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## Lecture Five: British Imperialism in India

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**Empire during the Victorian Age**

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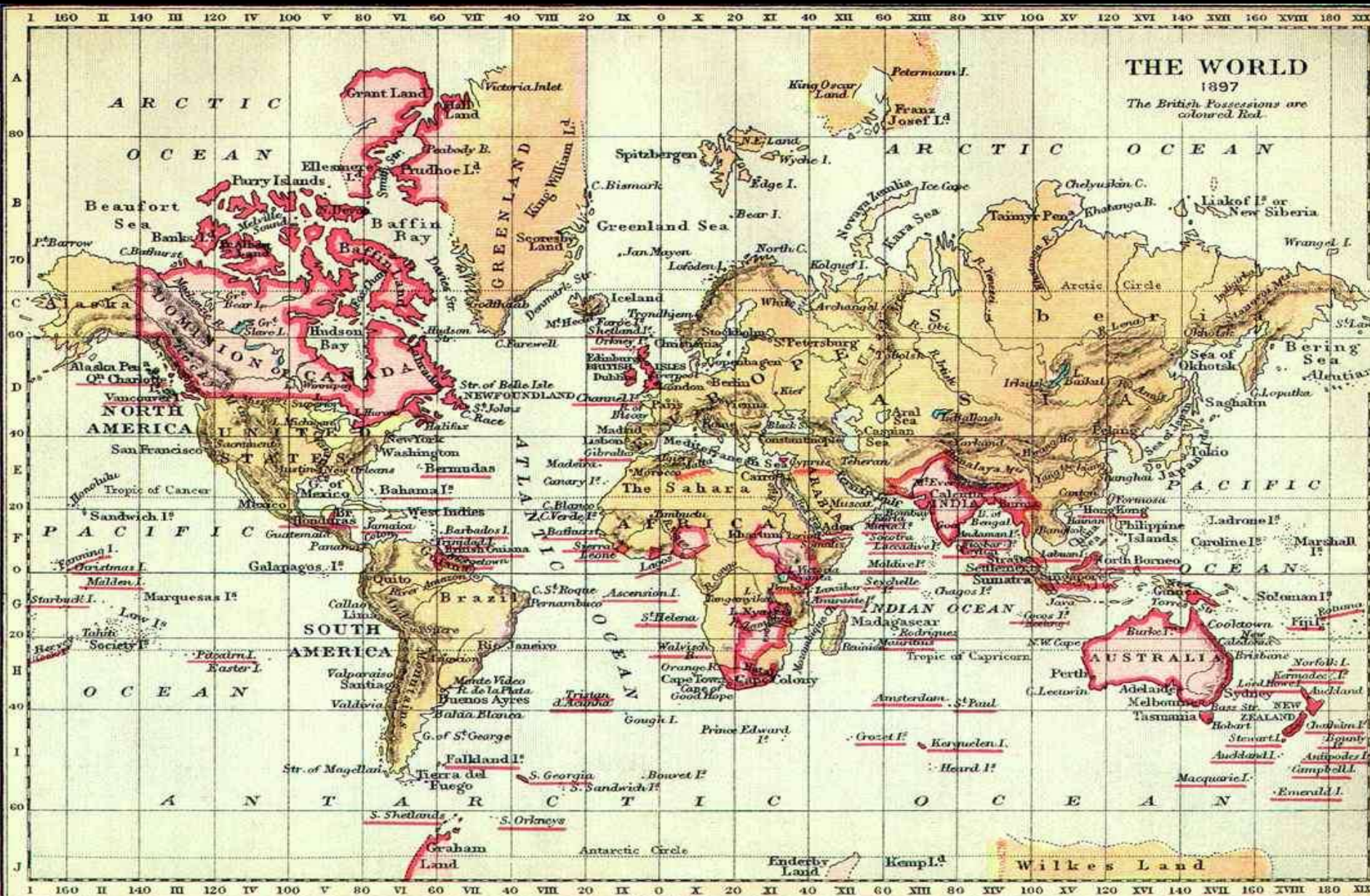
## **3. British Imperialism in India**

# Introduction

- The British Empire was the largest empire in history and, for over a century (1815 to 1914, a century known as “Britain’s Imperial Century”), it was the chief global power without any challenging rival. Indeed, historians recorded that more than **26 million km<sup>2</sup>** and about **400 million** people were added during that period to the already existing British Empire to cover **one-quarter** of the world’s surface and roughly over **one-fifth** of its population. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was described as “**the empire in which the sun never sets**”, as the sun was always shining on one of its territories. British Imperialism was motivated by many factors and ideologies including **social darwinism** and **Mercantilism**.

**How large was the British Empire at its peak, and which countries were once under British rule?**

# "The Empire in Which the Sun never Sets"



# British Colonies: African Colonies

## Africa

- **Egypt** (from late 19th c., effectively under British control after 1882): Controlled mainly to secure the Suez Canal, the vital route to India and Asia.
- **South Africa** (Cape Colony, Natal, later forming the Union of South Africa): Rich in gold and diamonds and a major white settler colony.
- **Nigeria**, Gold Coast (Ghana), **Kenya**, and **Uganda** (British West and East Africa)

# British Colonies: North America and the Caribbean

- **Canada:** A large settler dominion formed from earlier colonies (e.g., Nova Scotia, Quebec), important for timber, wheat, and as a loyal base close to the USA. It was referred to as “**British North America**”.
- **Caribbean colonies** or “**British West Indies**”(Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, etc.): Centres of sugar and later other crops, worked first by enslaved people and later by indentured labour

# British Colonies: Australia and the Pacific

- **Australia** (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, etc.): Major settler colonies supplying wool, minerals, and later wheat; they gradually gained self-government while remaining within the empire.
- **New Zealand:** Another settler colony with significant wool and meat exports, and an important base in the South Pacific.

**What were the Justifications  
and Motives of British  
Imperialism?**

# Ideological and Religious Justifications

- **The Civilizing Mission:** The idea that the
- The British were bringing civilization to the "uncivilized" areas of the world is famously
- expressed in Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden."
- **Christianizing mission:** The argument that imperial rule helped spread Christianity and "true religion" to non-Christian societies. This was associated with the evangelical revival of the late 18th century.
- **Social Darwinism (in the context of imperialism):** to argue that "stronger" (white, European) races were naturally destined to rule "weaker" ones.
- **Search for Religious Freedom:**
- Many colonies under the British Empire became the refuge of many outcasts within some religious minorities around the world who could not enjoy any aspect of religious freedom like Catholics, Calvinists, and Puritans.

# The White Man's Burden (First Stanza)

- Take up the White Man's burden—
- Send forth the best ye breed—
- Go bind your sons to exile
- To serve your captives' need;
- To wait in heavy harness
- On fluttered folk and wild—
- Your new-caught sullen peoples,
- Half devil and half child.
- 2

# Political Justifications and Motives

- **The Balance of Power Principle:** The term balance of power came into use to denote the power relationships in the European state system from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to World War I. Within the European balance of power, Great Britain played the role of the “balancer,” or “holder of the balance.”
- **Strategic rivalry and Competition among European Powers for more Influence Spheres.**



# Economic Motives

- The Effect of the Industrial Revolution and the growing need for raw materials,
- search for new markets and cheaper working force
  - □
- The Need to Import Slaves, mainly from Africa.
- □ Protecting Economic Interest and Guaranteeing Safe Route Passage, especially in
- Caribbean Islands

**How did India become a  
British Colony?**

# The Indian Kingdoms before British Rule

- **Mughal Empire:** The dominant power over much of northern and central India from the 16th to early 18th centuries, though it fragmented into semi-independent states later.
- **Maratha Confederacy:** A powerful Hindu polity centered in western India that expanded across large parts of the subcontinent as Mughal authority declined.
- **Sikh kingdom :** A strong regional kingdom in the northwest under rulers such as Ranjit Singh in the early 19th century.
- **Mysore:** A southern kingdom under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, notable for its resistance to British expansion.



# Early British Presence

Early British presence in India began with trade and gradually turned into political control. In 1600, the **British East India Company** was founded to trade with Asia, and in the early 17th century it established its first trading posts on the Indian coast at places such as Surat, and later at Madras and Calcutta. These coastal “factories” were officially commercial bases, but over the 17th and early 18th centuries the Company built up its own armed forces, negotiated treaties with local rulers, and used economic and military pressure to expand its influence, laying the foundations for later territorial rule and, eventually, the British Raj.



# The Indian Rebellion (1857) and the British Raj

- By the mid nineteenth century, the East India Company's long-standing practice of managing states through "protective" agreements had been replaced by a drive to impose direct rule. Under the "doctrine of lapse" (the British administration took over control of kingdoms where a ruler had died without a recognised male heir); other territories were annexed on the grounds that they had been mis-governed. The East India Company's practices were challenged by an increasing disaffection, especially by the elite class, which was culminated in the "Indian Mutiny". Although the rebels held their ground for a time, and inflicted substantial losses on their opponents, the rising failed in its objective of dislodging the British. After the 1857 Indian Rebellion, the British government ended East India Company rule and established direct Crown control through the Government of India Act 1858, marking the start of the British Raj. Queen Victoria became Empress of India, and independence was not gained until 1947.

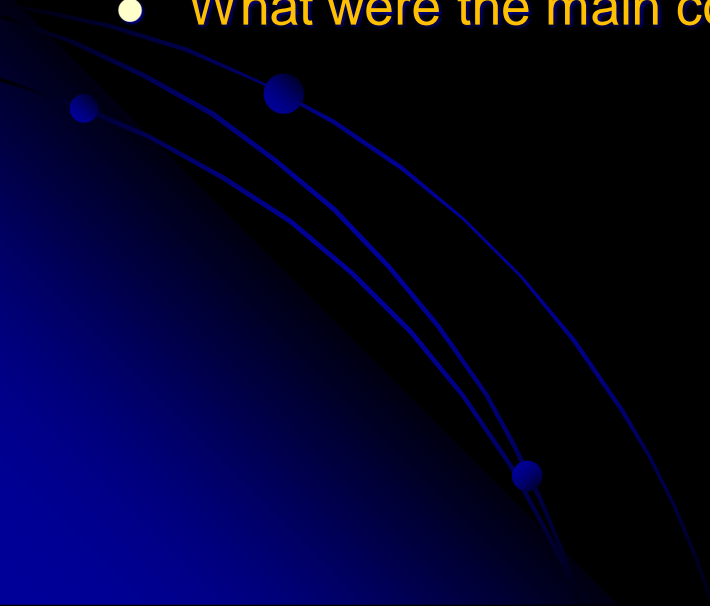
# British Legacy in India

- The British legacy in India is complex and mixed. It includes enduring institutions such as a centralized bureaucracy, a codified legal system, and a national railway network, alongside the widespread use of English as a link language in administration, higher education, and business. At the same time, British rule reshaped the economy toward export-oriented agriculture and resource extraction, contributed to recurrent famines and deepened social and regional inequalities, and left behind the fraught political geography of partition in 1947, whose consequences are still felt in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh today.

# Exercise 1

- Listen to the video and answer the following questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irAJcGwMb2I>.

- 1 How was East India India Company defined in the introduction?
  - 2. What was its headquarters?
  - 3. Was it the first oversea trade company?
  - What were the main countries interested in building overseas trade?
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# Exercise



*Thank You !*

*Messikh Djihad*