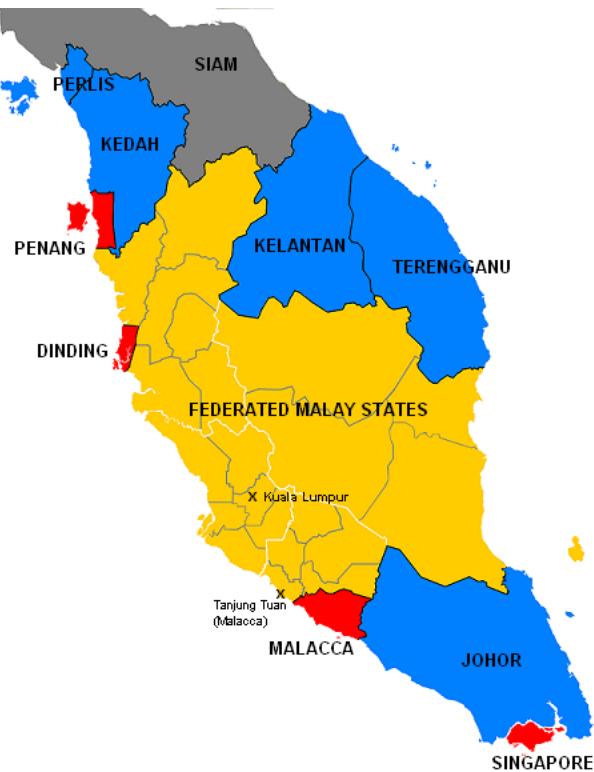
- pp.186-189 & 235-236 in AQA

Context:

- Little domestic tension/ limited nationalism: 'Malaya appeared to enjoy the happiness of a land without a history.' (Stockwell, 1999)
- Direct rule in Straits Settlements
- Protectorates in Malaya (Federated and Unfederated states) – indigenous sultans – deeply conservative and loyal to Britain
- Sudden collapse and brutal Japanese occupation 1942-45
- British support for Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA – mostly ethnic Chinese) – support from Force 136
- MPAJA dominated by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) → seen as liberators in 1945

Malaya's continued importance:

- Dollar earnings from rubber (esp. during Korean War) and tin
- Strategic importance of Singapore



Ethnic complexity (figures from 1947):

- Malays: 49.5%
- Chinese: 38.4%
- Indians: < 10%
- + small minority of British planters, officials, soldiers etc.

Post-War:

- Plans for Malayan Union (equal citizenship and abolition of sultanates) dropped after opposition from Malays → formation of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)
- Malayan Federation, 1948 – curtailed citizenship rights of ethnic Chinese → growing support for MCP led by Chin Peng
- Growing industrial unrest – unions infiltrated by MCP and nationwide *hartal* (strike) on 20 October 1947

Malayan Emergency:

- Murders of planters near Sungai Siput, Perak, 16 June 1948 by MCP
- Initially crude reaction from the British ('coercion and enforcement') – Chinese population threatened - massacre at Batang Kali in December 1948 (24 killed by Scots Guards)
- Jungle warfare (Britain's Vietnam)
- Sir Edward Gent replaced after criticism with the firmer Sir Henry Gurney (October 1948) → Gurney assassinated in October 1951
- 1950-51: change in approach to conciliate Chinese and win 'hearts and minds' under Sir Gerald Templer as High Commissioner – Cold War threat forced a re-evaluation of tactics → resettlement of Chinese communities into safe areas → gradual defeat of the MCP

Independence '*Merdeka*':

- July 1955: elections to the Federal Council: 51/52 seats won by multi-racial Alliance Party → MCP sidelined
- 31st August 1957: independence
- 1960: Emergency formally declared at an end
- 1963: Malaya united with Singapore, Sabah (North Borneo) and Sarawak to form Malaysia
- 1965: Singapore expelled from Malaysia to become fully independent.

Malaya can be seen as a real success for British decolonisation: a communist threat had been eliminated and the British handed over power to a sympathetic indigenous government, while maintaining influence. They retained a military presence in Singapore, economic interests, and allies in the Cold War.

- **How successful was British policy in Malaya between 1945 and 1963?**
- **Why did Britain decolonise in South-East Asia?**

ESSAY: 'Decolonisation in Asia, in the years 1945 to 1965 was more the result of Britain's changed international position after the Second World War, than of pressure from nationalist groups.' Assess the validity of this view.



The End of the Eastern Empire

Colonial territories 1945

British

Dutch (Netherlands East Indies)

French (Indo-China)

US (Philippines)

Portuguese (East Timor)

MALAYA date of independence 1957

★ 1948 Communist war/insurgency with date

→ main Indonesian attacks 1963–6

KARENs Burmese minority peoples

Palestine

- **Read: p. 132 in AQA; pp. 559-571 in James**

In 1945 attempted Jewish migration into Palestine was high and Britain capped Jewish migration at 1,500 a month. Relations between Arabs and Jews were deteriorating further and Britain sought to avoid making the problem more intractable. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, world opinion, particularly in the United States, favoured a settlement in Palestine that would allow for a Jewish state. Harry Truman, the US President, was sympathetic to the Zionist cause and supported the immediate entry of 100,000 Jewish migrants. However, the British government was also keen to maintain support from the Arab world who were united in their opposition to a Jewish state. For Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, Britain's dominant strategic interests in the Middle East outweighed sympathy for Zionism.

There were outbreaks of terrorism throughout Palestine by Jewish resistance groups who were determined to force rapid British withdrawal. The most dramatic event was the bombing of the King David Hotel (right, housing the British HQ in Palestine) in Jerusalem in July 1946 in which 91 people were killed. Britain's economic position was so weak that it couldn't afford the high costs of policing Palestine indefinitely where 100,000 British troops were stationed at an annual cost of £40 million. By 1948 300 British lives had been lost in a conflict which seemed insoluble.



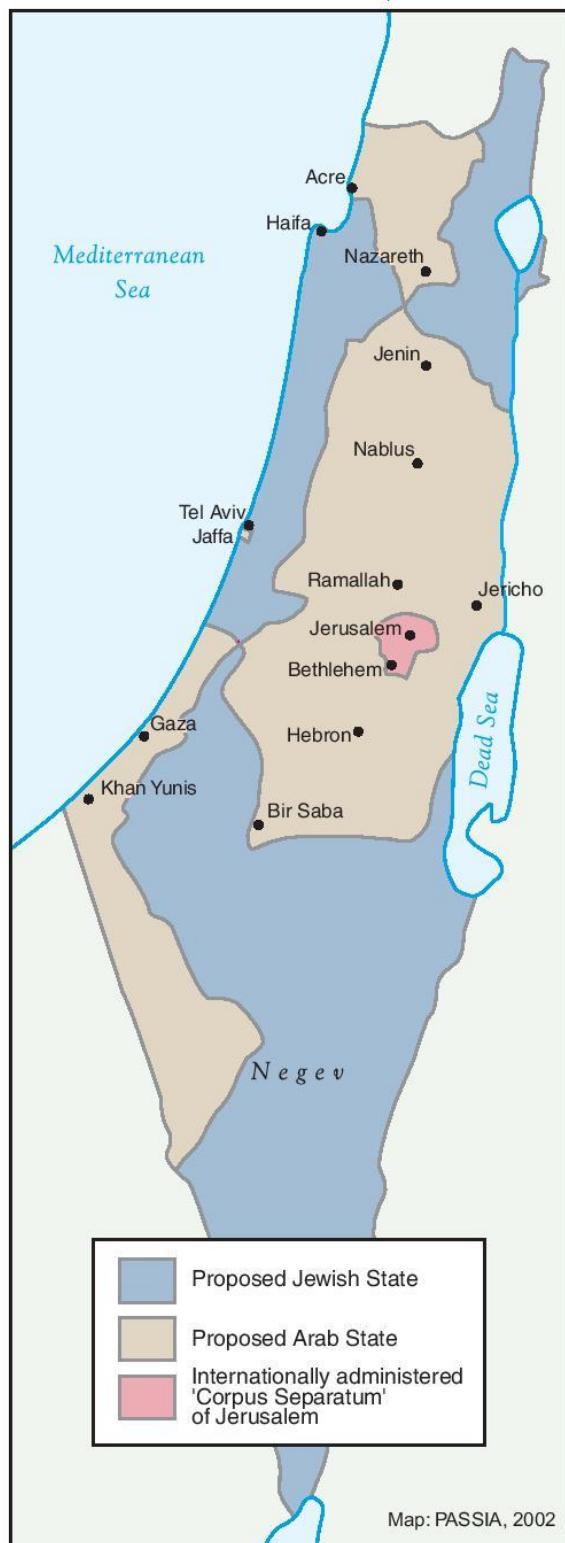
In 1946 Britain hoped to create a new unified state that would contain Arab and Jewish provinces with a large degree of autonomy. However, this idea was rejected by both sides and the United States. In 1947 Britain referred the question of Palestine to the United Nations which favoured partition. Bevin had no intention of implementing the settlement which was anathema to Arab opinion. In May 1948 Britain withdrew from Palestine and the United Nations partitioned the country into two: a Jewish state (Israel) and a Palestinian Arab state.

The violence between Arabs and Jews continued, as the new state of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948. It was immediately invaded by a coalition of neighbouring Arab states: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. However, the Israelis fought back successfully and, by the ceasefire in 1949, expanded their territory from the initial 1947 settlement.

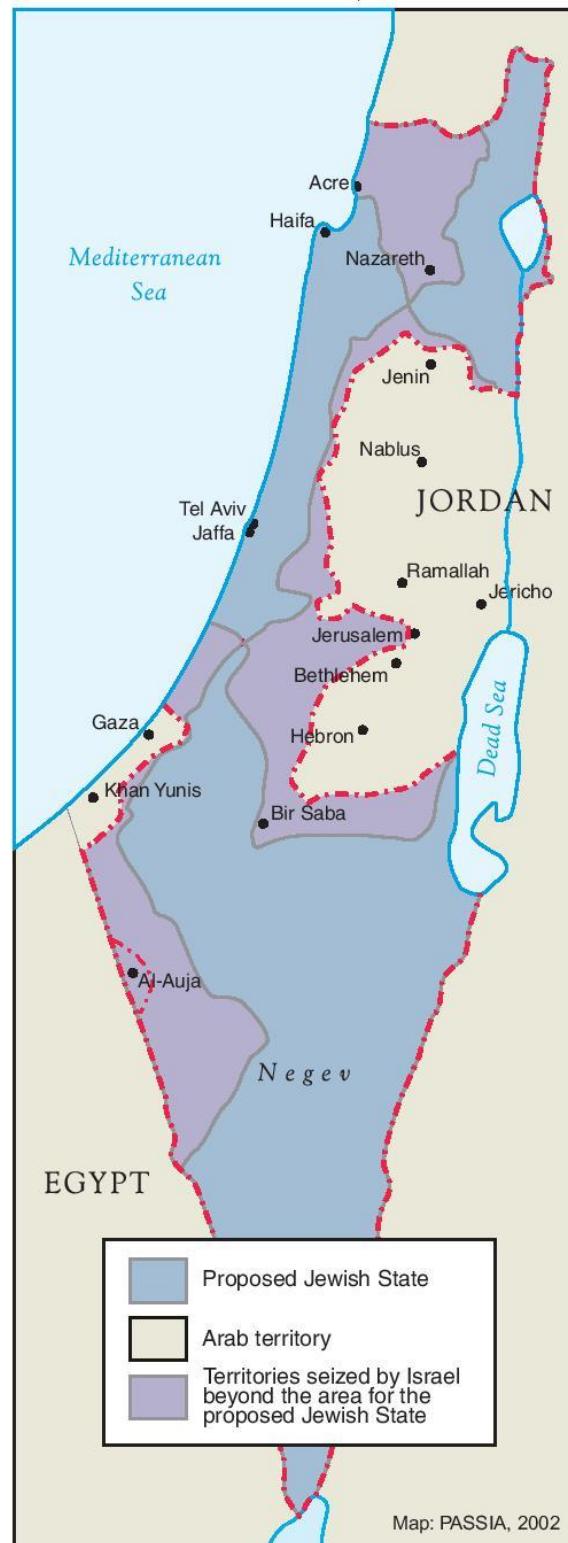
The birth of Israel, a moment of liberation for Jews and the culmination of the Zionist ideal, was considered a catastrophe ('Nakba') by the Palestinian people, 750,000 of whom fled their homes and became refugees in neighbouring countries. The conflict between the competing nationalisms of Israel and the Palestinians remains unsolved.

- **How successful was British policy in Palestine between 1918 and 1948?**
- **Why did the British leave Palestine?**

UNGA Partition Plan, 1947



Armistice Lines, 1949



A ‘Fourth’ British Empire?¹⁸

In the late 1940s, a vacant plot of land opposite the west end of Westminster Abbey became available, having previously been occupied by Westminster hospital and the old Stationery Office. Such a premium site so near to the centre of government was of great value and the Labour Government knew just what it wanted to do with it: ‘there is no more worthy use for this fine position than as the headquarters of our Colonial Empire’ argued the Labour minister, Lord Henderson, when introducing a bill into parliament to acquire the site for this purpose. Having been scattered around a series of inadequate offices in Whitehall, a new, modern Colonial Office would be constructed in the heart of London, ready to lead the development of the British Empire long into the future.

The continued importance of empire (Part 1: Economics):

- 1. Development of colonial possessions to encourage economic growth**
 - Attempt to increase dollar reserves through investment in colonial exports
 - 1948: Colonial Development Corporation to coordinate this
 - Example of success: Malayan rubber
 - Example of failure: Tanganyika Groundnuts Scheme, 1948
 - ⇒ **Problem:** Commonwealth countries and colonies relied on export of a limited range of primary products to Britain (lack of diversity)
- 2. Development of colonial possessions for the sake of ‘trusteeship’ – to justify imperial rule in the post-war world**
 - The Empire would centre on Africa and the economic and social development of the colonial peoples there
 - ⇒ **Problems:** There was never enough money available to invest in development on a large scale. The development that did occur tended to displace the traditional indigenous elites on whose collaboration the British had relied, and encouraged a new, literate, articulate class of nationalists.

¹⁸ John Darwin discusses the concept of a ‘Fourth’ British Empire in *The Empire Project* (CUP; 2009)

Post-war economic development of the empire

'Far from drawing the lesson not that economic weakness and strategic exposure had made their overseas empires an unprofitable burden, Britain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium reached the opposite conclusion. To rebuild their war-shattered economies, they needed cheap raw materials and tropical commodities that they could resell for dollars - the dollars to help pay for their essential imports from the United States. Their colonies now seemed the perfect source: they could be forced to accept payment at below the world price, and in Europe soft currencies not hard American dollars. Cocoa from West Africa, copper from the Congo, tin and rubber from Malaya, sugar, coffee and oil from the Dutch East Indies would keep the Wolf from the door until the Metropolitan economies got back into balance.'

- **John Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, (Penguin, 2007)**

Far from being abandoned after 1947, the Empire was repositioned in Africa, Malaya and, informally, in the Middle East. These regions were sources of vital supplies and contributed through their dollar earning. Britain's new colonial policy needs to be interpreted with Britain's economic priorities in mind. By forming the Colonial Development Corporation in 1947, Britain hoped to promote the production of food and other raw materials urgently needed at home and use the colonies to earn dollars on the world market. It is no coincidence that the areas over which the British most wanted to maintain imperial control were the regions of greatest economic value in the period of post-war reconstruction.

- **PJ Cain and AG Hopkins, *British Imperialism* (2001)**

What do Darwin & Cain and Hopkins argue about British imperialism in the post-war period?

The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, 1940 and 1945, established the principle that the British government would invest directly (and encourage investment from others) in Britain's tropical colonies. The latter Act made £120 million available for this. The hope was that rapid economic growth in Britain's colonies would be a motor that could help Britain's own economy back into growth. The Colonial Development Corporation was set up in 1948 to coordinate this.

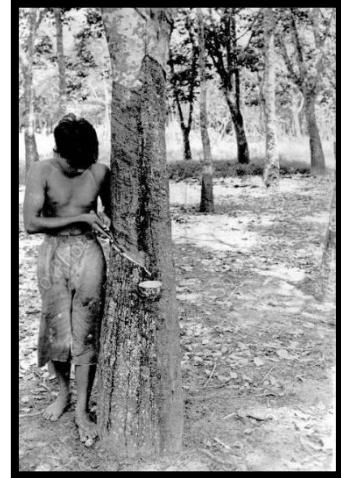
From 1943 Britain and the USA engaged in what was known as 'reverse lend lease.' This meant that wartime United States loans to Britain were repaid partly by raw materials shipped from British colonies to the USA. Tin and rubber from Malaya were very important in that context, while Africa supplied a wide range of products, both mineral and agricultural. Cocoa was third as a dollar earner after tin and rubber. In 1947, West Africa cocoa brought over 100 million dollars to the British dollar balance. Besides, having a virtual monopoly over the production of diamonds, South Africa was able to sell to the USA and earn dollars for Britain. It was on this very issue of currency that the colonial government did the most manipulations to ensure that Africa's wealth was stashed away in the coffers of the metropolitan state.

- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972)

Case Study One: Malayan Rubber

Rubber had been grown in Malaya from the late 19th century and, alongside tin, it became the centrepiece of the Malayan export economy. British planters established large rubber estates, mainly worked by Chinese and Indian migrant labourers, and their profits soared after the invention of the pneumatic tyre. As the US automobile industry took off into the 20th century, Malaya exported half the world's production of rubber by 1939. This was a major buttress of the Sterling Area, with rubber exports to the USA running at \$118 million a year. However, the Japanese occupation during the Second World War devastated the rubber industry; the plantations became virtual wastelands.

By 1947 rubber production had once again reached its pre-war peak and, by 1952-3 Malaya was providing 35.26% of Britain's net balance of payments with the dollar area. The Korean War (1950-53) caused the price of rubber to increase dramatically (due to increased US demand for military vehicles) and this only served to confirm Malaya's economic value to Britain; Malaya remained an extremely important possession and this helps explain why the British were so determined to prevent it from falling into the hands of a communist regime during the Malayan Emergency from 1948 onwards.

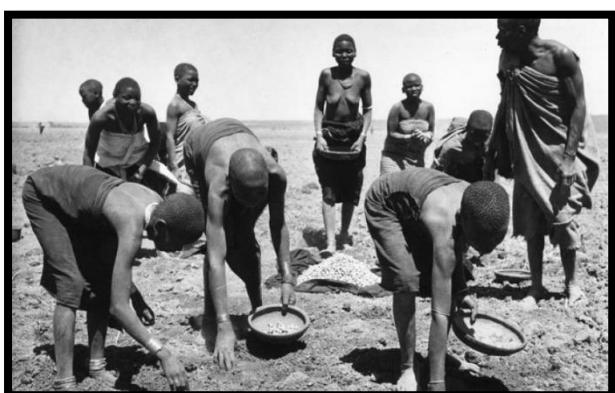


Case Study Two: The Tanganyika Groundnuts Scheme

Tanganyika had been an economic backwater prior to the Second World War and, with the newfound impetus behind colonial development, the Labour Government after 1945 decided to back a scheme that aimed to grow groundnuts (peanuts) on 3 million acres in Tanganyika. The hope was that this would bring economic development to this part of the empire, and supply the UK with a ready supply of nuts that could be used to manufacture various products including margarine.

However, the entire project quickly turned into a fiasco. Land needed to be cleared and, in the process, workers were harassed by wild animals, including bees, heavy machinery was ruined by trying to dig

in the hard soil, and workers went on strike. Eventually some nuts were planted but a lack of irrigation and a drought ruined the first crop. In the end, only 47,000 acres were cleared and planted (much less than the initial aim of 3 million) at a colossal total cost of £36 million. The scheme was costing six times as much to produce the crops as the crops were actually worth. In 1951 the whole project was written off as a failure.



The continued importance of empire (Part 2: Geopolitics):

'The argument for empire was not solely economic. A crucial part of the British case for staying put in the Middle East was geostrategic. Soviet aggression in central Europe, the strategists argued, could best be deterred by the use of air power - the huge bomber force the British had deployed against Nazi Germany. Russia's industrial cities were beyond the range of Britons own airfields, but from its Middle East bases they could be bombed at will. The British imperium in the Middle East would make up for British weakness close to home in Europe. France's post war leaders were also convinced they needed their empire as much if not more so. After France's defeat in June 1940 it had been the African colonies that had rallied to 'Free France'. Any hope of recovering France's pre-war status as one of the world's great powers seemed to depend on keeping the empire intact, not least as a source of military manpower.'

- John Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, (Penguin, 2007)

What does Darwin argue about Britain's empire in the post-war period?

Key Ideas:

- Maintenance of informal empire: protection of strategic interests through the Commonwealth after formal decolonisation
- Continuation of the 'dominion' idea → bonds of friendship = strategic allies
- Cold War context – prevent independent states entering the Soviet sphere of influence
- Cultivation of sympathetic elites to whom power could be handed
- Britain would retain its 'great power' status and rival the two superpowers as a 'Third Force' in geopolitics
 - ⇒ **Problem:** once independent, states would not necessarily stay in Britain's sphere of influence and could easily plough their own furrow.

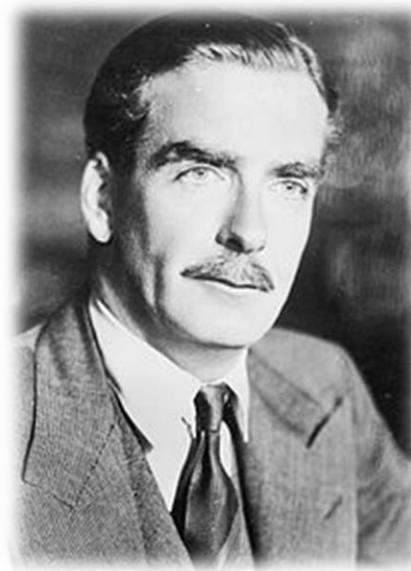
7. The Suez Crisis & Rapid Decolonisation (1950s-Present)



The Conservatives and the Empire, 1951-1957

Churchill returned to office at the head of a Conservative majority government in 1951. He was now 77 years old and, despite no reduction in his ambition, he lacked the energy that he had had ten years earlier. Despite the loss of India, Churchill was determined to maintain Britain's position as a world power, able to deal on equal terms with the United States and the USSR. In his view (in common with Attlee before him), Britain and its Commonwealth must remain an independent force in the world.

His Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden (right), was ambitious for the top job and became increasingly dominant in the government. Although Eden was much younger and seen to be a glamorous, energetic minister, his health was poor and he found his work increasingly stressful.



The United States was less concerned to encourage decolonisation than they had been as they feared newly independent states might become prey to communism and Soviet influence. However, Churchill and Eden found that they faced many of the problems the previous Labour government had faced. Britain's economy was still struggling to recover from the 1940s. It faced competition from Japan, France and West Germany whose economies were recovering rapidly from the devastation of the Second World War. The Treasury was increasingly worried about Britain's commitments around the world and the weight of colonial and defence spending.

Churchill's government saw the following imperial events:

- Moves towards independence in the Gold Coast and Nigeria
- The independence of the Sudan, 1956
- Attempts to create an East African Federation
- The creation of the Central African Federation
- The beginning of the Mau Mau Emergency in Kenya
- The continuation of the Malayan Emergency
- The onset of the Cyprus conflict

Throughout the priority was to maintain Britain's strategic position and influence throughout the world, whether through formal or informal means.

In 1955 Churchill finally retired as Prime Minister and he was succeeded by Eden. Eden premiership would be defined by the **Suez Crisis** in 1956. The humiliation that resulted from this would lead directly to his resignation in 1957.

The Suez Crisis

- Read: pp. 194-197 in AQA; pp. 573-587 in James

Context:

- 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty – Britain retained control of the Suez Canal Zone
- WWII – British military occupation of Egypt
- Continued Cold War significance of Egyptian airfields (within bombing range of USSR)
- 1952 – coup of Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser
- 1953-4 – agreements with Britain over Sudan and Suez
- 1955 – Baghdad Pact
- 1955-56 – Nasser draws closer to the USSR for aid

The Crisis:

- 16 July 1956 – nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company
- Failed attempts to resolve the crisis through diplomacy
- British-French-Israeli ‘Protocol of Sèvres’
- 29 October 1956 – Israeli invasion
- 31 October 1956 – British and French ‘intervention’
- Egyptian resistance
- The response of the USA → sterling crisis
- Ceasefire

Consequences:

- Diminishment of Britain and France as independent world powers
- Galvanisation of nationalist movements throughout the world
- Questions over the rest of Britain’s empire
- Humiliation of Anthony Eden → resignation in 1957

In 1956 it fell to Anthony Eden to learn the harshest lesson about how the days of Empire were well and truly over. As the British were about to discover, the appearance of dominance in the Middle East was illusory, not so much because of anything observable, but because of a change in world opinion. When the military leader, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser seized control of the Suez Canal in July 1956, he brought Britain into a head-on collision with reality. This was the crisis which gave the British Empire its fatal wound. The Egyptian nationalisation of the Suez Canal was not an imperial question but an international one. But there was a sense of imperial anger at work in Britain; Egypt had, after all, spent decades as the Veiled Protectorate. Race played its parts too. What finished off British delusions about the country’s place in the world was not what happened in Cairo or London, but attitudes in Washington. The Suez blunder was at least as great an imperial blunder as the fall of Singapore. The toothlessness of the British lion had been demonstrated to the world.

- Jeremy Paxman, *Empire* (2012)

- Why did Britain remain interested in maintaining its power in the Middle East?
- What was the impact of the Suez Crisis on Britain and its empire?



Was Suez the beginning of decolonization? Historiographically the battle-lines are drawn between those who make a high estimate of the effects, and those who feel they can be exaggerated. Anthony Low believes that it is always local nationalist pressure which forces transfers of power, and Suez is therefore ‘irrelevant’. By contrast, Roger Louis takes the view that ‘if there is any single event that marks the turning-point in the dissolution of the African empires, it is the Suez Crisis of 1956.’ This, to my mind, is a significantly stronger position, because: (1) Suez broke both the British imperial grip and the French cultural grip on the crucial area of the Middle East; (2) it forced a reconsideration of military deployments, which improved the prospects of Malta and Cyprus for self-government, and enabled Ceylon to get rid of British bases; (3) it had a psychological impact on Macmillan’s colonial policy, even if he could not act immediately; and (4) it made Britain ‘Public Enemy Number One’ at the United Nations for the next dozen years or so, with major implications for decolonization.

One final observation may be made. Suez was the most divisive political event of the last half-century in Britain, hugely more electrifying to public opinion than Thatcher’s action in the Falklands or Blair’s in Iraq. It was a moment of blinding revelation for many British people that the days of empire were numbered. It completely shattered the automatic trust and confidence of younger generations – and some older ones as well – in the good faith and honesty of their governments. Politicians would no longer get the benefit of the doubt. No subsequent generation would be as unquestioning as the last cohorts of national servicemen. Suez was for many a source of irreversible enlightenment, not least when evaluated in conjunction with John Osborne’s seminal play at the Royal Court Theatre, *Look Back in Anger* (May 1956), which seemed to validate a subversive outlook on life and politics. From this point onwards, deference to the Establishment, and indeed all establishments and hierarchies, would wither away. There was a new generation of protest, with criticism of foreign, imperial and nuclear arms policies better organised and more widespread than ever before. Press outrage was kept alive after Suez by a series of shameful incidents in Africa in the next few years. The anti-apartheid movement reached by the late 1950s what was probably the peak of its popular support. Of all of this, Macmillan, succeeding Eden as Prime Minister, was acutely aware. Public opinion had never been able effectively to lead governments where they did not want to go in overseas policy, and this did not change. Nevertheless, the new critical awareness of the public, and its willingness to take an ethical stand, was an important development.

- Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire* (CUP; 2006)

What does Hyam argue about the importance of the Suez Crisis?

Was the Suez Crisis the key turning point in the dissolution of the British Empire?

After Suez, Britain's decolonisation proceeded rapidly under Eden's successor, Harold Macmillan. From 1959 onwards, the remainder of Britain's African empire rapidly slipped away. Just as an Egyptian crisis had propelled Britain's involvement in the scramble for Africa after 1882, it was an Egyptian crisis that prompted Britain's scramble out of Africa.	
Macmillan initially continued Eden's colonial policy for the first two years of his premiership. In 1957 a review into Britain's colonial policy concluded that decolonisation should not be rapid, that Ghana's independence was unique, and that independence for other African colonies would not come until the 1970s at the earliest. In 1958 Whitehall proposed that spending on colonial development actually be increased.	
British power in the eastern Mediterranean was sustained after the Suez Crisis. Malta remained British until 1964 when Britain negotiated base rights. Cyprus remained (and remains) Britain's headquarters in the eastern Mediterranean with significant bases there.	
Anthony Eden's successor, Harold Macmillan, accepted the realities of Britain's shrunken status. He was widely liked in Washington as he accepted the inexorable logic of geopolitical relations that pointed in the direction of decolonisation.	
Leading Conservative ministers had long been worried about the resources available to the government: the welfare state was popular but hugely expensive, and higher taxes would have been politically unpalatable. Pruning back overseas commitments and the empire was the least politically-damaging option as the British electorate had more important priorities.	
After the loss of their pre-eminence in the eastern Mediterranean, defence reforms in 1957 reduced the scale of Britain's armed forces and their commitments overseas, ended national service, and focused on the development of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent as the core of the country's defence. This curtailed Britain's ability to intervene in future colonial disputes.	
The 1957 review of Britain's defence policy was started before the Suez Crisis and confirmed longer-standing trends: that Britain would reduce the size of its armed forces and place more emphasis on the nuclear deterrent. These policies responded to public opinion and were Conservative policy from 1954.	
The British economy was already over-extended before Suez. The crippling costs of the welfare state and Cold War defence were already apparent to the Bank of England and the Treasury. The Suez Crisis simply confirmed sterling's weakness and made this fact more widely known.	
The decisive watershed for Britain's position in the Middle East came in 1958 with the Iraqi revolution which replaced the pro-British government with a more radical, anti-western regime that established relations with the USSR. From then on, British influence in the Middle East was restricted to the Persian Gulf.	
According to Beloff (1989), Suez brought about 'a general acceptance in the Conservative Party of the fact that the dominance of the United States in world affairs could not be challenged and that the path of safety was at almost any cost to align British policy with that of the United States.' Macmillan embodied this thinking and abandoned the Conservatives' traditional position as the 'imperial' party. Instead they emphasised the 'special relationship' with the United States.	
According to Louis and Robinson (1994), the Suez Crisis showed how ultimately the empire's future hinged on American attitudes. 'Once and for all, it was established that Britain had to work in concert with the United States... Suez had exposed the American essentials underlying British power for all to see.'	
Britain remained committed to intervention in the Middle East after Suez. For example, Britain intervened in Kuwait in 1961 and remained close to the Kingdom of Jordan. Britain fought to maintain its position in Aden	

and only withdrew from their in 1967 because of pressure from a nationalist insurgency. It was not until 1971 that Britain pulled its forces out of the Persian Gulf.	
Harold Macmillan only decided to investigate membership of the EEC in 1961 after South Africa left the Commonwealth, not in the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis.	
No longer the party of empire, the Conservatives under Macmillan looked to the developing European Community as the economic focus of Britain's future. It was under Macmillan that Britain first applied to join the European Community in 1961 (unsuccessfully).	
Britain's leadership of the Commonwealth was damaged over the Suez Crisis, especially as Nehru and India sided with Egypt. Britain became 'Public Enemy Number 1' at the United Nations.	
Decisions to transfer power in Ghana and Malaya in 1957 were taken before the Suez Crisis and could not have been accelerated by it. Decolonisation was, instead, determined by the force of nationalism which was, in turn, conditioned by the unique strength of nationalism in each individual colony.	
After Suez, the United States still encouraged Britain's overseas position when this was beneficial. The USA relied on British power in the Far East and urged Britain to continue its colonial role in Hong Kong as a symbol of the 'free world'. In 1961 the US aided Britain's defence of Kuwait when it was threatened by Iraq.	
Britain remained committed to its role in the Far East after 1956. The Anglo-Malayan defence agreement of 1957 allowed for the continued stationing of British armed forces in the country and Singapore remained an important British overseas base.	
For Cain and Hopkins (2001), the crisis highlighted 'the contradiction between upholding sterling and funding the military operations needed at times to defend Britain's world role... This searing experience caused Macmillan to undergo spontaneous conversion: after 1956, the advocate of empire and coercion stood four-square for sterling and peace.'	
For Lapping (1987), 'everybody saw that the imperial gunboat no longer worked.' After the crisis, Egypt became a centre and inspiration for anti-colonialism while both the Americans and Soviets began more proactive campaigns to win the 'hearts and minds' of Africa.	
It has been argued that the Suez Crisis damaged faith in Britain's ruling elite; that it helped speed up changing social and cultural attitudes that ended deference and encouraged new values and attitudes that challenged the status quo and had no time for or interest in the empire.	
Nasser's triumph over Britain and France inspired nationalists throughout the world. In the rest of Britain's African colonies, there was now confidence amongst nationalist leaders that Britain could be resisted successfully.	

It is not clear when the old empires realised that the Age of Empire was definitely at an end. Certainly, in retrospect, the attempt by Britain and France to reassert themselves as global imperial powers in the Suez adventure of 1956 seems more doomed than it evidently did to the governments of London and Paris, who planned a military operation to overthrow the revolutionary Egyptian government of Colonel Nasser, in conjunction with Israel. The episode was a catastrophic failure (except from the point of view of Israel), all the more ridiculous for the combination of indecision, hesitation and unconvincing disingenuousness by the British prime minister, Anthony Eden. The operation, barely launched, was called off under pressure from the USA and ended for good what has been called 'Britain's Moment in the Middle East', the epoch of unquestioned British hegemony in that region since 1918.

- **E. Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991, 1995**

What brought Eden down was not an American stab in the back; Britain's crisis was in reality self-induced. Until 1956 it remained the assumption in Britain, particularly among the general public, that the country was still a great power. India had been lost but most of the other colonies and territories remained part of the British Empire, or the Commonwealth as it was now named and British influence continued to pervade Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Suez exposed the extent of Britain's pretensions. Eden had tried to take an independent line in the Middle East, only to discover that Britain lacked the means to do so. Her armed forces were ill-prepared, she antagonised world opinion by her spurious cover-story, she lacked the bases and air transports needed for a swift operation and her economy was vulnerable to American pressure. The outcome was the worst humiliation in Britain's twentieth century history, beginning a long period of introspection and doubt.

- **D. Dimbleby & D. Reynolds, An Ocean Apart, 1988**

Because Eden had suspected that the United States was 'out to replace the British Empire', he had made the cardinal mistake over Suez, as Churchill intimated, of not 'consulting the Americans'. His successors, recognising their country's satellite status, did not make the same mistake – quite the opposite. For his part, Eisenhower aimed to employ the British Lion, injured though it was, in his struggle with the Russian Bear. This meant rebuilding the damaged alliance and shoring up Britain's position in the Middle East. Contrary to myth, therefore, the imperial legions did not march home in 1956. Of course, London's freedom of action was circumscribed by Washington. But, although Suez brought the Commonwealth to 'the verge of dissolution', according to the Canadian foreign minister Lester Pearson, it remained a global body. And Britain, possessing other allies as well as nuclear weapons, still aspired to be a great power.

- **P. Brendon, The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 2008**

The end of Britain's informal empire in the Middle East?

In certain respects, the Suez Crisis was not a turning point, but merely a symptom of a wider collapse of Britain's power in the Middle East. Encouraged by the independence of India, riled by the partition of Palestine, and resentful of perceived British perfidy, Arab nationalism was growing in force after 1945. A series of events throughout the region emphasized the collapse of the British imperial position:

- 1951 – election of Mohammad Mussadiq's nationalist party in Iran/ Persia – nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
- 1953 – Mussadiq overthrown by a CIA-funded insurrection and replaced with Shah Mohammad Reza, an American client ruler (until 1979)
- 1958 – overthrow of British client King Faisal II of Iraq
- 1965-1975 – British support for the Omani monarchy against Marxist partisans
- 1967 – withdrawal from Aden following a guerilla conflict
- 1971 – Formation of the United Arab Emirates and British withdrawal from the Gulf States

Throughout the period, the United States gradually pushed Britain aside as the paramount power in the region. Turkey was courted and joined NATO in 1951. Meanwhile, large US loans went to Saudi Arabia and the US became the primary supporter of Israel.

Nevertheless, Britain remained an important ally of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf States. In 1991 it participated in the Gulf War after Saddam Hussein's Iraq had invaded Kuwait. Then again, in 2003, Britain joined the USA in invading and occupying Iraq. In 2018 Britain reopened a permanent Royal Navy base in Bahrain.

Britain's dominance of the Middle East had not been sought, colonial fashion, as an end in itself, but as a means of safeguarding communications with the Raj in India. When the protection and stability of the Middle East were recognised as necessities in their own right because of its vast oil potential, even nostalgic imperialists on the extreme right recognised that the imposition of more direct control was no longer an option. It is also worth remembering that, from 1919, Britain's tutelage was explicitly intended to continue only until her dependencies had developed to the point when they could look after themselves. In that sense Britain's misjudgement related even more to the *pace* of history than to her purposes in it.

- **Glen Balfour-Paul, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire vol. IV The Twentieth Century* (Judith Brown and Wm Roger Louis eds.) (OUP; 1999)**

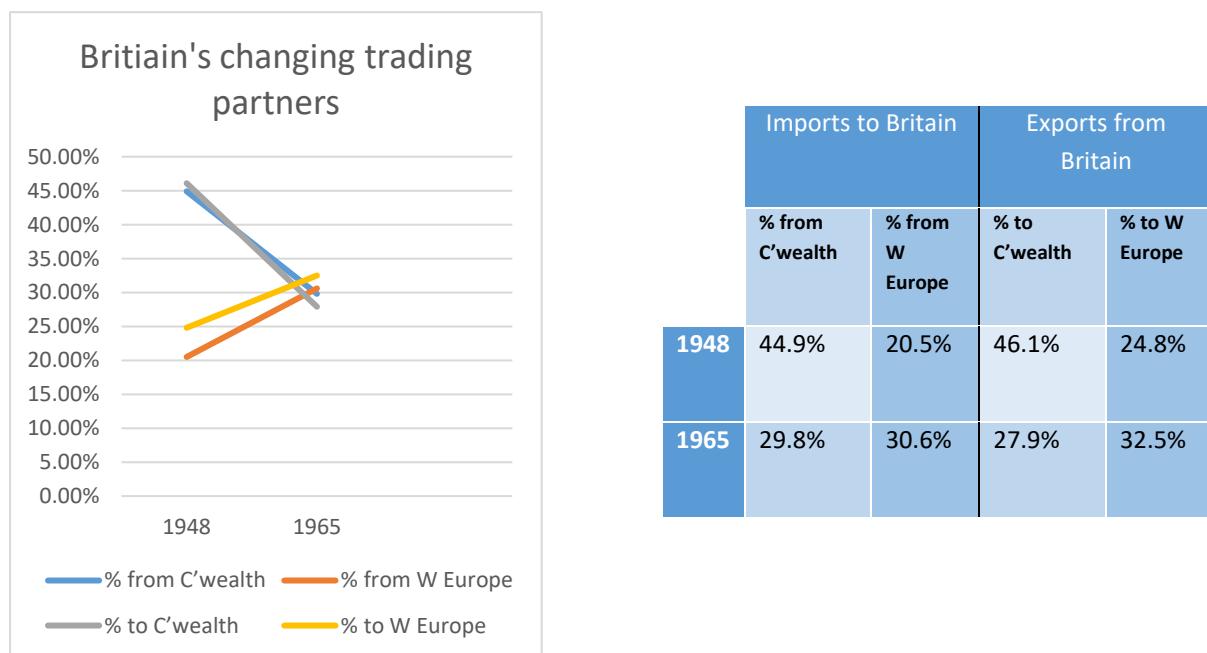
Economic change

- pp. 203-207 in AQA

Perhaps the most important reason why many in Britain were content with the Empire's disappearance was the fact that Britain's economic situation no longer made it viable. While it is undoubtedly true that both the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires managed to stagger on for an inordinately long time without dynamic economies, for the British, the profits and prosperity it brought had been one of the principle reasons for the Empire's existence: 'By the mid-1950s, France and Great Britain were adding up the costs and benefits of colonial rule more carefully than ever before and coming up with negative numbers.'¹⁹ Once the Empire began to be a financial burden, it was, perhaps, understandable why its dissolution was not resisted. In addition, Britain's imperial and military power had always rested on its industrial and commercial pre-eminence relative to other powers. However, this was eroded from the late nineteenth-century onwards and the United Kingdom was eclipsed by larger and more dynamic economies such as the USA, Russia/The USSR and Germany.²⁰ The two world wars speeded up this process and, post-1945, Britain's economy was unable to sustain the trappings of Great Power status.²¹

- AEWG

Declining importance of the empire for British trade and commerce:



¹⁹ Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', p.1537

²⁰ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, (Unwin Hyman Ltd., London, 1988) pp. 227-229

²¹ Kennedy *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 424-428

Changing European context:

- European-wide economic recovery in 1950s – Marshall Aid
- Formation of EEC – Treaty of Rome, 1957
- Failed British applications for membership: 1963 and 1967
- Sterling devaluation, 1967, of 14% against the dollar → end of the Sterling Area (1970s → end of fixed exchange rates)
- British entry to the EEC, 1973

From the mid 1950s to mid 1960s the trading ties between the colonies and Britain declined as Britain edged closer to Western Europe and North America. International trade in manufactured goods and services became more valuable than that in raw materials and food. The colonies subsequently became less attractive to British exporters looking for markets with higher incomes. There was also more competition for Britain from other industrial countries who were supplying goods to Britain's colonies and ex-colonies by the 1960s. Britain's decision to apply for membership of the EEC both reflected its rapidly expanding trade with nearby Europe and the decline of that with its far flung imperial trading partners. It also reinforced this trend, even though Britain's entry to Europe was delayed until 1973.

- Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies, 1850-1960* (1993)

What do Havinden and Meredith argue about Britain's economy?

- **What effect did economic change have on the British imperial policy?**

Changing international relations: 1950s-1960s

The Cold War dominated international relations by the 1950s and decolonisation was a process that occurred within its shadow. Although it remained the third most powerful country in the world, it was clear that, by the 1950s, British power was significantly inferior to that of the United States and the Soviet Union (despite developing its own independent nuclear deterrent in 1952).

Britain's alliance (the 'special relationship') with the United States rested on shared values and shared sacrifice in the Second World War. The two countries were also close military and intelligence allies during the Cold War and, together, were the most significant military powers in NATO. An Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement in 1958 resulted in close cooperation in nuclear weapons and supplied the British with American-designed missiles.

Yet, the Suez Crisis of 1956 revealed that Britain struggled to act independently of the United States. America remained hostile to empire on principle, and the interests of the Cold War would take priority – this could lead to a tolerance for British colonialism (e.g. in Malaya), or hostility to it (e.g. in the Middle East).

British post-war foreign policy is often regarded as focusing on 'three circles': three important relationships that need to be held in balance:



However, these relationships were never equal and the 1950s and 1960s saw significant changes in Britain's international relations:

- **An unequal relationship with the United States and growing military and economic dependence**
 - NATO and nuclear alliance
 - Withdrawal of Britain from the Greece as a sphere of influence (and hand over to the USA)
 - Marshall Plan - \$3.3 billion given to the UK
 - American reactions to the Suez Crisis
- **An increasingly distant relationship with the Commonwealth and the Dominions**
 - Decreasing importance of trade with colonial and Commonwealth markets
 - Canadian membership of NATO and closeness to the United States in trade and defence
 - Australian, New Zealand and Singapore – reorientation to the USA as guarantor of security in the Pacific – formation of SEATO in 1954
 - Determination of India and other Commonwealth countries to pursue an independent foreign policy – formation of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1956
- **A developing relationship with Western Europe**
 - Within the NATO alliance, Britain's defence policy had to be focused on Europe – the defence of West Germany and patrol of the North Atlantic
 - Growing trade with an increasingly prosperous Western Europe
 - Applications in 1963 and 1967 to join the European Economic Community

Europe:

- Treaty of Rome, 1957 – France, W Germany, Italy and Benelux → formation of the European Economic Community (EEC)
- UK stands apart – prioritising colonial connections. 1960 – formation of EFTA as rival bloc
- Growing prosperity of W Europe and growing importance of trade with W Europe
- British applications to join in 1963 and 1967 – vetoed by Charles de Gaulle
- British accession in 1973 – continued membership ratified by referendum in 1975



'England in effect is insular, she is maritime, she is linked through her interactions, her markets and her supply lines to the most diverse and often the most distant countries; she pursues essentially industrial and commercial activities, and only slight agricultural ones. She has, in all her doings, very marked and very original habits and traditions.' – **Charles de Gaulle** on vetoing Britain's 1963 application to the EEC.

Contrasts: The French experience of decolonisation

French defeat by Nazi Germany in 1940 and then Japan in 1942 was more destabilizing to the French Empire than the Second World War was to the British Empire. Charles De Gaulle's Free French forces competed with the collaborationist Vichy forces for control of France's colonial empire, and the humiliation of occupation completed undermined France's claims to be a strong imperial power.

France attempted to re-establish control of its empire after 1945. However, this proved to be an almost impossible task and the subsequent process of decolonisation was extremely violent and traumatic both for the French people, and for their colonial subjects.

The 1946 Fourth Republic relabelled the French Empire as the 'French Union' where colonies had some representation in the National Assembly in Paris. The French conception of empire was that the colonial territories would formally become part of France, abolishing any distinction between metropole and periphery, except representation would have to be skewed to ensure that white French remained in a majority.

Indo-China

France recolonised Indo-China in 1945-6 after Japanese occupation in WWII. However, the communist-nationalist Viet Minh (led by Ho Chi Minh) who had resisted the Japanese, now resisted the French and began a *guerrilla* campaign for independence. Cold War priorities (leading to US support) and lobbying from French business and settlers meant the French were dragged into a long conflict whereby they found it impossible to fully re-establish their control over the country.



In March 1954 a French army was destroyed at the battle of Dien Bien Phu and the French were forced to negotiate withdrawal and a peace at Geneva in 1954. Indo-China (Vietnam) would be partitioned between the communist north and a western-supporting south, pending elections. It was to forestall any risk that the entirety of the country would become communist that the USA gradually became sucked into a conflict that would define the 1960s.

Algeria

The position in Algeria was complicated by the fact that, throughout the 19th century, it had become a colony of settlement for France, numbering around 1 million people (10% of the population). The indigenous Muslim majority, faced with economic deprivation and a lack of political rights, started to resist French rule from the end of the Second World War.

The National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria waged a terrorist/ *guerilla* campaign from 1954 to 1958. French settlers and collaborating Arabs were targeted in attacks and the French sent over 400,000 troops to deal with the insurgency. In the wake of the humiliation of Dien Bien Phu, the French commanders were determined to succeed in Algeria. Over a million died in a conflict that would be one of the bloodiest chapters in European decolonisation. In contrast to Indo-China, there was little sympathy from the United States which recognised that the FLN were motivated more by Islam which

proved a barrier to communist ideas. The Cold War context, therefore, had little impact on the situation.

Caught between the reality of the situation on the one hand, and the demands of the Army and the French settlers on the other, a succession of weak governments in Paris failed to deal with the situation. In 1958 the Fourth Republic collapsed and Charles de Gaulle, wartime hero of France, came out of retirement to lead the nation. He redesigned the constitution, establishing the Fifth Republic with a strong executive presidency (himself). Despite promises to the army and the Algerian settlers, he was a realist and determined to relinquish France's colonial role.



Having fought the FLN to the negotiating table, De Gaulle was determined to offer Algeria a referendum on its future, a policy for which he got support from the French people in a referendum in 1961. Against staunch resistance from the settlers and the army, De Gaulle granted Algeria full independence in 1962. Most French settlers migrated to France, along

with large numbers of pro-French Algerian Arabs.

France's defeat and humiliation in the Second World War left it with a harder task to re-establish its position after 1945 than Britain. Nevertheless, the violence and turmoil that then accompanied French decolonisation inevitably had an impact on the British Empire.

- **How would French decolonisation have affected Britain and its empire in the 1950s?**

The Conservatives and the Empire, 1957-1964

Anthony Eden resigned in 1957 in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis. He was replaced by Harold Macmillan (right, former Chancellor of the Exchequer). Macmillan's main concern was to revive the fortunes of the Conservative Party, and the reputation of Britain after the humiliation of Suez.

Macmillan was an effective politician (nicknamed 'Supermac') and, buoyed by a growing economy, he led the Conservative Party to another victory in 1959. Like his predecessors, Macmillan sought to confirm Britain as a dominant power in world affairs. However, he was a pragmatist and it is under his premiership that British decolonisation accelerated rapidly.

He established a Cabinet Colonial Policy Committee to evaluate the benefits of the colonial empire and its findings recommended a leisurely route towards independence. In 1959, however, Macmillan decided on a quicker process. The appointment of Iain Macleod as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1959 was crucial. Macleod aspired to be the last Colonial Secretary; he was sympathetic to African nationalism and feared bloodshed if nationalist aspirations were delayed further.

Within the Conservative Party, younger, modernising MPs had taken their seats after the 1959 election and they weighed up the strengths and drawbacks of continued colonial rule with a detached pragmatic eye. They began to dominate over the shrinking reactionary group of Conservatives who wished to retain the empire at all costs (The Monday Club).

In 1960 Macmillan made a six-week tour of African colonies that ended in South Africa where *apartheid* and white dominance were in the ascendant. He made a significant speech to the South African parliament in Cape Town, warning them of the enormous changes that were currently sweeping Africa: '**the wind of change** is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.' This speech was not well-received by the white South African politicians. Nevertheless, it marks the point at which it was clear the British Government was committed to African decolonisation as quickly as was practically possible.



❖ What explains the decision of Macmillan's government to decolonise quickly?

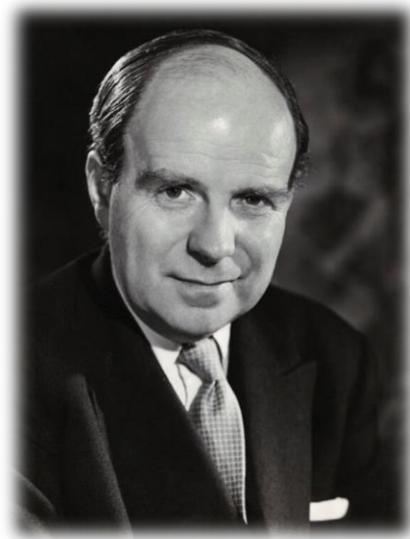
In February 1957, Harold Macmillan became Prime Minister. He was not committed to the Empire as Churchill and Eden had been. He was a political adventurer, able to change course if it served his purpose. He aimed above all to secure the friendship of the United States and, equally, to avoid conflict with African nationalism. He requested a balance sheet that would indicate whether each colony was a liability or an asset. But the economic and military issues were too complex for this to be done. Macmillan, however, decided independently that the empire was an undesirable burden and that he could only get back on good terms with the Americans by showing that Britain no longer possessed an aggressively imperialist mentality. He recognised too that international sentiment was now against colonialism. While the British could cope with limited colonial insurgency, they could not deal with major colonial warfare. The British parliament and public would not tolerate it, nor would the economy sustain it.

- Adapted from 'The Dissolution of the British Empire' by Wm. Roger Louis (1999)

What are the main arguments in the above extract?

Key Individual: Iain Macleod

- **Read: ODNB entry by David Goldsworthy (focus on his tenure as Colonial Secretary).**



Macleod had no previous experience in overseas policy and indeed had never set foot in a colonial territory. But his very lack of experience enabled him to think colonial policy afresh. This he did in accordance with his conviction—reinforced earlier in 1959 by the Hola Camp deaths in Kenya and the disturbances in Nyasaland—that ‘we could no longer continue with the old methods of government in Africa and that meant inexorably a move towards African independence ... although it was extremely dangerous to move quickly it would have been far more dangerous to try and hold back the tide of African nationalism.’

More succinctly he told Peter Goldman of the Conservative Research Department that he intended to be the last colonial secretary. In retrospect Macleod perceived himself as having ‘telescoped events rather than created new ones’ (Macleod and Kirkman, 3). His telescoping was done with the general support of the prime minister, who during 1960 was often to be seen in parliament with an arm around Macleod’s shoulders; although at times Macmillan was startled by Macleod’s speed, and he did not always take Macleod’s side in the disputes over central Africa which Macleod had with his ‘balancer’, the much more cautious Commonwealth secretary, Duncan Sandys.

Surveying his ‘dismal inheritance’ (Macleod and Kirkman, 8) in October 1959, Macleod decided that he must grasp the nettle immediately in Kenya and central Africa, where political and racial tensions were running high.

The historian Roger Louis considered that ‘Macleod was to Africa as Mountbatten had been to. Certainly the acceleration of Britain’s peaceful withdrawal from Africa stands as Macleod’s greatest political achievement, securing his reputation as ‘perhaps second only to Joseph Chamberlain’ (DNB) among the reforming colonial secretaries.

- ODNB Entry by David Goldsworthy

Cyprus & the Mediterranean

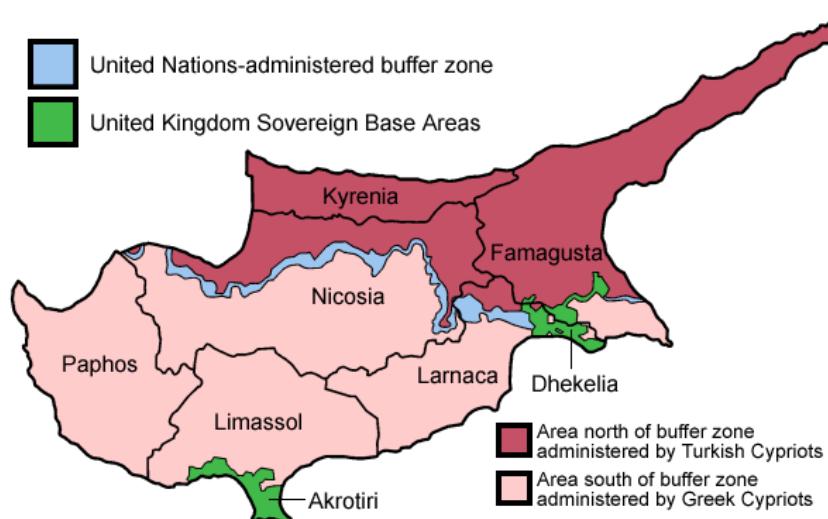
The British hoped that **Cyprus** would remain as a British base in the eastern Mediterranean to ensure that it maintained its dominance in the Middle East.

The island was divided demographically between the Greek majority (c. 80%) and a Turkish minority. The Greek population wanted union with Greece while the Turkish minority were opposed to this. Greek Cypriots, led by Archbishop Makarios, pressed for independence and formed a *guerrilla* organisation (EOKA) which waged a terrorist campaign in which 200 people were killed. Britain declared a state of emergency and 25,000 troops were sent to restore order in Cyprus.

'Black October' in 1958 saw 45 people killed and 2,000 EOKA suspects were arrested. Macmillan, realising that the island could not be held indefinitely through force, opened talks with Makarios which arrived at the following agreements:

- Cyprus was to become an independent state within the Commonwealth by 1960
- Its Greek and Turkish communities would each have a wide degree of autonomy
- Britain retained sovereignty over two military bases: Dhekelia and Akrotiri

Civil war continued between the Greek and Turkish communities and the island remains partitioned to this day.



The importance of **Malta** decreased as British naval power in the Mediterranean declined. A referendum in 1956 saw a majority of the population vote for full integration with the United Kingdom. However, this was rejected by the British Government and Malta became an independent state in 1963.

Despite Spanish claims to **Gibraltar**, the Gibraltarians firmly wanted to stay British. It remains a British possession to this day.

- What caused decolonisation in Cyprus?

West Indies

After the abolition of slavery and with the introduction of free trade, Britain's colonies in the Caribbean had become an economic backwater and remained so throughout the 19th century. Between 1848 and 1910 the number of plantations in Jamaica had shrunk from 513 to 77. The majority black population remained desperately poor with high rates of illiteracy. By 1900 Britain had reimposed direct rule to avoid power being hoarded by unrepresentative white assemblies.



West Indian nationalism was born during the miseries of the Great Depression in the 1930s which hit the colonies hard; trade unions and other representative bodies were formed to campaign for reform.

Some reform did come during World War Two when the West Indies proved their loyalty through supply of troops, and their strategic importance during the Battle of the Atlantic. Development grants were given out by London and the franchise was expanded. The United States of America, however, was clearly the dominant regional power and its economic, military and diplomatic interests were an overbearing presence in the Caribbean.

Both the British and nationalists favoured the idea of a West Indian Federation that would be strong enough to stand by itself as an independent dominion, and strengthen the bonds between the different colonies.

In 1958 the West Indian Federation was formed, combining ten islands in a new state, with the British retaining control of foreign affairs. However, the two largest islands, Jamaica and Trinidad, chafed at the limitations this arrangement placed on their autonomy. Jamaica voted to quit in a 1961 referendum and by 1962 the Federation had completely collapsed.

After the Cuban Revolution of 1958, the United States became even more determined to assert its interests in the region and it replaced Britain as the dominant power there, invading Grenada in 1983 to install a puppet government there and forestall the supposed spread of communism. The British were not even consulted on this American aggression against a Commonwealth state and this revealed starkly how imbalanced the 'special relationship' had become.

- **What caused decolonization in the West Indies?**
- **How successfully did the British manage decolonization in the West Indies?**

The spread of nationalism

Nationalism in Britain's African possessions appeared as a major force only *after* 1945. While there were some disturbances in the inter-war period (strikes by railway workers in Sierra Leone in 1919 and 1926 and disturbances in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia), the 'organisation of discontent in Africa was...very embryonic [and] easily suppressed.'²² However, the Second World War stirred up discontent in the colonies and, shortly after the war had ended, there were serious disturbances in Nigeria, Sudan and the Gold Coast. It is, therefore, possible to view nationalism's post-war appearance in Africa as precipitating Britain's withdrawal from the continent.

As the 1950s progressed, formal movements began to develop; African nationalists looked to India as their model, were encouraged by similar nationalist movements in neighbouring French colonies, and often found support both amongst the Left within Britain and in the leadership of the now influential USSR.²³ Charismatic individuals such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta emerged as leaders of powerful movements. Moreover, Britain's attempts to stimulate economic development in its African colonies through investment in the 1950s stirred up local resentments even further; whereas British rule had previously been fairly light-touch, when it started to become more active in the 1950s it lost the support of former collaborators and upset local vested interests thus creating opposition for itself.²⁴ Thus, enthusiastic attempts at development such as the measures to eradicate 'swollen shoot' disease in the Gold Coast, the imposition of contour terracing into Kenya and the catastrophic Groundnuts Scheme in Tanganyika made British rule much more apparent and much more deeply resented.

Coupled with this, the introduction of representative forms of local government both antagonised the indigenous elites through which the British had ruled indirectly and presented opportunities for local nationalist politicians to gain political experience. As Bernard Porter has argued, the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of the 1950s created new opportunities for political development and the exchange of ideas.²⁵ Throughout the 1950s Britain faced growing violence and unrest in most of its African colonies from Nigeria, to Kenya, to the different segments of the abortive Central African Federation. In all of these places Britain's own actions tended to exacerbate the problem. Elsewhere in the Empire too, the British struggled in the 1950s with colonial unrest: EOKA violence in Cyprus and a communist insurgency in Malaya stand out as notable examples. By the mid-1960s, as European flags were lowered throughout Africa and the rest of the Third World, it seemed that nationalists everywhere had triumphed over the old European Empires.

However, the role that nationalists played in ending the British Empire needs to be qualified; viewing the process of decolonisation as a culmination of a long struggle for liberty by the oppressed nations of the world seems a little misty-eyed and suspiciously Whiggish. Firstly, it is a mistake to assume that, until nationalist movements appeared in the Twentieth Century, the British Empire was perpetually calm and peaceful. It was not. For example, between the 1857 Mutiny and independence the British faced 77 rebellions of varying seriousness that were distinct from Congress' 'nationalist' activities.²⁶

²² Porter, *The Lion's Share*, p. 289

²³ Porter, *The Lion's Share*, p. 323

²⁴ Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*, pp. 92-97

²⁵ Porter, *The Lion's Share*, p. 322

²⁶ Shipway, *Decolonization and its impact*, pp. 43-46

The British had faced threats throughout the history of their imperial escapades and, after the experience of losing the 13 American colonies, had found imaginative ways of coping and dealing with them. Therefore, while the challenge presented by the movements of the mid-Twentieth Century were, on the whole, more united and more widespread than other rebellious groups had been in the past, it is nonetheless clear that, in few places, were the British simply chased out by a ‘nationalist’ movement. Simply because nationalist movements appeared in most British possessions prior to independence, this did not mean that they were solely *responsible* for independence.

Upon closer inspection, it seems clear that the British dealt with ‘nationalists’ in different ways depending on the circumstances. It is important to remember that nearly every movement was a shaky coalition of different interests which made them weaker than they might, at first glance, appear. As a result of conflict over what actually constituted ‘the nation’ and, therefore, what was being fought for, Britain was given quite a lot of room for manoeuvre. Sometimes they would react with coercion: the legal and military action against the Congress in India between the wars, against the Mau Mau in Kenya and the communists in Malaya in the 1950s would be examples of this; at the time, the victory of any of these groups could not be countenanced. In these instances, just as when it had faced rebellions in the past, the British were largely successful in their suppression and it must be remembered that Britain retained a formidable military power throughout the period of decolonisation. However, the British *chose* not to keep hold of their empire by force and dealt with many nationalist and anti-colonial movements in other ways.

By granting formal independence, the British hoped to placate nationalist demands while retaining informal influence over the nationalist elite.²⁷ The handing of power to nationalists can, therefore, be seen as part of an enduring characteristic of British rule: the British had frequently opted to control their empire through collaboration with indigenous elites and the British seem to have approached nationalists with a similar attitude. There was to be a new arrangement which would appease nationalist sentiments and centre on the Commonwealth: an organisation which the British believed held a great deal of potential for advancing British interests in nominally independent states. In many instances, the British willingly courted nationalists as potential new collaborators through whom they could continue to wield influence and this was the hope in the Middle East, India and in Africa. The British even went to the extent of cultivating nationalism in certain places and acting as its midwife so that the British would have a group to hand over a fractured, heterogeneous territory to (Nigeria being an obvious example).²⁸ As Frederick Cooper has pointed out, the new ‘national imaginaries were as much a consequence as a prior condition’ of independence.²⁹ Therefore, rather than accrediting nationalism with the sole responsibility of destroying Britain’s imperial position, it must be recognised that their apparent success was only enabled by a range of other complimentary factors.

- AEWG

²⁷ Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, pp. 167-168

²⁸ Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 174

²⁹ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, 2010), p. 414

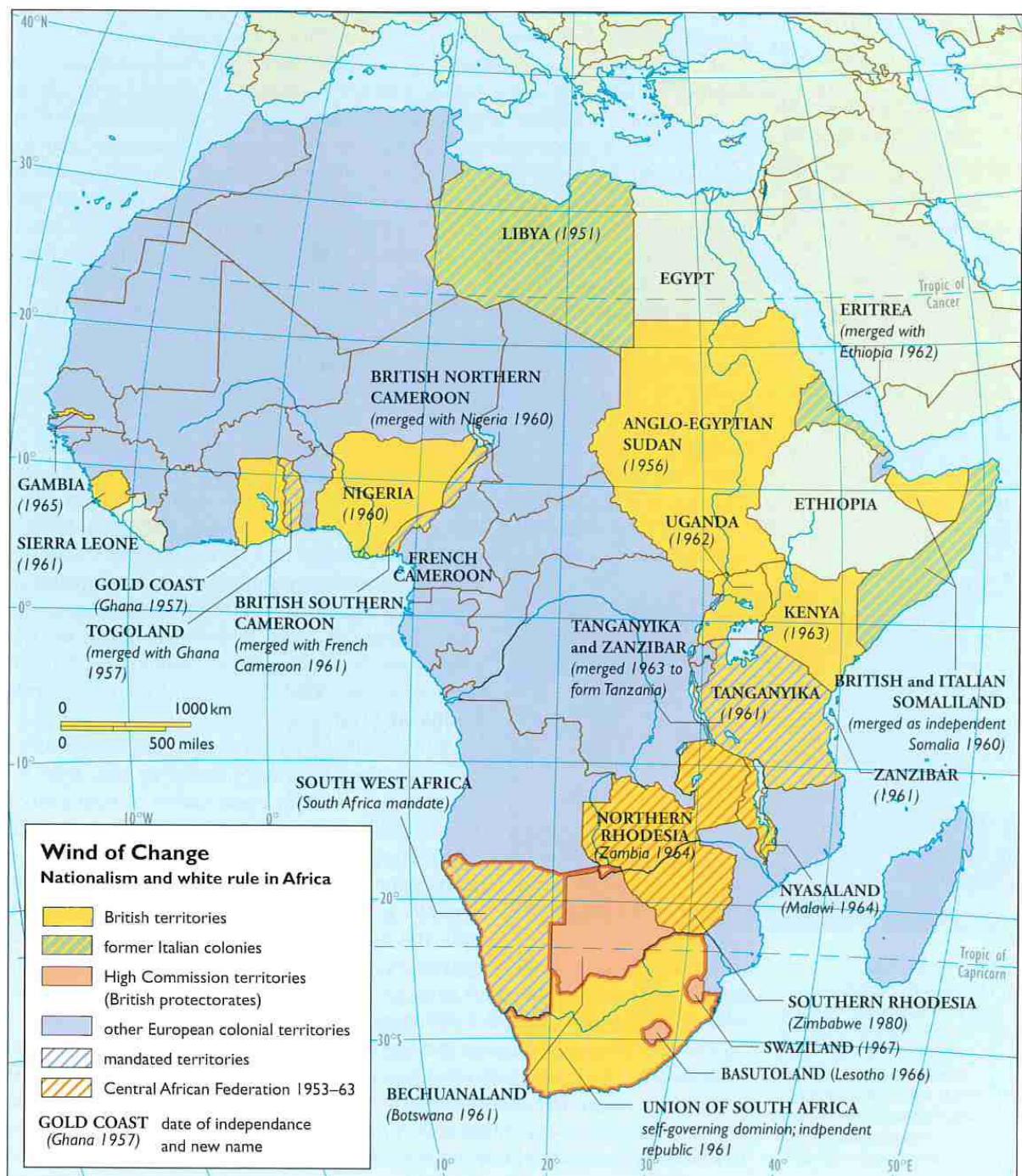


- **What explains the growth of nationalism in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s?**

There emerged a new style of African leadership in the east of the continent after 1945. The first stage began soon after the war when the earlier leadership of illiterate workers was replaced by younger, more educated men in the cities, such as Mombasa and Nairobi. A similar change followed more slowly in the rural areas, where the chiefs lost out to a newer, younger generation of leaders: the school teachers, the clerks and the traders who were outside the traditional authority structure. The second stage occurred in the 1950s, with the appearance of a new type of politician, the nationalist, with a strong, more specific anti-colonial commitment. Many still in their twenties, they were better educated than the earlier leaders. Some had been abroad for part of their education. The majority of these new leaders were the second generation of the emergent elite: teachers, cooperative officials, trade unionists, clerks, and some professional men. These were the men who built the political parties; who edited the party newspapers; and who moulded rural and urban discontent into a base from which they demanded power.

- **Cherry Gertzel, *East and Central Africa* (1984)**

What does Gertzel argue about the emergence of nationalism in Africa?



Winds of Change: West Africa

- Read: pp. 180-182 & pp. 236-238 in AQA; pp. 607-621 in James

The Gold Coast (Ghana)

What was the context?

What happened?

Why did Ghana become independent when it did? (What were the main factors?)

What was the role of Sir Charles Arden Clarke (1898-1962) – see pp. 216-217 in AQA



**What was the role of Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) – see pp. 209-210
in AQA**



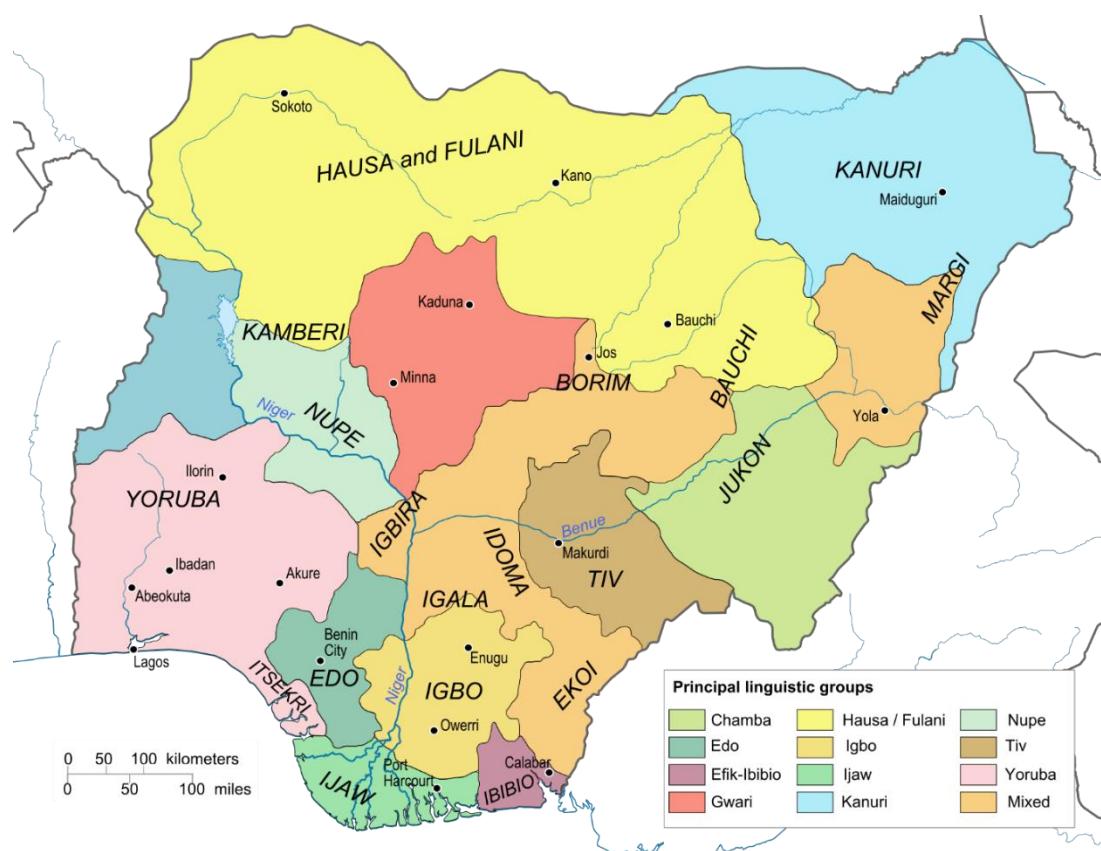
Nigeria

What was the context?

What happened?

Why did Nigeria become independent when it did? (What were the main factors?)

What was the role of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-96) – see pp. 210 in
AQA



Map showing the principal ethnic and linguistic groups in Nigeria

Britain's other two colonies in West Africa, The Gambia and Sierra Leone, became independent in 1961 and 1965 respectively.

- What caused decolonisation in West Africa

Winds of Change: East Africa

Kenya

- Read: pp. 232-235 in AQA

What was the context?

What happened?

Why did Kenya become independent when it did? (What were the main factors?)

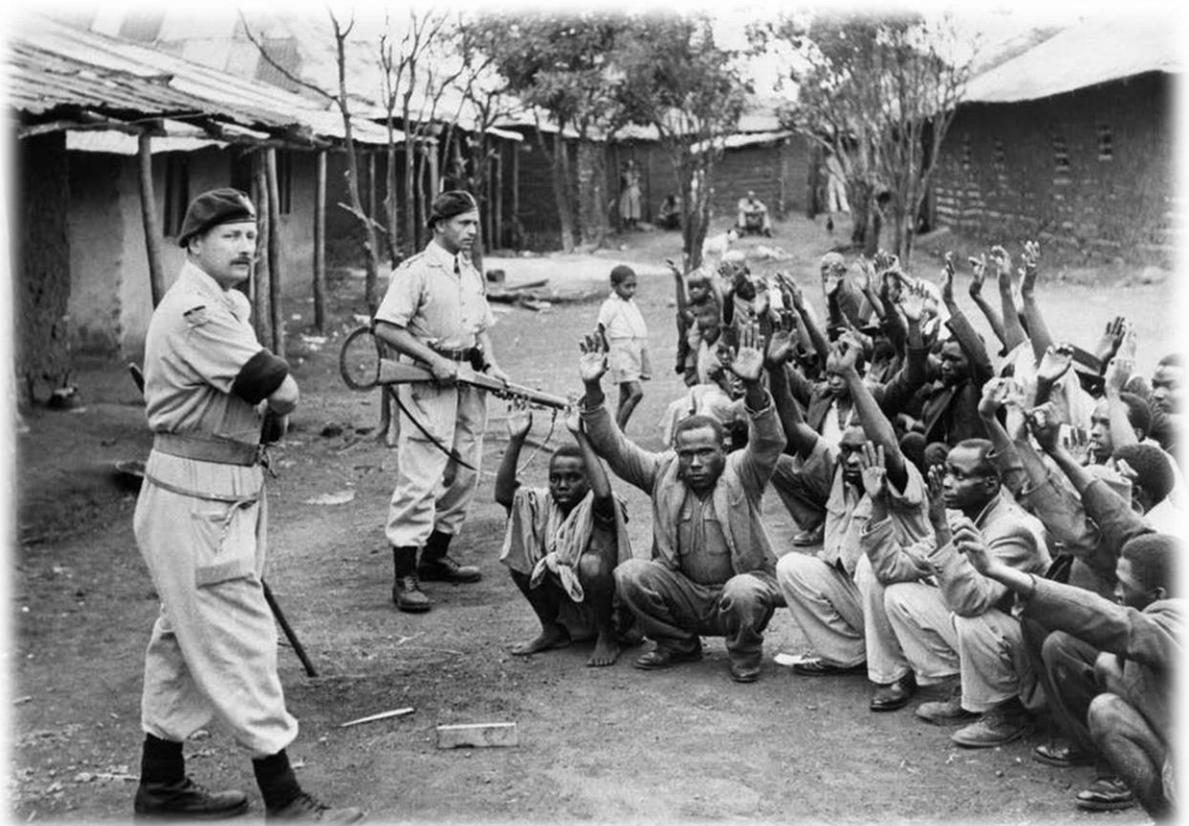
**What was the role of Jomo Kenyatta (1891-1978) – see pp. 211-12 in
AQA**



The Mau Mau was a nationalist, anti-colonial peasant movement. In Mau Mau there were no revolutionary intellectuals. As a result, the Mau Mau lacked the focus and discipline of a revolutionary party. In the Mau Mau revolt, there was a direct challenge to the social order, which was colonial and racist. To this end, it could be argued that Mau Mau agitated for the abolition of the colonial system. The revolt strove for an independent future free of colonial control. Yet most of the participants were peasants who wanted their own land to live on and farm and who wanted to enjoy prosperity. But to strive for an independent future did not necessarily mean that Mau Mau activists had a common concrete idea as to the shape of this future. This remained one of their major weaknesses.

- **Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya* (1998)**

What does Maloba argue about the Mau Mau uprising?



Among the many intriguing aspects of Mau Mau is the length of time that the freedom fighters survived in the thick forest environment of Mount Kenya and the Nyandarua range. Without prior preparations or established arrangements for the supply of provisions, ammunition and firearms, thousands of discontented Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peasants trekked to the forests to strengthen the swelling numbers of Mau Mau freedom fighters. Faced with the sophisticated weapons of the British and loyalist troops, the freedom fighters' only advantage was the forest environment. Mau Mau was a traumatic experience for both the British and the Africans. Among the peasants it precipitated many hardships, including thousands of deaths, loss of property and indeterminate stretches of detention and imprisonment. The Mau Mau struggle proved far more difficult to quell than the colonial government had anticipated. What had initially appeared as a localised uprising became a fully-fledged war that lasted over three years and necessitated the importation of British troops, advanced artillery and an extensive expenditure from the British treasury. The war rocked the very foundations of the colonial regime in Kenya and forced British colonial officials and Whitehall and to rethinking the whole colonial policy. In other words, Britain was awakened to the urgency of bringing Africans into the mainstream of the country's economic and political developments.

- Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* (1987)

What does the above extract argue about the Mau May uprising?

Uganda

What was the context?

What happened?

Why did Uganda become independent when it did? (What were the main factors?)

Tanganyika & Zanzibar (Tanzania)

What was the context?

What happened?

Why did Tanganyika & Zanzibar become independent when they did? (What were the main factors?)

- **Why did Britain decolonise in East Africa?**

Southern Africa and Rhodesia

- **Read: pp. 238-240 in AQA**

In southern-central Africa the situation was complicated by the demographics of the colonies there:

- Northern Rhodesia (70,000 white people; 2 million Africans)
- Southern Rhodesia (221,000 white people; 3.5 million Africans)
- Nyasaland (7,000 white people; 2.5 million Africans)

The British government found themselves stuck between two pressures. The white settlers had hoped to create a new dominion and resisted any attempts to limit their rights of self-government, or introduce black majority rule. On the other hand, the British government was determined not to resist the pressures from African nationalism and sought to introduce more representative forms of government for the indigenous population.



Northern Rhodesia was a significant source of copper, while Southern Rhodesia was largely agricultural. There were extremes of wealth with the majority of the black population earning less than a tenth of the white population.

The Central African Federation was established in 1953, incorporating Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The British hoped to accommodate continuing white demands for autonomy (essentially white minority rule) with growing African demands for self-government.

However, growing nationalism was getting out of control in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland amongst black Africans opposed to the Federation and the privileges it gave to the white community. Kenneth Kaunda in Northern Rhodesia and Dr Hastings Banda in Nyasaland led resistance to the Federation. Developing violence in Nyasaland led to a declaration of a state of emergency in 1959 and the arrest of Banda. Over 1300 Africans were arrested without trial and 20 people lost their lives in the Nkata Bay incident.

The Devlin Report concluded that the Emergency had been an overreaction and condemned police brutality. The Report also made it clear that the black population were completely opposed to the Federation. This came at the same time as the report into the Hola Camp in Kenya and encouraged moral arguments in favour of decolonisation which encouraged Macmillan and Macleod to push ahead with further change.

Fearing that the situation might spiral out of control, Macmillan's government established the Monckton Commission which reported in October 1960 that the Federation in its present form was unworkable and that greater representation for the black population was needed immediately.

Resistance from the white population and further violence from the black population in Northern Rhodesia led to a breakdown in negotiations. The British Government accepted that the Federation had no future. Final negotiations at Victoria Falls in 1963-64 resulted in the following outcomes:

- Northern Rhodesia became the independent state of Zambia in 1964, with Kaunda as leader. It remained within the Commonwealth.
- Nyasaland became the independent state of Malawi in 1964, with Banda as leader. It also remained within the Commonwealth.

This left the even more problematic issue of Southern Rhodesia where the larger white minority continued to resist any moves towards black majority rule. A hard-line white movement, the Rhodesian Front (RF), led by Ian Smith, emerged to fight any power-sharing with the black majority.

To forestall any further pressure from Britain, Ian Smith, as Prime Minister of what was now simply called 'Rhodesia', declared UDI from Britain in 1965 – a Unilateral Declaration of Independence

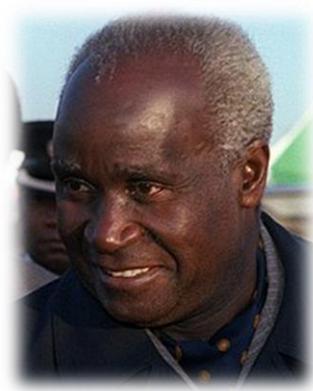
(right). Although this was illegal and condemned by Britain and other Commonwealth countries, there was little Britain could do; Rhodesia had its own army and was supported by *apartheid* South Africa who were sympathetic to the idea of a racially divided state.

A civil war in Rhodesia dragged on for fifteen years between the white government and the nationalist ZANU and ZAPU movements. Eventually negotiations in London led to the establishment of black majority rule and the creation of the state of Zimbabwe in 1980.



- **What caused decolonisation in Central Africa?**
- **What complicated decolonisation in Central Africa?**

Key Individual: Kenneth Kaunda (1924-Present) – see p. 239 in AQA



Key Individual: Dr Hastings Banda (1898-1997) – see p. 239 in AQA



Key Individual: Ian Smith (1919-2007) – see p. 240 in AQA



South Africa, 1945-1994

White South Africans had been split over the question of South African entry into the Second World War. Although South Africa would join Britain, many Afrikaners remained bitter about this and, in 1948, the Afrikaner National Party won the election.



The National Party was determined to remove British influence from South Africa and its primary policy was the establishment of *apartheid*: an institutionalised form of racial segregation that denied legal and civil rights to the majority black population. Under *apartheid* white South Africans enjoyed very high standards of living while their black neighbours suffered enormous educational and economic disadvantage. Britain was critical of this policy (see Macmillan's 'winds of change' speech in Cape Town in 1960), but this had little impact on white South African opinion.

In 1961 after a whites-only referendum, South Africa became a republic and was pressured to leave the Commonwealth. Over the following thirty years, South Africa would become increasingly isolated; it was criticised by both sides during the Cold War and developed its own nuclear weapons to defend itself. As internal opposition to *apartheid* increased from the black population, the South African government became increasingly draconian and brutal in its crackdown on dissent.

The African National Congress emerged as the main organisation opposed to *apartheid* using violent and non-violent tactics. Its most prominent leader was Nelson Mandela who was arrested and imprisoned for sabotage in 1962.

Apartheid finally came to an end in the late 1980s and early 1990s with negotiations between the ANC and the leaders of the National Party who had come to the conclusion that the growing internal violence and international opprobrium were unsustainable. After 27 years in prison, Mandela was released and was elected President in South Africa's first fully democratic election in 1994. South Africa was invited to re-join the Commonwealth in the same year.

A black and white photograph of Nelson Mandela, showing him from the chest up, wearing a light-colored shirt. He is leaning against a wall, looking thoughtfully to his left. In the background, there are vertical bars, suggesting he is in a prison cell.

John Darwin, Unfinished Empire

For Macmillan especially, the Nyasaland crisis [1959] contained an implacable message. Henceforth no British government should find itself dragged into confronting African popular movements. The potential humiliation outweighed any imaginable gain. At all costs London must find representative Africans with whom it could deal and to whom more power could be granted. In the famous speech that marked the climax of his African tour in early 1960, Macmillan lectured the South African parliament with the passion of a convert. ‘The wind of change is blowing through this continent... and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.’...

Between Macmillan’s ‘wind of change’ speech and the Federation’s demise [eventually in 1963], the African scene had radically changed. One sign of this (and an embarrassment to the British) was De Gaulle’s sudden offer of independence to France’s African colonies in 1960 (although not yet to Algeria). Much more significant was the ‘Congo Disaster’. The Belgians had rushed their vast colony into independence in January 1960, perhaps in the hope that they could then safely install a client regime. The result was catastrophe. The copper-rich province of Katanga quickly split off, with the open encouragement of Belgian mining interests. Rule from the centre broke down elsewhere. The Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba was kidnapped and murdered with Belgian and perhaps American connivance. Meanwhile the local Congolese army or *force publique* broke out in a mutiny, killing dozens of whites, including women and children. A torrent of white refugees poured down through the white-ruled Federation towards the South African ports and the safety of home. As the Congo split up into rival regional satrapies, the Soviet Union began (just as Macmillan had warned) to appeal to African nationalists, denouncing Western intrigue and blaming capitalist greed for the Congo’s fate.

There can be little doubt that the long-drawn out horror of the Congo concentrated British minds. It strengthened still further the aversion they felt for being trapped in an African conflict. ‘The Prime Minister and Colonial Secretary then said they did not want an Algeria’, noted Macmillan’s private secretary in November 1960. The Congo was worse – because it was much nearer to Britain’s remaining possessions in Central and East Africa. It also heightened the fear that the siren call from Moscow would become more seductive with every month that passed until independence was granted. Tanganyika and Uganda, both Congo neighbours, were rushed into sovereignty in 1961 and 1962. The same effects can be seen in the other difficult case: the settler colony of Kenya.

- What does Darwin argue about the reasons for rapid British decolonisation in Africa?

Changing Attitudes within Britain

- Read: chapter 23 in AQA; pp. 588-606 in James

There are grounds for doubting whether nationalism, however powerful and decisive it may have been in certain cases, really was the crucial determining factor in accelerating imperial retreat generally. The growth of nationalism alone was never the whole story. An alternative way of explaining imperial retreat has been to see it as a political choice taken by post-war governments under the pressure of domestic (often economic) constraints and calculations of national interest. In this sense Britain simply drifted away from her old imperial role; the ‘will to rule’ gradually slackened and public indifference reinforced the effects of economic decline. The idea that during the 1940s and 1950s there was a sharp change of attitude in Britain towards empire and the burdens of an imperial role, and that this played a key part in disengagement from colonial responsibilities, helps to explain the end of the British Empire.

- Adapted from *Decolonisation since 1945* by John Springhall (2001)

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to British decolonisation between 1945 and 1967.

An assessment of the British mind-set and the metropolitan situation (in addition to the periphery) is essential to understanding why the British Empire disintegrated. Certainly the desire for great-power status never left British governments and the almost universal support behind the expedition to recover the Falkland Islands in 1982 suggests that the British public never lost their appetite for imperial adventures. While neither the Labour nor Conservative Parties were resolutely pro-Empire (although the Conservatives in particular contained a faction that were), neither were they particularly anti-Empire either and governments of either complexion consistently pursued policies which attempted to defend Britain’s interests.³⁰ The military intervention in Egypt in 1956 would be an example of this. Indeed, even after the debacle of Suez there was an expectation that Britain’s place in the world could be maintained and the aforementioned efforts to develop the African colonies in the 1950s reveals that not everyone had given up on the idea of empire either.

However, the hope for many was that British power would be preserved through the Commonwealth. The overriding concern of the British when dealing with nationalists was to ensure that a ‘friendly’ government remained in place so that vital British interests could be protected and influence retained. The long tradition of meeting colonial discontent with reforms (dating back to the granting of dominion status to the ‘white’ settler colonies – Canada, for instance, achieving virtual self-government in 1867) gave many an acceptable political (and mental) framework in which to fit Indian and other colonies’ moves towards responsible government. Indeed, for some, the development of

³⁰ Smith, ‘French and British Decolonisation’, p. 78

colonies until they were ‘ready’ for self-government was the very *raison d’être* of the Empire and this seemed to give decolonisation the appearance of an inevitable, even welcome, process.³¹

In addition to this, the British public can be seen as either ambivalent about the whole imperial project or, more pragmatically, more concerned about the economic costs of empire when the improvement of living standards and the development of the welfare state seemed more of a priority. The fact that, according to a survey in 1948, half the British population were unable to name even a single colony is particularly revealing.³² Moreover, there was also an enduring strand of British political thinking which had always put itself in direct opposition to the whole concept of Empire. Many Whigs had supported the American revolutionaries in the 1770s and William Gladstone has been described as a ‘reluctant imperialist’ who always had moral qualms about the imperial concept.³³ Opposition to the colonial system was taken up as a cause by many in the Labour Party in the early 20th century and this moral repugnance that some Britons felt towards the Empire became much more widespread in the aftermath of the struggle against Nazism; the concepts of racial superiority which underlay imperialism became deeply unfashionable in the post-war world. The hostility towards the government in response to brutal treatment of the Mau Mau rebels in Kenya can be seen as an example of this. Indeed, it is possible to discern a potentially fatal contradiction existing within Britain which saw itself both as a bastion of human liberty since the 17th century, and yet also the governor of an empire, the continuance of which entailed the restriction of liberty for its subject peoples.³⁴ Certainly, apart from a few dusty corners of the Conservative Party, there were few in Britain who dug in their heels over the process of decolonisation.

It must be said, therefore, that the reason the British had a less traumatic experience of decolonisation than the French, for instance (whose Fourth Republic collapsed in 1958 as a direct consequence of the Algerian war) was, to an extent, because the British were reconciled to the ending of their Empire.³⁵ While it is disingenuous to claim that the Empire was wound up purely because of apathy, moral outrage or because it had finally achieved some supreme purpose, these factors certainly made the transition easier for the British, particularly as there was a belief that influence could be preserved and that the loss of empire didn’t necessarily mean a loss of status. To a significant extent, nationalist or anti-colonial movements in the colonies were pushing at an already opening door.

- AEWG

- How did changing attitudes in Britain encourage the process of decolonisation?

³¹ Smith, ‘French and British Decolonisation’, p. 73

³² Porter, *The Lion’s Share*, p. 312

³³ Porter, *The Lion’s Share*, p. 111

³⁴ Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, (Vintage, London, 2008) p.xviii

³⁵ Smith, ‘French and British Decolonisation’, p. 71

Cultural Change:

As well as the geopolitical and economic change that encouraged decolonisation, British culture in the 1950s and 1960s underwent profound changes:

- The impact of the Suez Crisis (1956) and the Profumo Scandal (1963)
- Demise of deference – the ‘Angry Young Men’ of the 1950s – John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956)
- Relaxation of traditional social attitudes – *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* trial – 1960
- The growth of satire – e.g. *That Was the Week That Was* (1962-3); *Beyond the Fringe* (1960); *Private Eye* (1961)
- Social mobility – attacks on class division
- The emergence of the ‘teenager’ and youth culture – Beatles’ first LP - 1963

What then happened to those values, such as ‘duty’, ‘loyalty’, ‘hierarchy’, and ‘authority’, previously considered to be the social bedrock of empire, yet now increasingly called into question? It is tempting to link the erosion of these values to the process of decolonisation. After all, within scarcely a generation the whole hierarchical embrace of empire had been dismantled, such that the British aristocracy could no longer credibly claim to be the national and imperial ruling class by hereditary right. It could be argued that Suez changed attitudes towards military authority, ushering in a willingness to challenge old, deferential values. Among those who felt that Suez epitomised what was wrong with post-war Britain were the ‘Angry Young Men’ of the post-war era. Most famously, John Osborne and Alan Sillitoe captured the pessimism and disillusionment of the late 1950s and early 1960s., and especially the lack of opportunities for the working class. For both men, Suez provided a licence to rail against the arrogance and ineptitude of Britain’s ruling class.

- *Social Life and Cultural Representation: Empire in the Public Imagination* by Andrew Thompson with Meaghan Kowalsky (2011)



In 1967 the bestselling album in the UK was the Beatles’ ‘Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Heart Club Band’, the costumes that the band wore on the front cover seemed to satirise the elaborate military and official uniforms that had been so associated with empire.

Excerpt from 'Look Back in Anger' by John Osborne

'Look Back in Anger' is a seminal play that was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in 1956 (the year of the Suez Crisis). Its realism and focus on ordinary life meant that it was an abrupt change from most earlier plays; the opening night's crowd gasped when the curtain rose to reveal the set: a cramped, dreary one-room flat in the Midlands, with an ironing board as the most prominent feature. The play helped generate the term 'angry young men' to describe the mood of a new generation.

The play's focus is a young married couple, living in the aforesaid claustrophobic flat. Jimmy Porter is an educated man with a working class background. He is angry and bitter at the rest of the world, and particularly the upper classes of Britain of whom Jimmy regards his wife, Alison, as representative. Their relationship is essentially abusive as Jimmy vents his frustration on Alison. In this scene, Alison's father, a former Colonel from the Indian Army, arrives to take her back home.

COLONEL: I am mystified. Your husband has obviously taught you a great deal, whether you realise it or not. What any of it means, I don't know. I always believed that people married each other because they were in love. That always seemed a good enough reason to me. But apparently that's too simple for young people nowadays. They have to talk about challenges and revenge. I just can't believe that love between men and women is really like that.

ALISON: Only some men and women.

COLONEL: But why you? My daughter... No. Perhaps Jimmy is right. Perhaps I am a – what was it? an old plant left over from the Edwardian Wilderness. And I can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more. You can see what he means, can't you? It was March, 1914, when I left England, and, apart from leaves every ten years or so, I didn't see much of my own country until we all came back in '47. Oh, I knew things had changed, of course. People told you all the time the way it was going – going to the dogs, as the Blimps are supposed to say. But it seemed very unreal to me, out there. The England I remembered was the one I left in 1914, and I was happy to go on remembering it that way. Beside, I had the Maharajah's army to command – that was my world and I loved it, all of it. At the time, it looked like going on forever. When I think of it now, it seems like a dream. If only it could have gone on forever. Those long, cool evenings up in the hills, everything purple and golden. Your mother and I were so happy then. It seemed as though we had everything we could ever want. I think the last day the sun shone was when that dirty little train steamed out of that crowded, suffocating Indian station, and the battalion band playing for all it was worth. I knew in my heart it was all over. Everything.

ALISON: You're hurt because everything has changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. Something's gone wrong somewhere, hasn't it?

COLONEL: It looks like it my dear.

Withdrawal from East of Suez

In 1964, the Conservatives lost the general election to Harold Wilson's Labour Party. Wilson tried to project an image of modernity and spoke of the 'white heat' of technology driving a forward-looking economy and society. There was no room for empire anymore and he continued Macleod's policy of rapid decolonisation.

In November 1967 the value of sterling came under pressure, forcing Britain to devalue the pound by 15%. The new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Roy Jenkins, was an ardent supporter of the European Community and an opponent of Britain's over-extended global commitments.



In January 1968 Harold Wilson announced to the House of Commons that, due to financial constraints and budget cuts, Britain was withdrawing all significant forces from east of Suez – Britain would no longer be a power in the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, and the Far East. For the foreseeable future, Britain's defence commitments would be focused on Europe and the Mediterranean.

In his statement announcing this to the House of Commons, Wilson referenced the appropriateness of Rudyard Kipling's poem, *Recessional*.

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart...

Far-called our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!



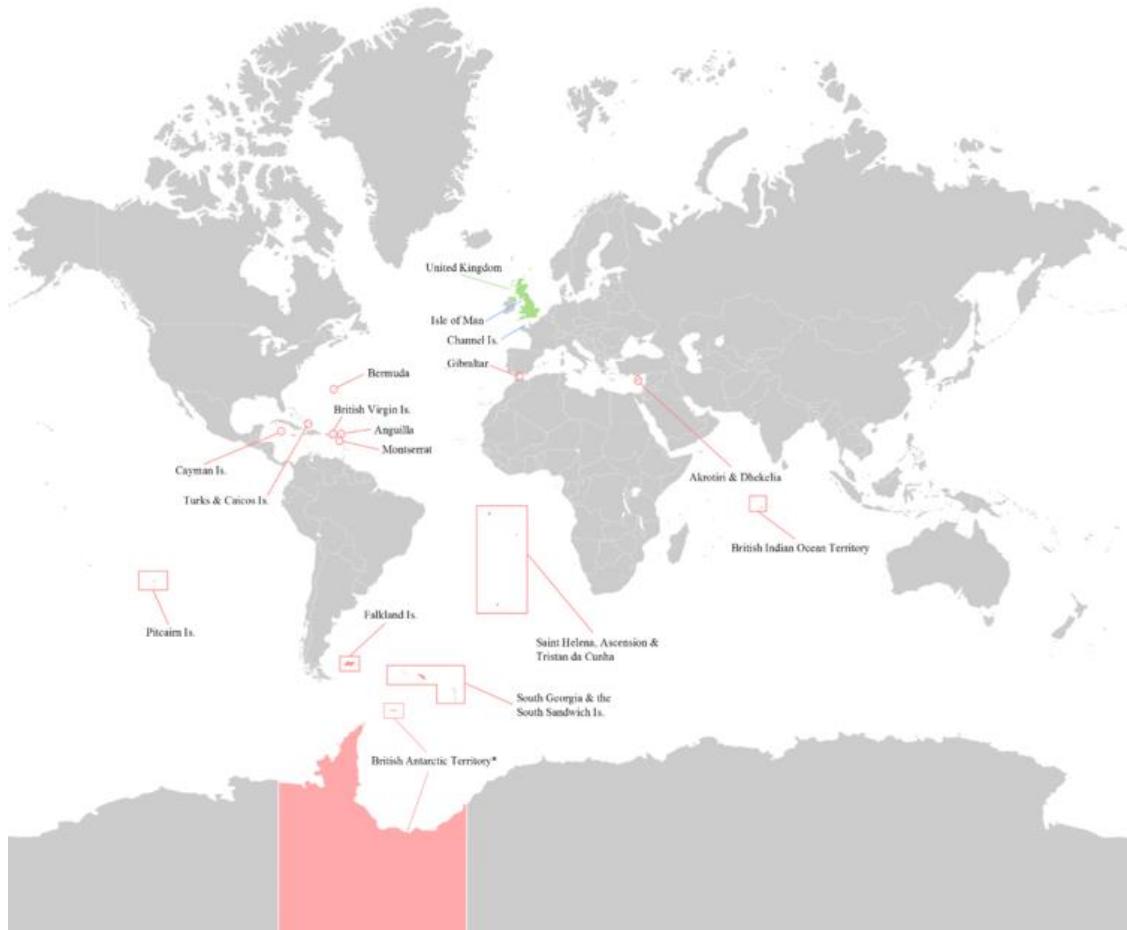
Philip Larkin, 'Homage to a Government', 10th of January 1969

Next year we are to bring the soldiers home
For lack of money, and it is all right.
Places they guarded, or kept orderly,
must guard themselves, and keep themselves orderly.
We want the money for ourselves at home
Instead of working. And this is all right.

It's hard to say who wanted it to happen,
But now it's been decided nobody minds.
The places are a long way off, not here,
Which is all right, and from what we hear
the soldiers there only made trouble happen.
Next year we shall be easier in our minds.

Next year we shall be in a country
That brought its soldiers home for lack of money.
The statues will be standing in the same
Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.
Our children will not know it's a different country.
All we can hope to leave them now is money.

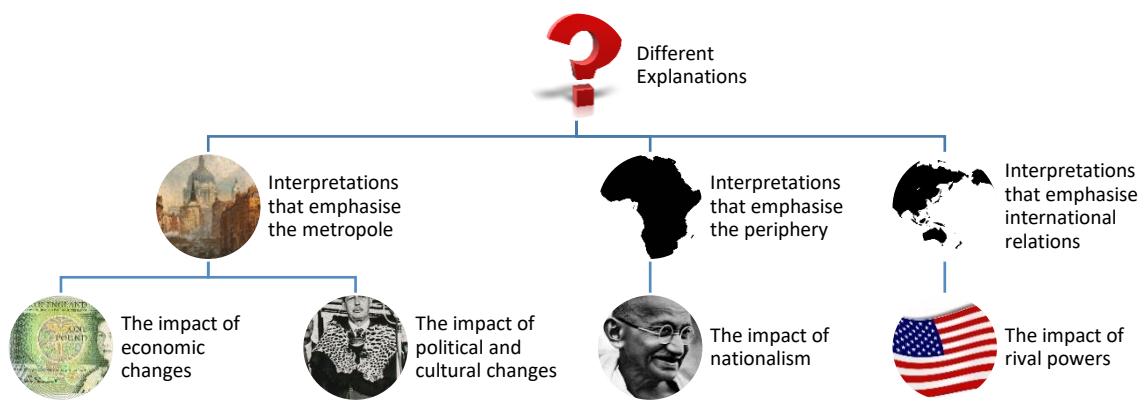
The Residue



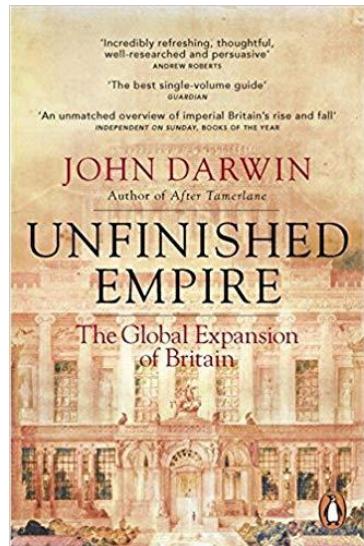
Sir Richard Turnbull, the penultimate Governor of Aden, once told Labour politician Denis Healey, that 'when the British Empire finally sank beneath the waves of history, it would leave behind it only two monuments: one was the game of Association Football, the other was the expression 'Fuck off'.'

- **What is the legacy of the British Empire?**

Historiography: Explaining Decolonisation



- Read: John Darwin *Unfinished Empire*, chapter 11 'Ending Empire' and outline his main arguments on decolonisation



Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire* (Cambridge; 2007)

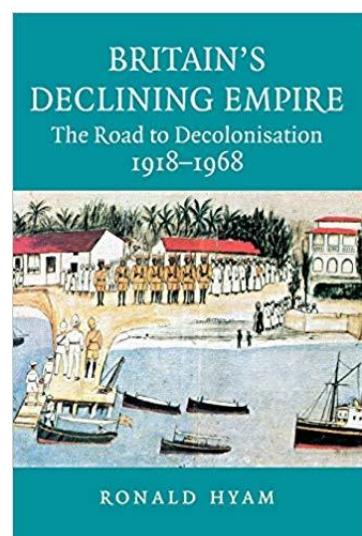
Our understanding of decolonisation can be usefully deepened by reference to the opinions of the officials. Civil servants were uniquely well placed by their experience and access to information to grasp the dynamics of what was happening, at least in terms of the immediate reasons and context for decisions taken. The reasons they gave for the speeding up of the process were always about external influences, usually nationalist, but also, in later phases, international pressure. Saville Garner believed that the British empire came to an end 'because other people's empires were crumbling all around'.

In the final analysis, centre and periphery were equally important. The metropolitan side, with the decision-making power, was the one which holds the explanatory key. Colonies which demanded self-government usually got it, but we cannot say that they thereby determined the outcome. The really significant historical question to ask is how the imperial power had got psychologically to the point where it was prepared to open the door to self-rule when nationalist leaders knocked and asked. By the mid-1950s, Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on a number of occasions was told privately by colonial politicians not to take their public requests too seriously; they had, they explained, to make demands in order to keep their local support, but they realised that they needed more time and to be better prepared.

The Labour government theory of the late 1940s was that prestige would be more likely to accrue by timely transfers of power to moderate nationalists; Attlee and his ministers accepted the Colonial Office proposition that 'the transfer of power is not a sign of weakness, but it is, in fact, a sign and source of strength'. In any case they did not want to be found in the last colonial ditch, vilified internationally along with the bad guys like the Portuguese. Britain did not take the initiative in the decolonisation of Africa. Great power rivalry - in the shape of the Cold War and a competition for international respectability - induced the British twentieth-century scramble to get out of Africa.

The British empire flourished and declined in a particular set of international contexts. The way it operated depended not only on favourable external and geopolitical circumstances, but also on the feasibility of imperial control, in terms both of the acquiescence of peoples ruled, and of the ability to match available resources to the maintenance and defence of a far-flung system. All these preconditions were under threat in the period after 1918. Although the empire was impressively mobilised on behalf of the British war effort after 1939, the overall trend towards an increasingly unmanageable and dysfunctional imperial system was not reversed. What happened in the international sphere after the Second World War gradually but decisively reinforced the sense that a global empire was not only beyond Britain's means, but was also threatening its prestige and reputation, and becoming a liability.

The Cold War determined the main outlines of British policy. Because of it, Britain had to satisfy the nationalists, side with the USA, strengthen the Commonwealth and square the United Nations. Because of it, the whole thrust of decolonisation was to proceed in such a way as to encourage the emergence of pro-Western nationalist states. What the British people really cared about in the twenty years after the end of the Second World War was not the future of the empire, but how to avert the



probability of what Hugh Dalton called 'the Third World War'. The words of Clement Attlee have an insistent resonance: 'An attempt to maintain the old colonialism would, I am sure, have immensely aided communism.'

❖ **What does Hyam argue about British decolonisation?**

The immediate causes of the end of the British Empire are to be found not only in the nationalist movements in the Empire itself, but also in the lessons learned from the Algerian revolution and in the danger of Soviet intervention in the Congo. It seemed altogether more prudent to settle with African liberation movements in eastern and central Africa before war broke out between blacks and whites or before the Africans turned to the Russians for sponsorship... If the Americans looked forward to transforming the Empire in the long run into independent states within the Western alliance, in the short run they propped it up against the challenge posed by the Soviet Union and Communist China. Paradoxically, one consequence was that the Cold War sometimes presented nationalists with the opportunity of playing the superpowers against each other or against the British. Actual or prospective superpower intervention could increase nationalist prospects... The international climate thus expedited the advance to independence, but the circumstances varied from region to region, from colony to colony. With the United States and the Soviet Union competing against each other in the colonial world, the local strength of nationalism or insurgency often determined the actual timing of decolonisation.

- **Wm. Roger Louis, 'The dissolution of the British Empire' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Judith M Brown (Oxford; 1999)**

- **Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to British decolonisation between 1945 and 1967.**

The rapidity with which decolonisation occurred between 1945 and 1967 suggests that while decolonisation was the product of changes at the international, domestic British and colonial levels, it was the international ones – particularly the Second World War – that triggered further changes that destroyed the old pre-war relationships of the imperial powers with their empires. In the British case, involvement in the war drove them to changes in colonial policy that created new political conditions which made the colonies harder to rule. Meanwhile the international and domestic British side effects of the war (especially the emergence of the anti-colonial powers, the USA and the Soviet Union) encouraged colonial resistance to the old colonial powers. It made it harder for the British to reassert authority without imposing unwelcome financial and political burdens on the home government, as well as jeopardising wider international interests outside the Empire. A ‘vicious circle’ of imperial decline was set in motion, and the imperial system unravelled.

- Adapted from *Britain and Decolonisation* by John Darwin (1988)

It would be a mistake to think that the European powers gave independence to their colonies after the Second World War. There were certainly international pressures which helped bring about decolonisation, as well as domestic considerations within the imperial nations. But independence was wrested from the grasp of the imperialists – not freely surrendered. It was the nationalists who held the whip hand for once – not the imperialists. The winning of independence by the former colonies was in a very large measure the work of the nationalists in the colonies themselves. Their ‘positive action’ and agitation, including in some instances armed insurrection, gradually made it clear to the colonial powers that, in the existing state of world opinion, it was not worth their while to attempt to hold the colony by force and that it was better to retreat with the best face possible, salvaging what they could and trying to retain as much good will as possible for the post-independence era.

- Adapted from *The Rise and Fall of Western Colonialism* by Stewart C Easton (1964)

The significance of nationalist movements in bringing about the end of empire can be questioned. Until local crises blew up, policy towards specific colonies was mainly determined by Britain’s economic and national needs, while plans for individual territories were shaped by reasoned assessments for the security, economic viability, social cohesion, and political maturity of each. Increasingly, however, events forced the British to compromise – ultimately to abandon – staged progress, measured programmes and long-term planning. But even then the authorities were influenced more by the dangers of lawlessness on a colony than by the force of the nationalists’ demands. Left to themselves, the British would probably have proceeded slowly – worrying about whether colonies were important from a British point of view and setting a leisurely programme for them to evolve towards independence. But outbreaks of violence and disorder increasingly forced the pace. In general violence was not deliberately instigated by the nationalists. But nationalist movements did benefit from unrest since the British did not want to hold out for long against violence.

- Adapted from *Power, Authority and Freedom* by AJ Stockwell (1996)

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to British decolonisation between 1945 and 1967.

Nationalist or anti-colonial movements rode the crest of a wave which they did little to initiate and did not control. They were operating in an historical moment when the survival of Britain's Empire was impossible. Britain's own political climate and its economic situation meant that the British Empire was destined to wind up at some point and it was the geo-political situation that determined when that point would be. This does not mean that nationalist movements played a negligible role in explaining Britain's imperial decline. Indeed, had this phenomenon not existed, Britain's Empire might have ended very differently and it was only because of their existence that the British had anyone to hand over territory to. However, the British courted them as much as fought them and their apparent success in achieving independence from Britain was crucially dependent on other interconnected issues.

- AEWG

That India became a member of the Commonwealth was spun as the culmination of liberal empire, another signal transition moment in its unfolding. There was no embarrassment in it. The post-war Labour government was deeply committed to this narrative and its incorporation of the notion of colonial development that the empire could produce commodities that would earn much needed dollars. In 1960, while the former labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee extolled the empire for voluntarily surrendering sovereignty to its colonies, the ruling Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, spun the wind of change blowing through Africa as the fulfilment of the imperial narrative. Such narratives of continuities with the past, real or imagined, framed understandings of decolonisation. The British did not simply let go of empire after the Second World War whatever Attlee claimed. They fought long and hard to hold on to some colonies, such as Kenya and Malaya. In others the promise of substantial continuity allowed more graceful transition.

- Priya Satia, *Time's Monster* (2020)

- Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to British decolonisation between 1945 and 1967.

ESSAY: 'In the years 1947 to 1967 Britain lost all interest in its empire.' Assess the validity of this view.

ESSAY: The Suez Crisis was the key turning point in the decline of the British Empire. Assess the validity of this view.

In the twenty years or so after the Second World War, Britain succeeded in disbanding her empire with remarkable dignity and skill. She was known to have decided not to hang onto her colonies forever – it had long been recognised that such a policy was both impracticable and undesirable. Nationalist leaders understood that their real quarrel with Britain was over the timing of independence rather than independence itself. This being the case, most quarrels concerned Britain's estimate of how ready native peoples were to govern themselves. British ministers wanted to hand over power only when a sufficiently educated class was ready and able to administer their country. Until they were convinced that one existed, they felt they would betray their responsibility to native populations should they give up control too soon. Native leaders, on the other hand, pointed out this was bound to take generations and Britain should give proof of her good intentions by bringing natives into the government process.

Adapted from A Sked and C Cook, Post-War Britain, 1979

After the substantial decolonisation in Asia in the late 1940s, the American government became much more concerned to keep its European allies devoted to the struggle against communism than to suggest that they should give up any more colonies. Although this now allowed the British to maintain their imperial position free from external pressure, the expenses of the campaigns in Kenya and Malaya were uncomfortably high. Almost all of Britain's colonies had been acquired at very little cost, as the British were unwilling to take control if it involved heavy spending, and the cost of maintaining law and order had been subsequently carried by the colonies themselves. However, the experience of the early 1950s brought about a change, as British taxpayers suddenly had to meet the bulk of the expense they could not afford. From this point onwards it was realised that, unless a larger proportion of the national income than ever before were to be spent on colonial defence, a policy of withdrawal would be unavoidable.

Adapted from T Lloyd, The British Empire 1558–1983, 1984

An enduring historical myth, repeated in a number of political memoirs, suggests that Britain excelled in the practice of 'managed decline': sensibly reducing its imperial ambition in accordance with shrinking resources. It was certainly true that the British were extremely reluctant to resist mass political movements, whether in India after 1945 or in Africa after 1959. But they were much more willing to use political force when the odds were more promising and the incentives greater, as in Malaya and Kenya. Nor was it true that after the Second World War British leaders quickly adjusted their vision of Britain's place in the world to its reduced physical power and economic potential. For over twenty years the reverse was the case. Even the supposed champion of realism, Harold Macmillan, was anything but realistic. His grandiose schemes for preserving British world power indicated almost no comprehension of the complex realities of African politics.

Adapted from J Darwin, Unfinished Empire, 2012

- Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to British attitudes to decolonisation in the years 1945 to 1967.

The devolution of colonial power, whether achieved by armed struggle or negotiation, was the result of two complementary forces: increasingly popular anti imperialism which was articulate and often threatening; and decreasing European means and will to power. Everywhere anti-imperialism formed the basis of colonial nationalism. It gave political cohesion to diverse ethnic and social groups within each colony; it provided for ideological unification and it explained in simple terms to the colonial peoples their poverty and backwardness. Once the imperial jewels like India had demonstrated the possibilities of anti-imperialist action, colonial politics elsewhere inclined more and more towards future independence and nationhood. The political change was affected by two means: guerrilla war (which was more the exception than the rule) and colonial party politics (an external appendage of western liberal democracy). The chief agency of political change was negotiation between the colonial administration and the emergent national political party. Thus, the British converted the most vociferous national party into the majority party and its leader eventually became Prime Minister.

- Raymond Bette, *Europe recalls her Legions* (1970)

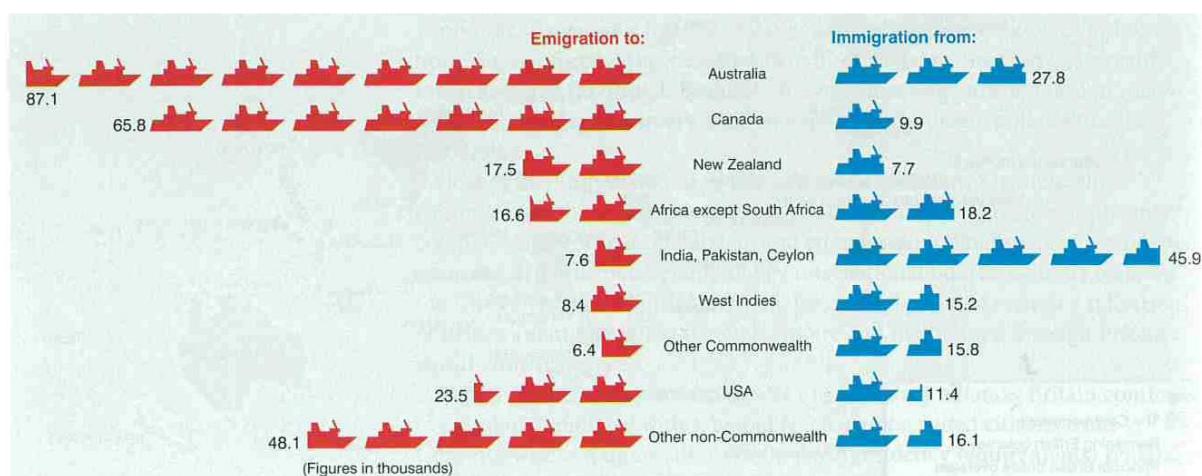
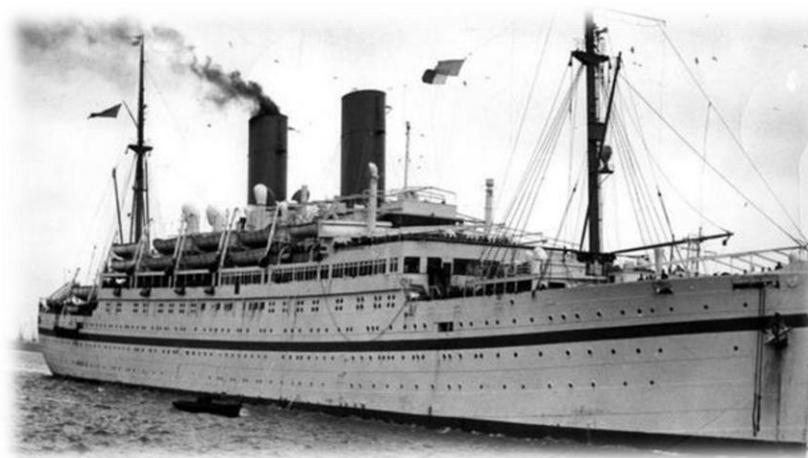
- Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in this extract are in relation to British decolonisation between 1945 and 1967.

Post-colonial ties

Migration and Race Relations

- Read: pp. 221-226 in AQA

- Continued emigration from Britain to dominions into the 1950s
- British Nationality Act, 1948
- Economic recovery → demand for migrant workers
- Migration from India and Pakistan, Africa and the West Indies (*Empire Windrush - 1948*) → settlement in large towns and cities
- Racism within Britain (Oswald Mosley and the Union Movement)
- Growing resistance to high immigration → encouragement of racist attitudes
- British Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962
- Immigration a significant issue in 1964 General Election
- Race Relations Act, 1965 and establishment of the Race Relations Board
- 1968 – Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech



British migration in 1967

The word repeatedly used in the memoirs of the West Indian and African migrants who came to Britain in the post war decades is 'disappointed'. They were disappointed that the nation they had been told was their mother country treated them so badly, disappointed that the skills and talents which the nation had found useful during the war years were disregarded in peacetime and they were ushered into low status or menial jobs. They were deeply disappointed and wounded when they discovered how difficult it was to fulfil the most basic human need and find somewhere to live. Thousands of post war black migrants were consigned to the poorest parts of Britain cities and there left prey to predatory landlords such as West London's infamous Peter Rachman. The migrants would have felt an even deeper sense of disappointment had they known the help that was offered to the European voluntary workers and denied to them, and that behind closed doors successive governments had plotted to portray them as indolent, immoral and backward. Many felt they had been lied to, not just by prospective employers who had actively recruited in the West Indies, but by the British Empire.

- David Olusoga, *Black and British* (2016)

Cultural Impact

- **Read: pp. 226-229 in AQA**

- Some imperial themes continued in film (e.g *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1962)
- Continued popularity of Elgar etc. – but difficult to disentangle from simple patriotism
- British institutions that had been steeped in empire continued without their imperial role – but did aspects of an imperial ethos continue? – public schools, the armed forces, the Church of England, the monarchy, the honours system etc.
- Impact of American culture → development of popular culture with no imperial references
- Emergence of English as global language → impossible to disentangle British/ English culture from American culture

- **What are the residual legacies of the empire for Britain?**



Although the imperial message was still conveyed to Liverpool schools after 1945 through films and lecturers sent by the Imperial Institute, and though prizes were still awarded for essays on imperial and Commonwealth themes, much of the impetus had waned by the mid-1950s. The 1953 coronation was effectively the last great imperial event in Liverpool. And amnesia about empire seemed to set in. Even Labour, finally in control of the council in 1955, seems to have taken little interest in imperial affairs. Its Toxteth branch passed no resolutions regarding colonies in the 1950s, and woke up to events in Africa only with the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960. Nor did member show interest in the conditions of Liverpool's black community, itself a legacy of empire. It is therefore tempting to accept the argument that imperial propaganda was generated by a few enthusiasts, and appealed only to relatively few of the population.

- **Adapted from 'Transmitting Ideas of Empire: Representations and Celebrations in Liverpool, 1886-1953' by Murray Steele (2008)**

Over the course of the 1950s, understandings of decolonisation shifted, with continual news of the Kenyan emergency and other conflicts and, more decisively, the humiliating British defeat that was the Suez crisis of 1956: an abortive invasion of Egypt brought home the lesson that Britain could no longer flex its military muscle without Americans say so, bringing down the government of Anthony Eden. The narrative of decolonisation as a story of imperial fulfilment and continuity within the Commonwealth was now challenged by the decline thesis of British history, a sense of history's betrayal of Britain. Rather than doing justice to Britain's past, history seemed to be mocking it: what future might they possess now? Old narratives of the rise and fall of empires were trotted out to explain Britain's post-war fortunes. The generation of would-be colonial administrators who emerged from the public schools and Oxbridge encountered a new political reality and responded with anger and, more productively, derision, launching a rich satire trend ridiculing well-worn ideas about duty and service to nation and empire and the civilising mission.

- **Priya Satia, *Time's Monster* (2020)**

- **Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these two extracts are in relation to British attitudes to empire in the years 1945 to 1967.**

The Commonwealth



- Successive British Governments hoped that this would be a mechanism to maintain British power
- The independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 meant that the Commonwealth was no longer an all-white club. There are now 53 members of the Commonwealth.
- 1949 – India's transition to a republic meant that members no longer had to have the monarch as their Head of State
- The term 'dominion' fell out of favour after WWII. Those nations that retain Elizabeth II as their Head of State are instead referred to as Commonwealth Realms
- Regular 'CHOGM' meetings every two years
- Still headed by the Queen – taken very seriously by Elizabeth II – continued Christmas Day broadcasts
- Not a formal military alliance – it has been criticised as ineffective and pointless – difficult to coordinate policy between so many members
- Has been used to exert pressure on members – South Africa, Zimbabwe etc.
- An important conduit for 'soft power' – shared heritage, values, language – it facilitates cultural, sporting and economic links (e.g. the Commonwealth Games)
- Britain's relations with the USA and the EEC/ EU have always been more significant



Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting, 2019

Epilogue: End of Empire?

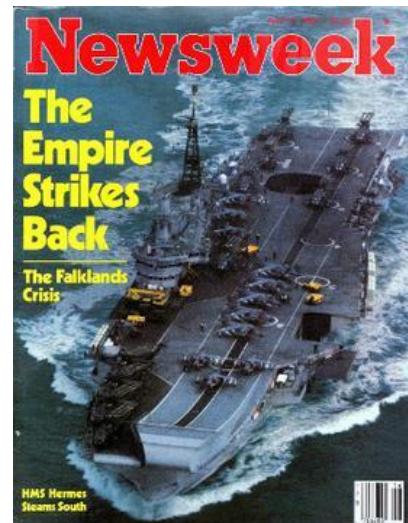
- **Read: pp. 622-639 in James**

The withdrawal from Africa in the 1960s left only a few scattered remnants around the world, most of which were too small to survive as independent states. Nevertheless, the last two decades of the 20th Century saw two final imperial moments:

The Falklands War

The British government had long wanted to withdraw from the Falkland Islands, first acquired in the early 19th century. However, the population of 3,500 British settlers there resisted attempts to share sovereignty with Argentina which had long claimed the islands they called the *Malvinas*. The regime in Buenos Aires was a fascistic military dictatorship which sought to exploit the grievance of the islands for popularity.

Talks between Argentina and the UK broke down in the early 1980s and Argentina invaded the islands in 1982, assuming that Britain would not bother to fight for territory so far away. Fearing damage to Britain's international prestige at the height of the Cold War, and framing the issue as one of self-determination, the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, ordered a naval task force to sail to the South Atlantic to retake the territory. Meanwhile, the British tabloid press whipped up an atmosphere of jingoism.



Despite enormous logistical difficulties, the British Armed Forces successfully defeated the Argentinians and fought their way back on to the islands. British prestige had been reasserted and the UK subsequently rebuilt a significant military force in the South Atlantic. Throughout the conflict Britain was fortunate that it could rely on tacit support from Washington DC and the Presidency of Ronald Reagan who was a close ally of Thatcher.

The conflict was reminiscent of the 'small wars' of the 19th century and demonstrated once again that, when pushed, Britain could still assert itself as a formidable power able to project force around the world.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong, which had been acquired from China during the opium wars, was Britain's final remaining colony of significant size. It had developed into a financial and

trading *entrepot* in the Far East with a booming economy that contrasted with the communist mainland. However, Britain's lease on the New Territories (the land bordering Hong Kong which made the colony viable) was due to expire in 1997 and Beijing were determined to regain control over Hong Kong.



The problem was that most of the Chinese residents of Hong Kong had no desire to become part of communist China. In negotiations, Britain and China agreed a settlement in 1984; Hong Kong would be handed over in 1997, but would retain its economic and political freedoms for a further 50 years – the concept was named as ‘One Country; Two Systems’. The final governor, Chris Patten, tried to entrench a democratic culture in the colony before a moving handover ceremony in 1997. As the Union Jack was lowered over Britain’s final significant colony, Elgar’s *Nimrod* was played. Patten and the Prince of Wales then sailed away from Hong Kong on the last voyage of HMY *Britannia*.

Return to east of Suez?

Yet, Britain remained a global power; a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a leading member of NATO amongst other international organisations. Despite defence cuts after the end of the Cold War, Britain embarked on a more global role again, particularly under the premiership of Tony Blair from 1997 to 2007:

- Leading NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999
- Intervention in Sierra Leone, 2000
- Invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, 2001 onwards (with the USA)
- Invasion and occupation of Iraq, 2003 onwards
- Intervention (with France) in the Libyan civil war, 2011

Britain’s Armed Forces remain some of the most powerful in the world, as indicated in the launch of two *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers. Its ‘soft power’ reach is global, and it remains one of the world’s largest economies, with London as the world’s financial hub. Britain spends \$18.7 billion a year in international development aid (second only to the United States). In 2018 Britain reopened a permanent naval base east of Suez in Bahrain on the Persian Gulf, *HMS Juffair*.

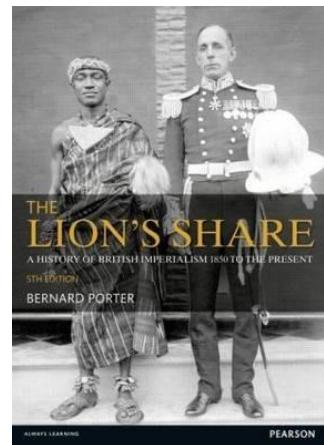


- **Is Britain still an imperial power?**

Reading Porter's *Lion's Share*

Chapter 10:

1. In what senses was the empire more of a liability than a benefit during the Second World War?
2. Why was the Middle East problematic for the British during the Second World War?
3. What was the impact of the Second World War on India?
4. What examples of unrest were there in British Africa during the war?
5. Why was Britain's reliance on America during the war unhelpful for the further survival of the empire after WWII?
6. What plans did Britain have for the colonies after 1945? Why was a 'radically new departure' expected?
7. Why might these promises have been abandoned if Churchill had remained in power after 1945?
8. What was the attitude of the Labour Party towards the empire in 1945?
9. What was the attitude of most British voters towards the empire in 1945?
10. To what extent were Labour and the Conservatives in agreement over the empire after 1945?



11. Why was a hasty retreat from empire regarded as a bad move?

12. What was the concept of 'trusteeship'?

13. What were the effects of the Colonial Development Acts?

14. How did the Cold War introduce another justification for the maintenance of colonies?

15. Why was India an exception after 1945?

16. Why did communal violence increase in India after 1945?

17. Why did the government set a time limit for Indian independence?

18. To what extent did Britain still exercise any power in India by 1947?

19. Why was the independence of India not necessarily the beginning of the end for the whole empire? How had the empire's rationale changed?

20. To what extent was the empire still economically beneficial for Britain after 1945?

21. What strategic benefits did the empire continue to bring to Britain?

22. What was the link between economic development and industrialisation, and growing national consciousness in Britain's colonies?

23. In what sense was colonialism ‘breeding its own antidote’?

24. What factors encouraged the growth of African nationalism in the 1950s?

25. What was the attitude of the 1951-57 Conservative government to decolonisation?

26. How did many Conservatives (mistakenly) view the Commonwealth?

27. In which two colonies did the government have success in fighting to ensure the ‘right people’ took over?

28. Why did Cyprus remain important for Britain in the 1950s?

29. Why does Porter argue the Suez crisis was a significant moment?

30. How successful were the British in trying to maintain control over Cyprus?

31. What solution did the British hope to impose in eastern and central Africa to safeguard their own (and settler) interests?

32. In what sense was Kenya ‘Britain’s Algeria’?

33. Why did the Central African Federation not succeed?

34. What was ‘undoubtedly the major single motive for Britain’s final stepping down from her former world role’?

35. Why were there growing moral arguments against British colonialism in the 1950s?

36. Where did Britain's economic destiny seem to lie by the 1960s?

37. Why did decolonisation seem to be a dereliction of duty to some liberal paternalists?

38. How did many British continue to regard nationalist leaders?

39. What firm date for the end of the British Empire 'fits better than most'? What happened then?

40. In what sense was the Commonwealth a compensation for empire?

41. Why did the Commonwealth turn out to be 'a disappointing failure' for many in Britain?

42. In what ways did Britain snub the Commonwealth in the 1960s?

43. How, for some imperial idealists, was decolonisation the justification for the empire?

44. How did some people make decolonisation easier for themselves to bear?

45. To what extent were the mass of the British public affected by decolonisation?

Generic Mark Scheme

Section A – Interpretations Questions

Target: Assessment Objective 3:

Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.

Generic Mark Scheme:

L5: Shows a very good understanding of the interpretations put forward in all three extracts and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. Evaluation of the arguments will be well-supported and convincing. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. 25-30

L4: Shows a good understanding of the interpretations given in all three extracts and combines this with knowledge of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. The evaluation of the arguments will be mostly well-supported, and convincing, but may have minor limitations of depth and breadth. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. 19-24

L3: Provides some supported comment on the interpretations given in all three extracts and comments on the strength of these arguments in relation to their historic context. There is some analysis and evaluation but there may be an imbalance in the degree and depth of comments offered on the strength of the arguments. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. 13-18

L2: Provides some accurate comment on the interpretations given in at least two of the extracts, with reference to the historical context. The answer may contain some analysis, but there is little, if any, evaluation. Some of the comments on the strength of the arguments may contain some generalisation, inaccuracy or irrelevance. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. 7-12

L1: Either shows an accurate understanding of the interpretation given in one extract only or addresses two/three extracts, but in a generalist way, showing limited accurate understanding of the arguments they contain, although there may be some general awareness of the historical context. Any comments on the strength of the arguments are likely to be generalist and contain some inaccuracy and/or irrelevance. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. 1-6

Nothing worthy of credit. 0

Section B – Essay Questions

Target: Assessment Objective 1:

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme:

L5: Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well substantiated judgement. **21-25 Marks**

L4: Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16-20 Marks**

L3: Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11-15 Marks**

L2: The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10 Marks**

L1: The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5 Marks**

Nothing worthy of credit. 0 Marks