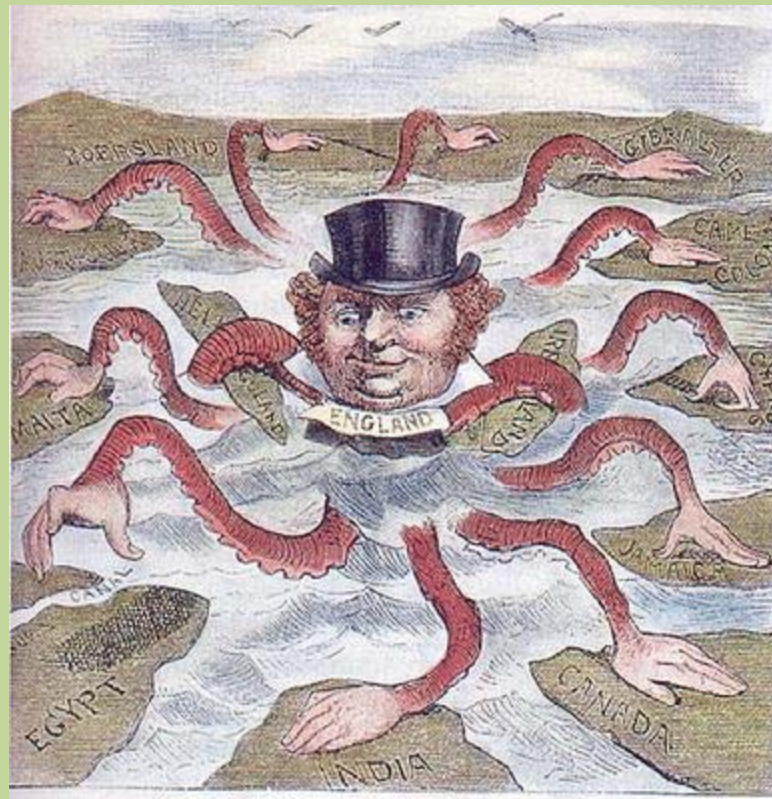


# British Imperialism

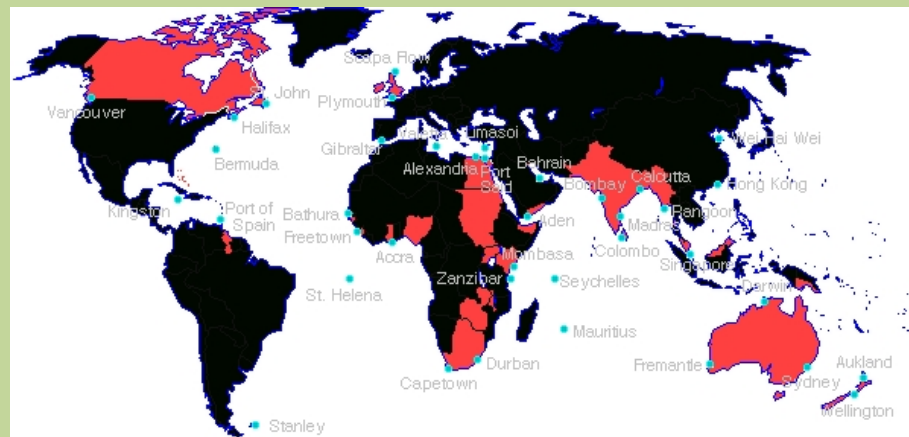
THE EUROPEAN MOMENT (1750 – 1900)



# British Imperialism

## *“The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire”*

- The British controlled colonies all over the world from Australia, Southeast Asia, India, the Caribbean, Africa, and beyond (By the 1920s they occupied nearly 25% of the world’s population and lands).
- *Why the British?*
  - They industrialized first so they had a jump start on technology and a need for raw materials for their factories
  - The world’s best navy



## What was changing?

- Prior to 1750 (or the American Revolution) Britain's focus was on slavery plantations in the American colonies (slavery is now over, and the U.S. is independent). Instead Britain will focus on the Eastern Hemisphere.
- Britain is surpassing (perhaps because of the Industrial Revolution) possible competitors (French & Dutch).
- Along with new shipbuilding techniques free trade is replacing mercantilism, which will help “sea powers.”
- Therefore, 1750 is not just the start of the “European Moment,” but also the rise of the British.

- After 1850 larger ships were built (In the 1700s ships did not exceed 300 tons, but after 1850 clipper ships were 2,000 tons) that were also much faster thus further stimulating maritime trade.



## In India

- The once powerful Mughal Empire (Islamic) had been in decline since the mid 1700s, leaving an opportunity for the newly elevated British and its East India Company.
- The EIC employed an army of Indians known as Sepoys who were led by British officers (The British were still competing for complete control over the subcontinent with Muslims, other European nations, and Indian princes).

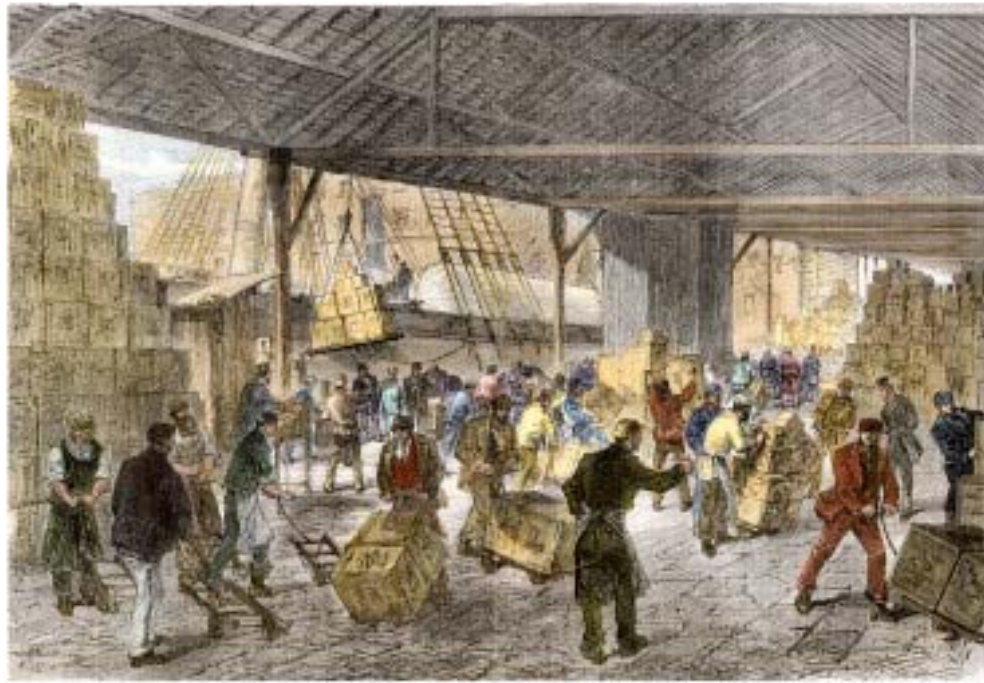




- It was really the East India Company's "India" and not that of the British government (*imagine Microsoft or Wal-Mart taking over a country!*)
- They controlled an area with more people than the population of all of Western Europe. Christian missionaries were less restricted and Indian elites were granted more power than they had under the Mughals (*yet for women and the ordinary Indian life worsened*).



- The British viewed India as it's own personal supply closet of raw materials to feed it's industrial factories (Indians were forbidden to manufacture things on their own and were forced to buy British goods. India was the world's largest supplier of textiles, but not anymore).



- The British were regularly putting down small uprisings with its sepoy. However, the Sepoy Mutiny (or Sepoy Rebellion) of 1857 was much more consequential. *Why?* It was the sepoy who were supposed to put down uprisings, plus they were well trained.
- The sepoy found out that their rifle cartridges were greased with beef and pork fat, to use the cartridge they had to bite off the end – this violated their beliefs. Rebellions took place throughout central & northern India.





- However, the revolt was destined to fail because Indian Hindus and Muslims disagreed about what the future of India was to look like, Hindus preferred British rule to Mughal rule.



- As a result of the mutiny, the British took direct command of India. This period of British rule became known as the Raj and lasted from 1857 – 1947. (A cabinet minister in London directed policy, and a British governor-general in India carried out the government's policy).



- India benefited and was hurt by British colonialism.

### NEGATIVE

- Britain held much of the political and economic power
- Britain's demand for cash crops and other materials reduced food production causing famine
- Racism was widespread



### POSTITIVE

- Britain established a large railroad network uniting different regions
- New canals, bridges, and telegraph lines were built
- Local warfare ended



- A rigid class system developed, and most Indians resented their British rulers (British control did offer Indians new opportunities, but . . .)

**“Ninety-nine percent of the railroad employees were Indians, but Europeans occupied all the top positions – ‘like a thin film of oil on top of a glass of water, resting upon but hardly mixing with those below,’ as one official report put it.”**



- As a result, Indian nationalism would develop.
- Ironically, the development of India by the British (Western style schools, and European ideals) played a part in this nationalism. It was normally led by educated middle class Indians who were beginning to prosper, but were upset with prejudices *(like the creoles of South America?)*
- Rammohun Roy (Western-educated, from a Brahmin family) wanted Pan-Indian nationalism.
  - He tried to reconcile the country's social and ethnic divisions *(the history of India had always been various city states with the occasional period of unification: Mauryan Empire, Gupta Empire, Mughal Empire, etc.)*
  - Encouraged reforms to help women (put an end to sati & infanticide)





## Australia & New Zealand

- Similar to Amerindians the indigenous people of Australia and New Zealand were prone to European diseases (this was not true of the Indians, Africans, and people of S.E. Asia who were also being colonized by the British).
- The first permanent British settlers down under were male & female convicts who had limited contact with aborigines. (Captain James Cook is credited for first exploring these places).



- However, after the discovery of gold in 1851, free settlers came to Australia (no longer just a penal colony); by 1860 a million immigrants had arrived (Immigration to New Zealand was much slower).
- Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century both places were on their way to independent rule (similar to the government in Canada). The British had learned their lesson from the American Revolution (i.e. give the colonies some independence and let them take care of their own expenses).



- Aborigines and the Maori were often excluded from democracy and often put on reservations.
- However, Australia and New Zealand were among the first countries to allow women's suffrage.



## Women's Vote in Australia.

*Extracts taken from an article in the Canadian Magazine of June, 1907, written by Professor R. E. Macnaghten, of McGill University, Montreal, who lived for some years in Australia; headed*

### A PLEA FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN CANADA.

"That the extension of the franchise to women has been a real success in Australia can hardly be disputed by any unprejudiced person; and sufficient time has passed since the first introduction to enable us to take a broad and dispassionate view of the case. Ninety per cent. of the men of Australia, to whichever of the great popular parties they might belong, would, I believe, agree in stating that the concession of the vote to women had been a real benefit to the State."

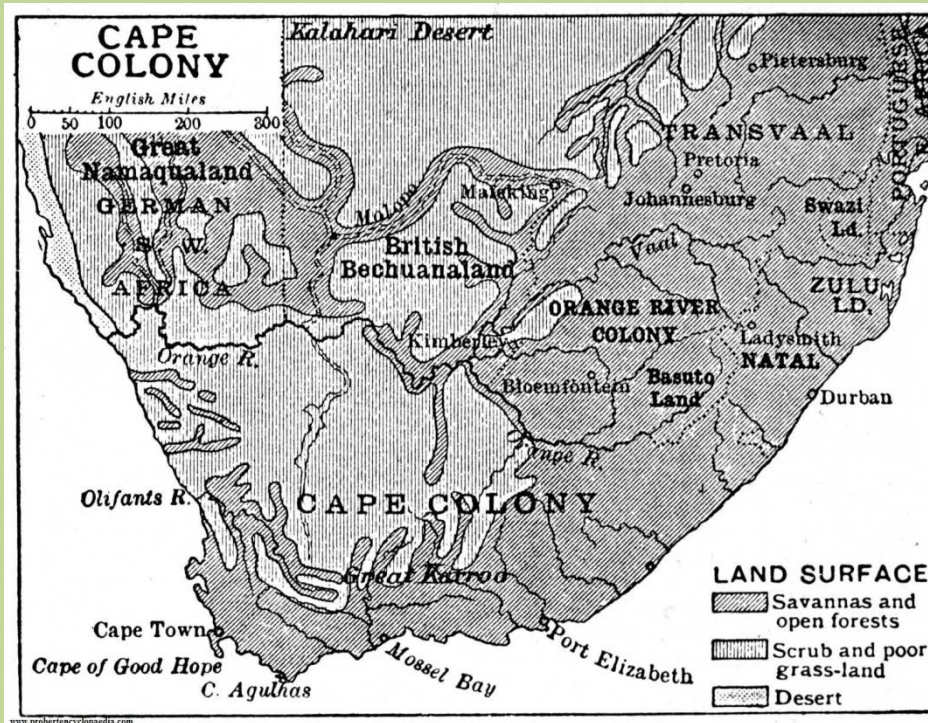
"Now it is sometimes said as an argument against female suffrage that 'Women do not really want the vote.' What has happened in Australia since the granting of female franchise is I think, a clear and striking disproof of that assertion. I admit of course that before the suffrage was granted to the Women of Australia, there was no very manifest or outspoken indication of such a desire. . . . But on the other hand that women, since the boon has been granted, have shewn the fullest and most intelligent appreciation of their privileges will hardly be denied by any one conversant with the actual facts of the case. In the towns women vote, in greater proportional numbers than men. In the country, owing to the long distances which have to be traversed, . . . the case is somewhat different, though even there, so far as the villages are concerned, the women are exhibiting remarkable political acumen."

"And not only are women, by going in great numbers to the polls, showing that they fully appreciate the privilege conferred on them; but they are also introducing new, and what I think must be regarded as more scientific, methods into political and electoral organization."

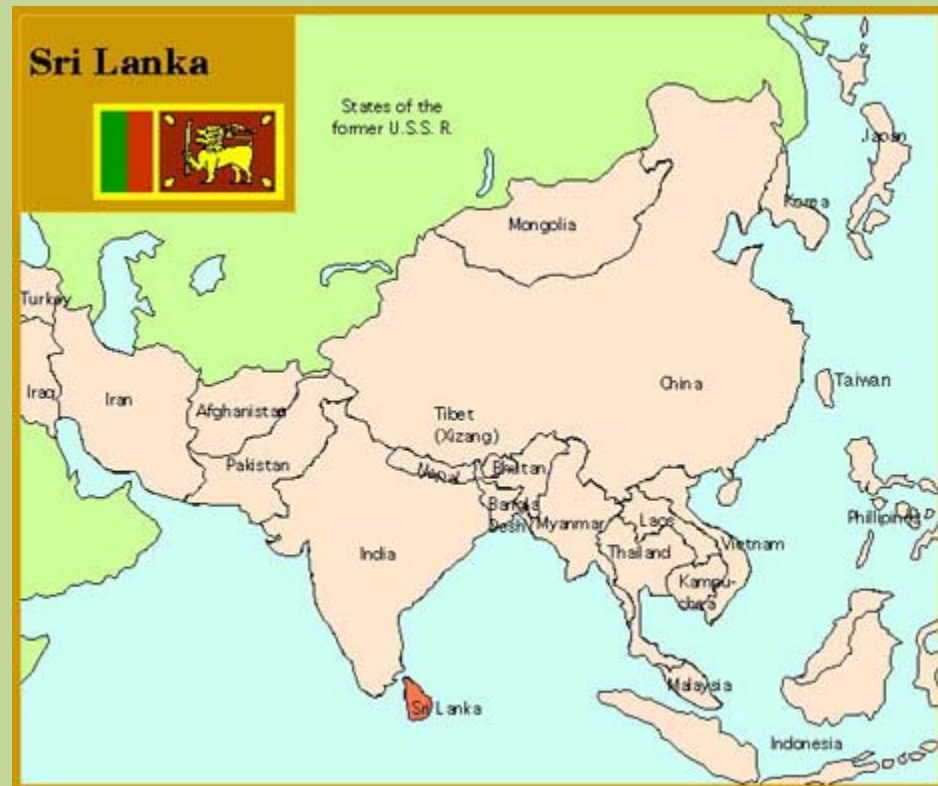


## Other Notable Places

- The “Cape Colony” in South Africa (despite consisting of Dutch settlers who called themselves Afrikaners) was of high importance because of its strategic location between India & England.



- Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British also took over strategic trading locations in Southeast Asia:
  - Java (part of Indonesia, but given back to the Dutch)
  - Burma
  - Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka)
  - Malaysia
  - Singapore





- By 1870, Britain had dozens of colonies around the world (despite losing 13 colonies in the Americas).
- Its goal was not so much territorial expansion, as it was doing what was best for its commercial & trading interests:
  - Tea & raw materials from India
  - Ivory from East Africa
  - Sugar from the Caribbean
  - Forest products from S.E. Asia



# British Empire Cica 1914



# British Imperialism

THE EUROPEAN MOMENT (1750–1900)



*in a . . .*



- Coinciding with their Industrial Revolution Britain turned it's attention to the Eastern Hemisphere and took numerous colonies – not so much for land, but for economic gain.
- Some places were given almost complete independence ([Australia](#)), while others experienced direct control ([the Raj in India](#)).