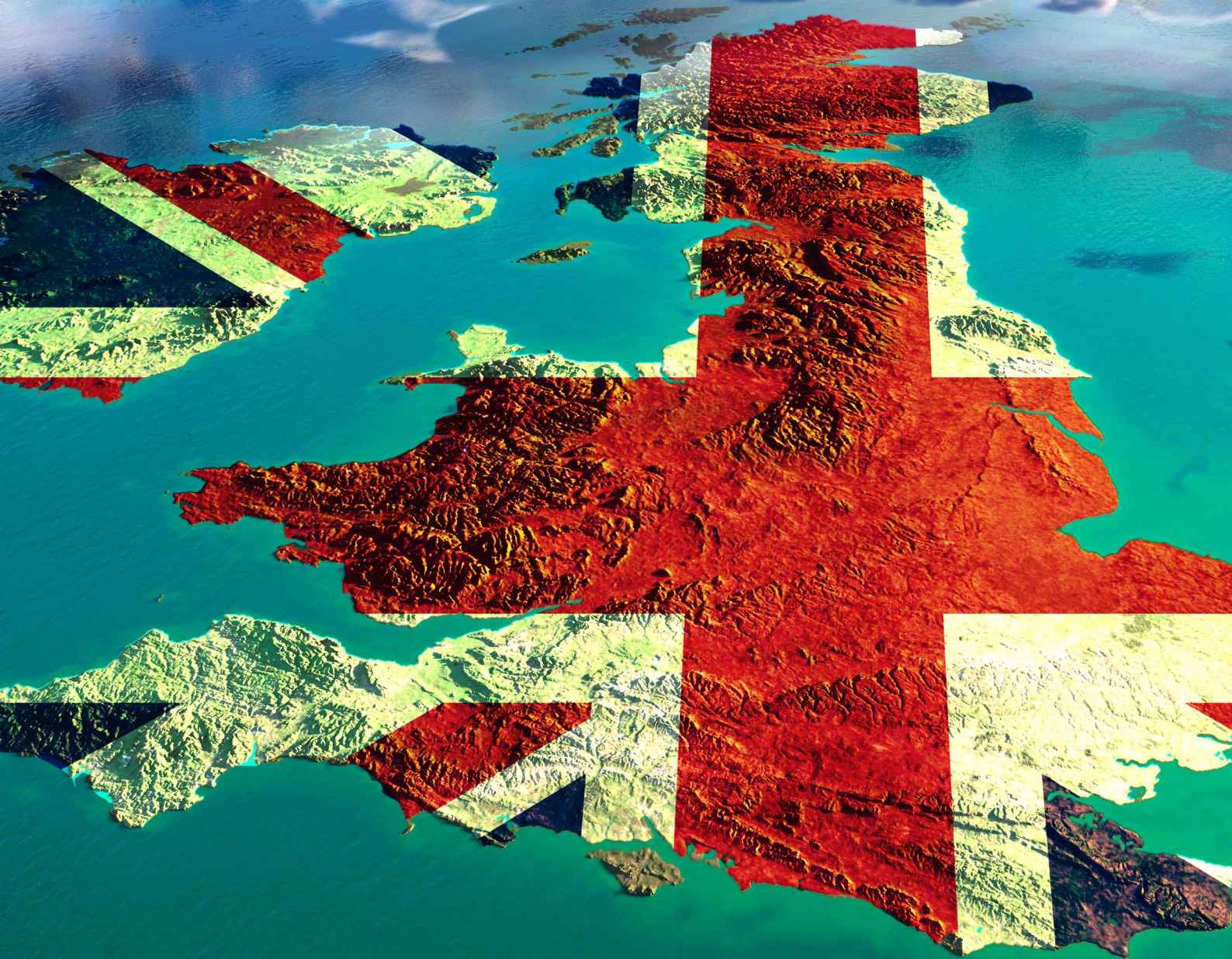


The Geopolitics of

Britain



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Introduction

Britain is a relatively small island situated off a large but historically divided continent. The island emerged in spectacular fashion in the 17th century due to its navigable rivers, natural resources and fertile land. These factors allowed it to develop a world class navy that would go on to dominate the worlds oceans and colonise a quarter of the world's population. But the rise of a continental power and two world wars saw it eclipsed by the US and ever since Britain has played a strong hand in maintaining a global presence. Looking forward the UK continues to play a weakening hand in global affairs, and it is really a matter of time when the sun really will set on the British Empire.





What are Britain's Geopolitical imperatives?

On a map Britain looks like a small island separated by the English Channel from the European continent. Whilst Britain is separated from the European landmass, its biggest threat and priorities have been dominated by what takes place on the European continent. Scotland, Wales, and Ireland became the United Kingdom at different times and still today have different languages and identities. Maintaining unity on the isles has for long been a geopolitical imperative.

Britain's challenges throughout its history have always come from continental Europe and dealing with Europe is Britain's second geopolitical imperative. This has always been Britain's fundamental challenge as it was invaded by the Romans, the Normans and both the

Germans and Spanish attempted to invade the British Isles. A dominant power on the European continent or unity on the continent could pose a threat to Britain as it could marshal the resources to build a navy and threaten the UK. Such a power could threaten Britain from accessing foreign markets.

As Britain is a small island, which has cold temperatures for half of the year, accessing foreign markets for resources as well as exporting its goods is Britain's third geopolitical imperative. To achieve this Britain needed to ensure a continental power never emerges. It needed to build a navy to defend itself and it needed to ensure it was never dependent on the European continent.



What is the British Identity?

Before the Romans came to the British Isles, the whole island was one big patchwork of different tribes and clans. Celts came from central Europe and inhabited the UK - Scottish, Irish, Welsh and English didn't exist at the time. Before the Romans came, Britain was many tribes fighting to control the island. These tribal groupings eventually formed the small kingdoms that later evolved into the kingdoms of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

Imperial Rome in time raped and pillaged its way to the end of the European Peninsula and undeterred by the English Channel, sought conquest beyond the European continent. Julius Caesar arrived in 55 BC to conquer Britain and the Romans would control Britain for over 400 years. By 407 AD the Romans got up and left as there were bigger issues to deal with, Rome itself was being invaded. We know the Romans built roads and towns and for some reason the British today, celebrate the Roman occupation, it is now part of British identity and culture.

Soon after the Romans left the Angles and Saxons came to the British Isles from the Germany - Denmark area. The Anglo-Saxons established the Kingdom of England, and the modern English language owes almost half of its words to them. The Angles and Saxons set up a whole network of different kingdoms: Kent, East Anglia, Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, and others. They are considered the original English.

When the Vikings invaded the isles in 787, they unified Britain with Norway and Denmark, under its King. The Vikings were successful in raiding and establishing settlements, but for the next 300 years there were lots of wars in different parts of the British Isles between the Vikings and the Angles and Saxons. They established settlements and controlled parts of England, particularly in the north and east, known as the Danelaw. It was not until 1066 the Anglo-Saxon king defeated the Vikings by repelling a Viking invasion led by King Harald Hardrada from Norway.

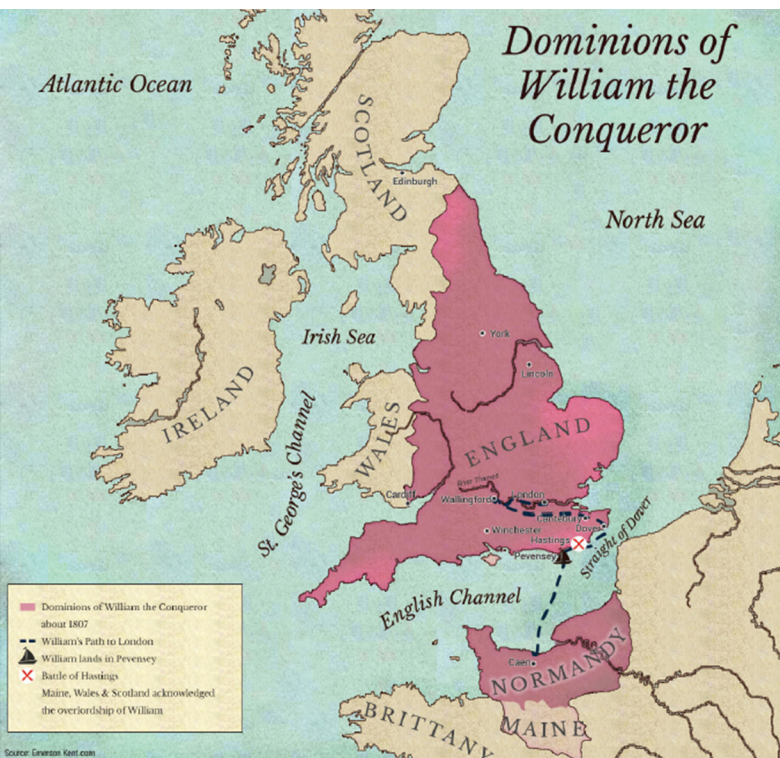
In 1066 William Duke of Normandy invaded the British Isles and his invasion and subsequent occupation would have the biggest impact on the future of the isles. He would defeat the forces of the Angles and Saxons in the Battle of Hastings and crowned himself King of England. He



believed he had a right to the kingship as the previous King had no children.

The first act of William the Conqueror, in 1067, was to declare that every acre of land in England now belonged to him as the new monarch. This was unprecedented: Anglo-Saxon England had been a mosaic of landowners. Now there was just one. A comprehensive survey and record of landholdings and property ownership in England was carried out and compiled in the "Domesday Book." It provided a detailed account of the land, resources, and taxable values within England. The Domesday Book was last used in settling a legal dispute in 1982! With this data William proceeded to reward his supporters with land. This was the beginning of feudalism; it was also the beginning of the landowning culture that came to dominate Britain for centuries and gave rise to the landed gentry that led to the aristocracy who would dominate the political life of Britain. Today, descendants of William the Conqueror's handout still own Britain's land, 160,000 families (0.3%) of the population own 70% of the land.

British identity has been shaped and influenced by numerous invasions from across Europe. Whilst the British like to give credit to the Romans and Anglo-Saxons for shaping their culture, the truth is British culture is a mis-mash of Germanic, Norwegian, Viking and Roman influences.



Roman Empire, 117 CE

How did Catholic Britain

Become a Protestant Nation?

The process through which Catholic Britain became Protestant took place during the 16th century when the broader Protestant Reformation was sweeping across Europe. Protestant teachings and doctrines gained popularity among intellectuals, clergy, and the general population in Britain.

King Henry VIII of England played a crucial role. In the 1530s, Henry sought an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon from the Catholic Church which refused to grant it. In response, Henry broke away from the authority of the Pope and established the Church of England, with himself as the head of the church. The Act of Supremacy in 1534 declared the English monarch as the supreme authority in religious matters within England.

As part of Henry VIII's break from the Catholic Church, he ordered the dissolution of monasteries and religious houses in England. This move served both religious and financial purposes, as Henry gained control over the wealth and lands of the monastic institutions. After Henry VIII's death, his children - Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I continued with Protestant reforms. The Church of England underwent significant changes influenced by Protestant doctrines and practices.

Edward VI's half-sister, Mary I became queen after his death and sought to restore Catholicism in England. But upon her death, Elizabeth I became queen in 1558 and she sought to find a middle ground between Catholicism and Protestantism, allowing certain Catholic practices while embracing Protestant doctrines. With the monarchy making a break from the Pope, due its own personal interests the transformation of Catholic Britain into a predominantly Protestant nation took place.

These factors, along with the complex interplay of politics, religion, and individual beliefs, contributed also. However, it is important to note that Catholicism remained a significant presence in other parts of the British Isles, particularly in Ireland and some pockets of Scotland and Wales.





How Has the Monarchy Survived in Britain?

The death of the long-term monarch Queen Elizabeth II, who died on the 6th of September 2022 brought into focus the role of the monarchy in the UK. The Royal House of Windsor is today the longest serving royal family and Queen Elizabeth II was the longest serving monarch. Her reign spanned 15 prime ministers. As the Elizabethan era came to an end the biggest challenge for the Royal House has been how to keep an archaic mediaeval institution relevant in the modern era.

The monarchy emerged in the UK as monarchy is the history of Europe. Nations states are a relatively recent development in history. In most of human history there were not nation states but there were territories run by families. Until at least the 16th century there weren't sovereign states but there were large family estates called kingdoms and dynasties run by kings, Queens and emperors that constantly fought with their neighbours for wealth and power. When a kingdom conquered, grew, and encompassed enough area, it was called an empire.

For most of history ruling orders were centred around families, kingdoms and dynasties. When a ruler passed away his oldest son would usually inherit his father's throne and territory. Marriages were the most logical ways an empire could stay in the hands of a tightly knit family group.

As most wealth was also in the hands of a small percentage of the population which consisted of monarchs, dynasties and families, over time religion or Christianity specifically came to be used to justify

their rule. Across Europe the later Romans and almost all the European monarchies that emerged after the Roman Empire collapsed supposedly gained their power from the divine, the clergy who represented the divine, and the landowning nobles.

The Europeans and the Chinese lived on opposite sides of the world and had little contact with each other through most of history, but they operated in essentially the same way, though China's institutions were bigger, more developed, and less religious than Europe's.

The roots of monarchy in Britain can be traced back to ancient times. The concept of monarchy was prevalent among Celtic tribes and was later influenced by the Roman Empire's governance structure. The arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th and 6th centuries shaped the system of governance in Britain. The Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great once he achieved dominance over parts of England assumed the title 'King of the English.' His grandson was the first king to rule over a unitary kingdom roughly corresponding to the present borders of England. These Anglo-Saxon monarchs converted to Christianity as God made kings and only the Pope in Rome could say what God wanted. The Archbishop of Canterbury — God's man in England — could anoint a king with holy oil, raising the king above everyone else. From this time until the middle of the 17th century the British Monarchs ruled supreme.

In the UK much like wider Europe a number of attempts were attempted to overthrow the monarchy or

reduce its influence. This was rarely from the masses who were languishing in poverty, but usually from other competing classes who were looking to increase their influence. Struggles between the different classes and efforts to maintain the status quo, like Europe, was also a regular feature in the UK. Struggles over wealth and power would lead to the English Civil War, which was a brutally violent continuation of the centuries-long battles between classes that culminated in the Glorious Revolution in 1689. These civil wars in Britain and conflicts weakened the monarchy and strengthened Parliament. They also established terms for the relationships between the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

In 1189 Henry Fitz-Ailwin de Londonestone became the first Lord Mayor of the City of London, the historic square mile and financial district in Central London. Successive Lord Mayor's stripped the monarchs of England of power over the City of London – the City has never been part of England or London. It is still not subject to the Sovereign today. In the 13th century a group of rebel barons were able to clip the wings of an unpopular king in the Magna Carta of 1215. The final 'peace agreement' would restrict some of the powers of the monarch's arbitrary authority, even after it was torn up by the King and not accepted by the Pope.

In 1688 a group of English politicians and nobles turned to the sovereign Prince of Orange (Southern France) a Protestant Dutch King, to assume the throne of England in The Glorious Revolution. This led to a constitutional settlement where these plotters established parliamentary sovereignty and limited the powers for the monarch. A couple of decades later a Bill of Rights would take away from royalty the *"...power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament..."* and that of *"...levying money for or to the use of the Crown without grant of Parliament."*

By the end of the 18th century the abandonment of the British monarchy in America and the bloody revolution in France in 1789 had given monarchies a bad name. Democracy, representative rule and nation states were all the rage. The world was changing, and monarchies were seen as a thing of the brutal past. Things only got worse for the British monarchy. At the beginning of

the 20th century most of the major monarchies and dynasties in the world were overthrown. The Qajars in Iran, the Qing in China, the Habsburgs in Austria and the Hohenzollerns in Germany all came to an end. The British monarchy adapted and remade themselves. Queen Victoria was from the German Royal House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and her eldest son, King Edward VII, took the name of the family's regular summer residence in the western suburbs of London – Windsor, in 1917, due to anti-German sentiment during World War One.

The decline of Britain as a global power after World War Two would give the Royal Family a new reason for its continued existence. British officials used all the pageantry around the Royal Family as a means to market Britain around the world and in theory the Queen was the head of state for a number of nations and territories. The Royal Family came to form British soft power in an era where Britain's hard power was in decline.

Over time, the monarchy in Britain evolved into a constitutional monarchy, where the monarch's powers were limited by law and the constitution. The Royal Family in the UK has survived as it adapted and found a role for itself as other monarchies were either abolished or violently overthrown. The monarchy still enjoys privileges which include being exempt from paying taxes and sovereign immunity, meaning the monarch can't be prosecuted under a civil or criminal investigation. Whilst Queen Elizabeth II did make voluntary tax payments her son King Charles did not pay any tax on his inheritance from his mother. For British politicians as well as Britain's ruling class they see the Royal Family through an economic and a soft power lens that brings credibility and tourists to the UK.





What is the City of London Corporation?

At the heart of London is the square mile known as ‘the City’ which is a sovereign state separate from the Crown and London. The City is also not part of England, it is not subject to the Sovereign, it is not under the rule of the British parliament. Like the Vatican, in Rome, it is a separate, independent state. It is the Vatican of the commercial world. The City is ruled over by the City of London Corporation and over the centuries became the wealthiest square mile on earth. Its ruler is a Lord Mayor, rather than the Monarchy.

The official year of its incorporation is 1189, but no one knows when exactly the City of London Corporation was formed as there are no founding documents. As a legal body, the City of London Corporation is incorporated “by prescription,” meaning because it’s so old, everyone assumes it was incorporated. Londinium was set up as a trading post by the Romans and from this period it thrived. When William the Conqueror became King, he allowed the City to have certain privileges so long as they accepted him as King. Numerous subsequent royal charters over the centuries confirmed and extended the City’s rights.

The City gained the right to have its own mayor, later being advanced to the degree and style of Lord Mayor of London. The Lord Mayor ruled over such an important territory he was designated as one of two

guarantors charged with ensuring that the Crown kept its side of the bargain in Magna Carta of 1215. As British strength and influence grew around the world from the 1600s so did the wealth, strength and influence of the elite merchants of the city and this led to conflict between the Crown and the City, beginning with the House of Stuart. The Stuart monarchy made two serious attempts at reforming the power and influence of the City. The first led to a civil war, the temporary abolition of the monarchy and to the execution of King Charles I in 1649. When his son became King in 1660, when the monarchy was restored, he attempted to make the monarchy the source of the City’s authority. The City barons turned to the Protestant Dutch Prince William of Orange and his wife Mary, to undertake a coup and assume the Royal throne. The new monarchs then issued a charter making the City the greatest beneficiaries of the Glorious Revolution. It declared: *“That the mayor, commonalty and citizens of London shall for ever hereafter remain, continue and be, and prescribe to be, a body politic, in re, facto, et nomine ... and shall have and enjoy all their rights, gifts, charters, grants, liberties, privileges, franchises, customs, usages, constitutions, prescriptions, immunities, markets, duties, tolls, lands, tenements, estates and hereditaments whatsoever.”*

In 1694 the privately owned Bank of England (a central bank) was established to finance the profi-

gate ways of William III. The bank was financed by a group of City merchants. As Britain's wars and global presence increased so did the loans the monarchy needed, this made the central bank, owned by the city, central to Britain's rise. The Bank of England and the City began to dominate and control the affairs of Britain because they financed Britain's global expansion.

This led to two empires operating side-by-side. One was the Crown Empire where all the colonial possessions where large settlements had taken place such as the Union of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada were governed under British law under the authority of the British government. All the other parts of the British Empire such as India, Egypt, Bermuda, Malta, Cyprus, Singapore, Hong Kong, Gibraltar and colonies in Central Africa, those that were inhabited by the indigenous people were not under the Crown. These were not under British rule and as a result the monarch and the British parliament had no authority over them. They were privately owned and ruled by corporations incorporated in the City. The most famous was the East India company that ruled over India, Hong Kong and Singapore. But there were many others such as the Hudson's Bay Company that colonised North America. The Royal African Company who transported enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to British colonies in the Caribbean and North America. The British South Africa Company, formed by Cecil Rhodes, colonised Southern Africa and the British East Africa Company colonised Eastern Africa.

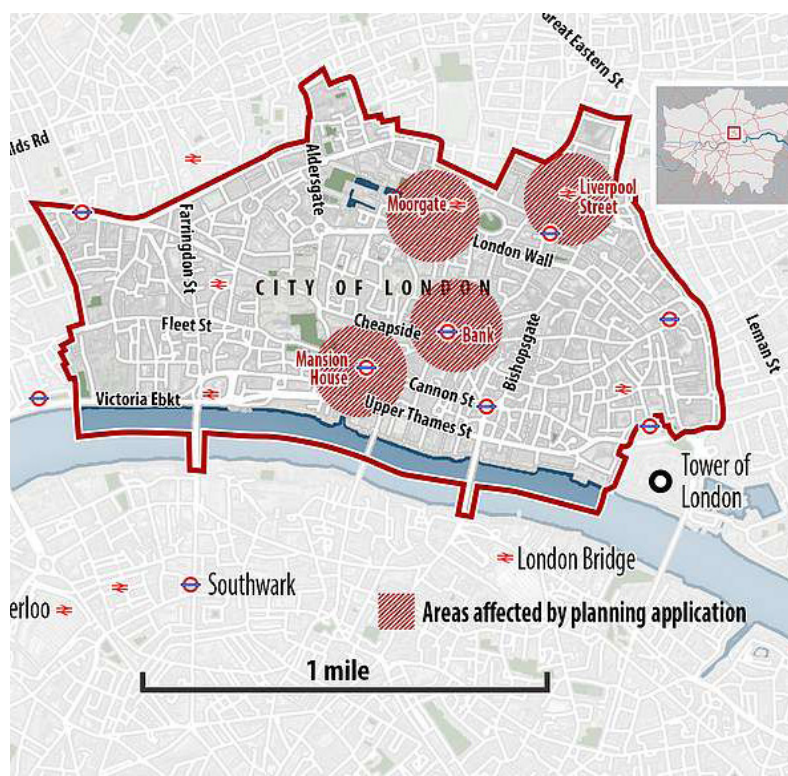
When the East India company founders wanted a royal charter and a monopoly over trade in the East one of its founders included Stephen Soame, who was also the Lord Mayor of City. Charles Peers, Chairman of the East India Company in 1714, was also the Lord Mayor of The City of London.

Britain's Empire was dominated by the city. Not only did it finance the global expansion but all the critical institutes from the Bank of England, Lloyds of London and the many corporations came to be based there as by 1850 50% of all global manufacturing took place in the UK. This was serviced by the City, which made the City the core of the British economy and the British Empire.

At the demise of the British empire after World War Two, the city kept itself relevant by creating a web of offshore secrecy jurisdictions that captured wealth

from across the globe. 14 former Crown territories became dependencies, along with the Channel Islands and Isle of Man all of which operate on a semi-autonomous basis. They are completely independent but are reliant on the UK for security and representation in international relations. As they are independent, they have been used by the City as tax havens. The City of London, once the financial capital of the largest empire in the world, became the centre of the most important part of the global offshore system.

The City and its leadership the Corporation of London still maintain many privileges. The Corporation of London is unique among British local authorities for its continuous legal existence over many centuries. It operates as a local authority with its own separate legal identity and governance structure. It has the power to make and enforce bylaws, manage local services, and levy taxes within its jurisdiction. The City of London Corporation elects a Lord Mayor, who serves as the head of the City, which supersedes the monarchy and the parliament. The electoral system of the City of London Corporation differs from the standard UK electoral system. It grants voting rights not only to residents but also to businesses and other organisations based in the City. In addition to being its own government within London, the City of London Corporation has a separate police service from the national Police. The City of London Police is responsible for all law enforcement within the city boundaries. Even when Parliament displaced the Crown, the state still refused to subordinate the Corporation of London to national laws and practices. Today the City's assets and its ancient privileges remain untouched.





Why Has There Never Been a Revolution in Britain?

Britain has never had a successful revolution by the masses. For much of the history of the British Isles foreign invaders spent long occupations on the isles. Britain's political architecture took shape from the Norman invasion in 1066 and William the Conqueror's subsequent distribution of land to his supporters.

This created the feudal class that would dominate British political and economic life through ownership of land. They dominated economic life as they held vast landholdings, which were sources of wealth and power. They had privileges and rights, including political representation in the House of Lords (the upper chamber of Parliament), and enjoyed social and economic advantages.

The origins of the British Parliament can be traced to the 11th century, when the king of England would often consult with a council of advisers, which gradually developed into a representative assembly known as the "Great Council." This council consisted of feudals, church officials, and the king's appointed advisers. In 1265, Simon de Montfort, an influential noble, called a Parliament that included knights from each county and representatives from certain boroughs. This assembly became the precursor to the modern Parliament. It was from 1272-1307 under the reign of Edward I that two distinct chambers, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, took shape. The House of Lords consisted of nobles and bishops. Over the following centuries, Parliament gradually gained more influence and power.

Parliament which consisted of the rich landed gentry would compete for power with the monarchy over the centuries. Different monarchs would give titles and privileges to their supporters whilst on other occasions the landed gentry and aristocracy would try to restrict the power of the monarchy. The Magna Carta, signed in 1215, established certain rights and limitations on royal authority and was a dispute between an unpopular king and a group of rebel barons. It laid the groundwork for parliamentary involvement in decision-making. Parliament in time would gain control over taxation, legislation, and advising the king.

The English Civil War in 1649 was fought between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists. The Parliamentarians, led by Oliver Cromwell, emerged victorious, leading to the temporary abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Commonwealth of England. It lasted only 11 years. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, tensions grew, and this led to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when a group of English politicians and nobles turned to William of Orange, a Protestant Dutch stadtholder, and his wife, Mary, to assume the throne of England, effectively a coup. In a constitutional settlement these plotters established parliamentary sovereignty and limited the powers of the monarchy.

In 1714, a Bill of Rights would rob royalty of the "*.. power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament...*" and that of "*..levying money for or to the use of the Crown without grant of Parliament.*" The Acts of Union in 1707 and 1800 that united England and Scotland, and Ireland, respectively. They created the Kingdom of Great Britain and later the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland gave more power to parliament and those that were represented in parliament.

From the 1700s as British strength and influence grew around the world the elite merchants in the city also emerged with power and influence. They funded the British Empire's imperial adventures around the world and saw their wealth grow immensely. Industrialisation also saw the emergence of new wealth through industry and trade, leading to the rise of industrialists, entrepreneurs and large corporations. Some members of the aristocracy adapted and diversified their wealth, while others struggled to maintain their traditional influence. While the aristocracy's political influence has waned, many noble titles and

landed estates continue to exist today, and these families still dominate British political life. Similarly, the financial class hit the jackpot in the 1960s during the era of decolonisation when many of the British Empire's overseas island territories became Crown dependencies and thus tax havens. Places such as the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and Guernsey allow Britain's financial class to dominate the economic life of the UK. Since the 1990s a new class, the billionaires, have grown and around 177 exist today in the UK.

Today this 1% are able to dominate the political life of the UK due to the Conservative Party who serve the interests of this tiny elite. Unlike her European neighbours that adopted liberal constitutions, Britain remains deeply conservative. Conservatism was summarised by the 18th century philosopher Edmund Burke as a belief in pragmatism over ideology, in tradition over rationality, in the need for incremental over revolutionary change.

To preserve their power, Britain's elites have been very successful in subverting and subsuming any hostile trend under the banner of conservatism. When capitalism took hold in Europe, the conservatives embraced it as a measure for progress, though they resisted sweeping away what liberals termed

irrational institutions and traditions such as the monarchy or the hereditary principle of the House of Lords. In fact when these institutions were under threat, the conservatives sought to subvert any radical change that would undermine the influence of the old established families. In 1832 the Great Reform Act was passed to allow greater participation to the male industrial middle class. This was as a response to the growing unease amongst capitalists, the mill owners, merchants and traders, who saw their wealth grow but not their influence. The change was cosmetic; the landowners still commanded control over the state.

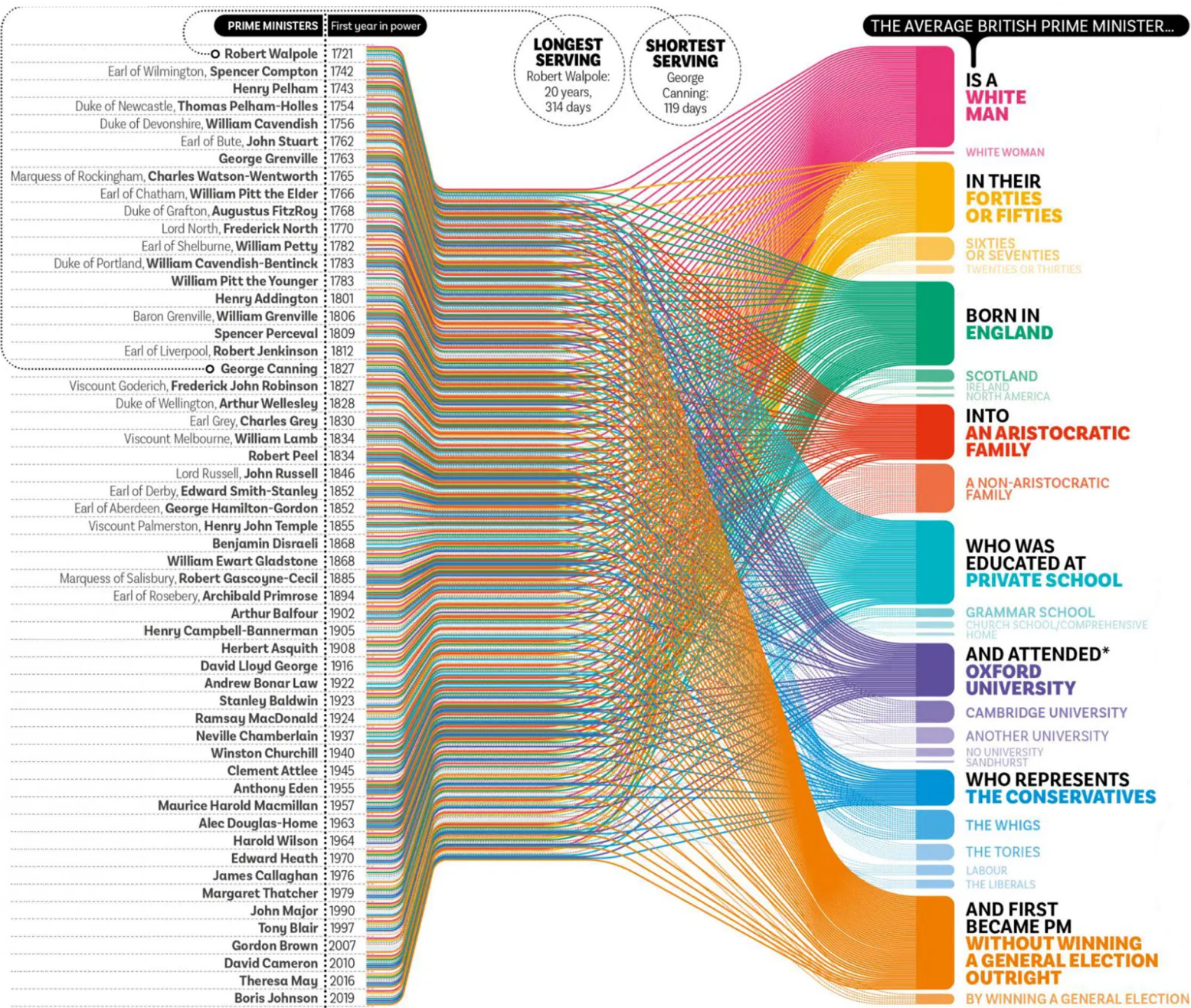
When the working-class chartist movement began to agitate, a further adaptation was made to accommodate the property-owning working class into the electorate. With Marxist movements sweeping Europe at the turn of the 20th century, the state permitted trade unions and the Labour Party to focus radicalism within the context of moderate socialism.

There has never been a revolution in the UK as the elites have remained the same for centuries and whenever a new trend or threat emerged, they successfully incorporated it into the system as their proxies in parliament and the Conservative Party served their agenda.



Who Gets to be the British Prime Minister

Britain's political elite have changed little over the centuries. This is why the UK has never had a revolution as the elites have successfully maintained the status quo. Successive British Prime Ministers have overwhelmingly come from a narrow part of British society





Why did Britain go to War with Numerous European powers?

Britain and England before her went to war with every European power as it has always been a strategic imperative to ensure no competitor emerged on the European continent. The biggest threat to the British Isles has always been a power or a united Europe blocking or invading the British Isles. As a result, it was always a strategic necessity for whoever ruled the British Isles to stop the rise of a European power.

Anglo-Spanish Wars - England first went to war with Spain in the 17th century when the Spanish and Portuguese discovered the New World and found immense Gold and Silver. There was little the monarchy and Britain's elite could do, they were poor and lacked any capability to take part in conquering the new world.

The English found an answer to this problem in the form of piracy. As early as 1496, Henry VII granted letters patent to the Venetian navigator John Cabot, giving him and his sons: *"...full and free authority, faculty and power to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea [not the southern sea, to avoid conflict with Spanish discoveries], under our banners, flags and ensigns ... to find discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens or infi-*

rels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians ... [and to] conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands by them thus discovered that they may be able to conquer, occupy and possess, as our vassals and governors lieutenants and deputies therein, acquiring for us the dominion, title and jurisdiction of the same towns, castles, cities, islands and mainlands so discovered."

John Cabot the Venetian pirate sailed from England in 1497 in the hope to find a route to the other side of the world for a northern route across the Atlantic. He was never to return. The Portuguese got the sugar, spices and slaves, the Spanish got the gold and silver of the New World, which the British envied in the hope that England too could become rich on American metals. In 1493 the Pope had issued a bill allocating trade in the Americas to Spain and trade in Asia to Portugal. But England kept drawing blanks and eventually used her skills as sailors to steal gold from Spanish ships and settlements, which led to a series of Anglo-Spanish wars.

Both England and Spain sought to establish and expand their colonial empires, particularly in the Americas. Conflicts arose as they vied for control over lucrative trade routes, resources, and markets.

Spanish King Philip II, angered by the 'piratical' activities assembled a huge Armada in 1588 to conquer Britain and overthrow Queen Elizabeth I. The Spanish were defeated by the English navy in a series of naval battles and severely damaged Spain's naval power. After three more wars the Treaty of London was signed in 1607 which ended hostilities as Spain was bankrupt. With England's main rival on the continent defeated, England was able to establish its first American Colony at Jamestown, Virginia.

The Anglo-Dutch Wars - The Anglo-Dutch Wars consisted of a series of military engagements, including naval battles and sieges, spanning from 1652 to 1674 between England (eventually Britain) and the Dutch. The Dutch dominated oceanic trade by the mid 1600s, especially from Asia as Dutch ships would bring goods from Asia to European ports. As British ports and Dutch ports were so close to each other they both became economic competitors.

In the space of just eleven years (1649 to 1660) Britain added 216 ships to the navy. Navigation Acts were passed in 1651 and 1660 which meant goods from English colonies came on English ships only. This was the beginning of the Anglo-Dutch trade war. Between 1652 and 1674 the English fought three wars against the Dutch, the main aim of which was to wrest control of the main sea routes out of Western Europe – not only to the East Indies, but also to the Baltics, the Mediterranean, North America and West Africa.

Four wars were fought from 1682 – 1674 and led to an overall stalemate. Exhausted and with Dutch finances running dry the Treaty of Westminster was signed in 1674 that brought an end to the wider series of conflicts. With Britain then focused on India and seeing cloth more valuable than spices Britain lost interest in the Far East.

Anglo-French Wars - Britain's colonial success in India is what set the scene for a series of Anglo-French wars. Even prior to Britain's emergence and the pre-eminent power in India, there was already a struggle for dominance between the British and French empires.

Both the British and French empires sought to expand their colonial territories and influence around the world. They competed for control over valuable overseas colonies, trade routes, and resources. This competition led to conflicts in various regions,

including North America, the Caribbean, India, and West Africa. Control over lucrative trade routes and access to valuable resources were also central to the colonial ambitions of both Britain and France. The rivalry between their respective East India Companies, the British East India Company and the French East India Company, played a significant role in the conflicts in India. The British and French empires represented two major European powers with global ambitions. The conflicts between them were part of a broader struggle for dominance and supremacy in the colonial world.

When Napoleon took power in France in 1799, he turned his guns and armies against all the other European powers. By 1804 he had established a continental empire and turned his attention to his biggest challenge, the British Empire. With Britain ruling over India, she needed uninterrupted access to India. This was through two routes. Both involved going through the Mediterranean, with one route to Egypt, over the Isthmus, then down the Red Sea, around Aden to India. The other route was also through the Mediterranean, but from Syria, over land to the Euphrates to Basra then down the Persian sea to India.

Napoleon believed he needed to invade Britain and the best way to do this was to cut Britain from India, which the British economy relied upon. He therefore invaded Egypt in 1798 only to lose to the British navy and abandon Egypt in 1801 due mounting challenges and setbacks. This allowed him to continue with European wide wars and by 1812 when Napoleon's forces turned to invade Russia he had established a continental Empire.

Britain never fought the French alone but as part of coalitions which they funded. Various coalitions against Napoleon were formed that included Austria, Prussia and Russia. Five wars took place over a 15-year period all culminating in Napoleon's final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, where the British and Prussian forces defeated him. Napoleon was subsequently exiled where he remained until his death in 1821.

The victors in the Congress of Vienna redraw the map of Europe and established a new balance of power. The conference marked a significant turning point in European history as now the French were defeated there remained only one undisputed global power – Britain.



Why did Britain Lose its American Colonies?

For the British Empire its colonies were to be used for resource extraction and as markets for British corporations and merchants. Great Britain at the time taxed all its colonies to pay for its global empire. In North America she needed to defend her colonies against France, and over time taxed everything from newspapers, legal documents and tea. This is what led to the Boston Tea party revolt in 1773. These tensions eventually boiled over and on the 4th of July 1776, the 13 colonies on the East Coast abandoned relations with Great Britain by issuing the Declaration of Independence.

On paper the colonies had little chance of winning and gaining independence. The Americans were thirteen separate colonies who had a record of not being able to agree on anything. They had no professional soldiers, no allies and no navy. The Americans were up against a large and professional British army, reinforced by large numbers of German troops from Hesse. The British had won the Seven Years' War, including victory in North America against the French.

Despite the strength in numbers the Americans were able to leverage two advantages. The vast geographical distance between Britain and the American colonies posed logistical challenges for the British in terms of maintaining control and supplying their forces. The colonists, on the other hand, were fight-

ing on their home turf, which provided them with a strategic advantage. The American colonists also received significant military and financial assistance from the French, who saw an opportunity to weaken their long-standing rival, Britain. French aid, including troops, naval support, and supplies, greatly bolstered the American cause and played a crucial role in the ultimate victory over the British.

The British, on the other hand, were simultaneously engaged in a struggle with France for domination of Europe and control of the oceans. For the British, the American Revolution was not a matter of indifference, but neither was its outcome decisive in determining Britain's place in the world. The British were prepared to deploy a substantial force in North America, but having done so, they went on with their nascent industrial revolution and their global concerns. The amount of time and casualties they should devote to North America was seen in the context of its broader interests. They could absorb casualties, but the war could not be an absolute imperative.

Although Britain lost her American colonies in 1776, politically if not economically, she gained in many ways a wealthier prize - India.

What was the Context in India when the British Arrived?



India became the jewel in the British Empire's crown and supplied the raw materials, markets and wealth that turned Britain into an empire. None of this was guaranteed when the East India Company (EIC) first arrived on Indian shores in 1600 when it was incorporated by royal charter from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I. The Company, in furtherance of its trade, established outposts or 'factories' along the Indian coast, notably in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Increasingly this involved the need to defend its premises, personnel and trade by military means, including recruiting soldiers in an increasingly strife-torn land (its charter granted it the right to 'wage war' in pursuit of its aims). A commercial business quickly became a business of conquest; trading posts were reinforced by forts, merchants supplanted by armies.

The context in India could not have been more different than Europe at the time. India had a fifth of the world's population and was producing a quarter of global manufacturing (this became 27% by 1700). Indeed, it was the world's industrial powerhouse and the world leader in manufactured textiles. In comparison, England had just 5% of India's population and was producing just under 3% of the world's manufactured goods. A good proportion of the profits on this found its way to the Mughal exchequer in Agra,

making the Mughal ruler, with an income of around £100 million (£25 billion in today's money), the richest ruler in the world.

The Mughal capitals were the megacities of their day. Their cities were crowded with merchants, who gathered from all over Asia. Between 1586 and 1605, European silver flowed into the Mughal heartland at an astonishing rate. The silk-clad Mughals, dripping in jewels, were the living embodiment of wealth and power.

The Europeans were used to easy military victories over other peoples of the world. That said, EIC officials very quickly realised, no one could do this with the Great Mughals, not least because the Mughals kept a staggering four million men under arms.

In 1615 the EIC persuaded King James to send a Royal envoy to the Moghuls. Sir Thomas Roe spent three years trying to hold court with Jahangir, when he returned back to England, he had only obtained permission from Jahangir to build a factory, no privileges or trade routes were granted. Roe made it clear to the directors that force of arms was not an option when dealing with the Mughal Empire.

But the English tried their luck in 1686 when the EIC director in India wrote to London that they were consistently cheated by the locals and needed to teach them a lesson. A considerable fleet sailed from London to Bengal with 19 warships, 200 cannons and 600 soldiers. The Mughal war machine swept away the English landing parties and soon all the EIC factories at Hughli, Patna, Kasimbazar, Masulipatnam and Vizagapatam had all been seized and plundered, and the English were expelled completely from Bengal. The EIC had no option but to sue for peace and beg for the return of its factories and hard-earned trading privileges. They also had to petition for the release of its captured workers. When Aurangzeb heard that the EIC had ‘repented of their irregular proceedings’ and submitted to Mughal authority, the emperor left the EIC hanging for four years and then in 1690 graciously agreed to forgive them.

Throughout the 1600s the Mughals expanded and set up a system for maintaining their rule. The Mughals ruled over much of Northern India and were expanding into central and Southern India into the Deccan region. The Mughals also entered into many alliances, such as with the Rajput kingdoms, where they married Rajput princesses and incorporated Rajput nobles into their rule. The Mughals appointed governors, known as Subahdars or Nawabs, to oversee different regions, ensuring efficient governance and revenue collection. The empire was divided into provinces or “Subahs,” each with its own administrative structure. The key to successful Mughal rule was the Mughal taxation system. The Mughal zamindari system was a revenue collection system where the Mughal leader granted revenue rights over a specific area of land to a zamindar, who was responsible for collecting taxes from the people or cultivators within that area. The zamindar was very powerful, apart from paying a portion of revenue collection to the Mughal treasury, zamindars maintained law and order, settled disputes and ensured the smooth functioning of agricultural activities. When the Mughals entered into an alliance with a nawab, they were expected to pay a portion of their revenues to the Mughal treasury. This system of governance and economics turned the Mughals into, what many consider the richest nation in the world at the time.

But things were changing as the 1700s began. The Mughals launched several military campaigns in the Deccan region in order to expand Mughal rule. The Deccan region consisted of a number of Sultanates but the Marathas, an influential Hindu warrior



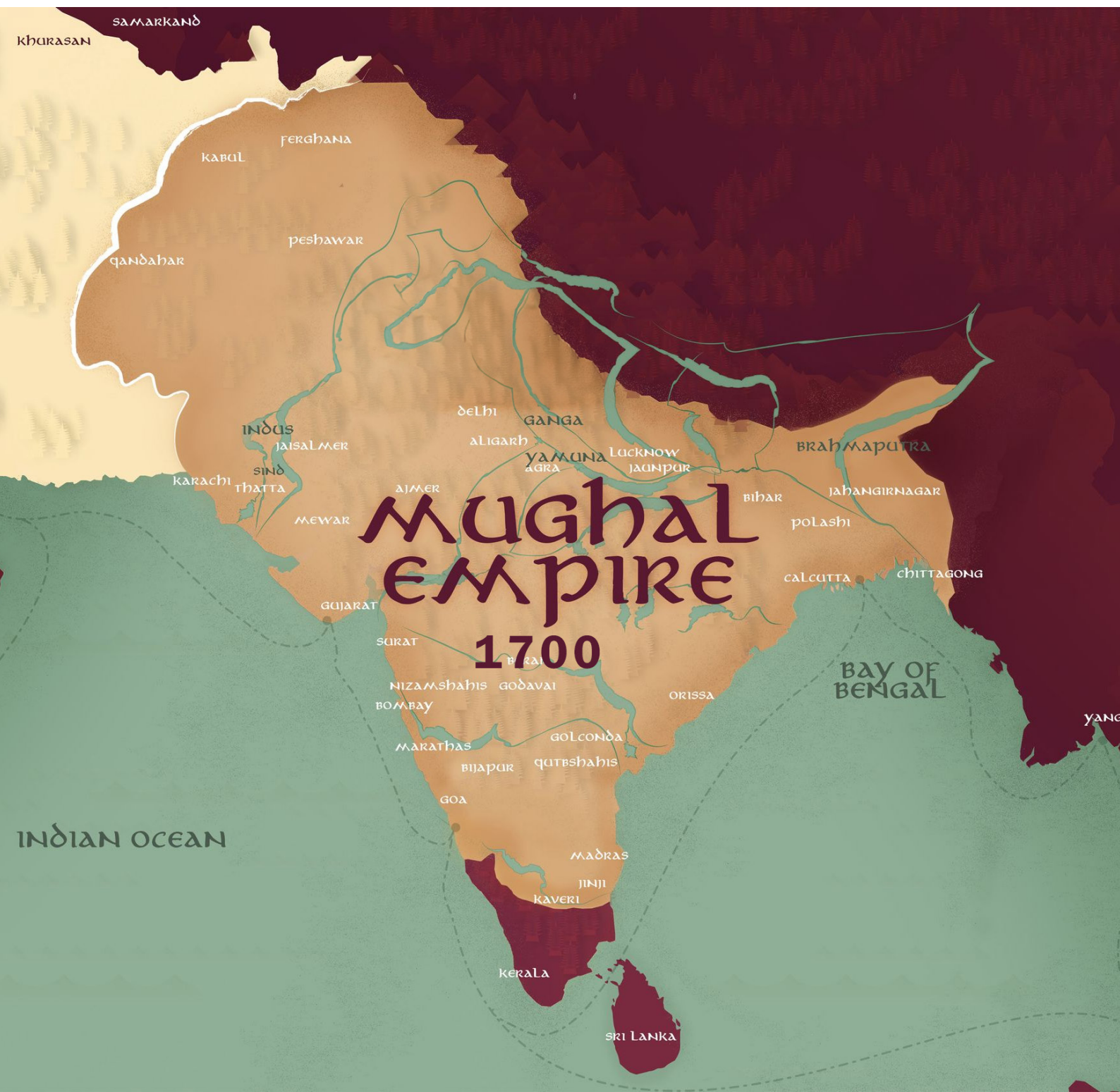
caste, resisted Mughal authority. Despite agreeing to become a Mughal Vassal in 1665, the Marathas didn't just resist, but expanded their empire. Aurangzeb would spend the last two decades of his life dealing with the Maratha rebellion and died in Deccan. The decades of war in the centre of India cost an estimated 100,000 lives a year and huge expense in gold and rupees, overstressing the resources of the Mughals.

The invincibility of the Mughals from the 1680s was undermined by the successful rebellion of the Marathas. This led to Jats, the Sikhs and landowning zamindar gentry also breaking into revolt and openly battling tax assessments by the Mughal state. These different acts of resistance significantly diminished the flow of rents, customs and revenues to the exchequer, leading for the first time in Mughal history to a treasury struggling to pay for the costs of administering the Empire or provide salaries for its officials. As military expenses continued to climb, the cracks in the Mughal state widened from fissures to crevasses.

In the years that followed Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the authority of the Mughal state began to dissolve. Mughal succession disputes and a string of weak and powerless emperors exacerbated the sense of imperial crisis: three emperors were murdered. In the face of ever-growing Maratha power, Mughal regional governors were increasingly left to fend for themselves, and several of these began to behave as if they were indeed independent rulers.

In the absence of firm Mughal control, the East India Company realised it could now enforce its will in a way that would have been impossible a generation earlier. But not before the spectacular sacking of Delhi by the Persian Nadir Shah in 1739 and the loot of all its treasures. The Mughal capital was pillaged and burned over eight long weeks; gold, silver, jewels and finery, worth over 500 million rupees, were seized, along with the entire contents of the imperial treasury and the emperor's fabled Peacock Throne; elephants and horses were commandeered and 50,000 corpses littered the streets. Nadir Shah had broken the back of the declining Mughals.

In 1757, the EIC under the command of Robert Clive, won a famous victory in Plassey over a ruling nawab, Siraj-ud-Daula of Bengal, who he accused of breaking the terms of a treaty with the EIC. Through the betrayal of the nawab by one of his closest nobles, Mir Jafar, whom the EIC duly placed on his throne, in exchange for de facto control of Bengal. The EIC now possessed the richest province of India. Robert Clive transferred the entire contents of the nawab's treasury (£2.5 million, £371 million in today's money) to the EIC's coffers in England as the spoils of conquest. Within 50 years the EIC would seize the Mughal capital of Delhi itself and then all of India.





How Did Britain use India to Enrich Itself?

British rule over India via the EIC and then directly by the Crown from 1857 is presented as benign, a version of the 'enlightened despotism' that characterised the Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries. The British may have been imperialists who denied Indians democracy, but they ruled generously and wisely, for the greater good of their subjects.

The British arrived in the 1600s to what was considered the richest nation on earth. They came to India to get a share of the pie. In 1600 India was generating some 23% of global manufacturing. By 1947, when the British Raj left, India had been reduced to a poor 'third-world' country, destitute and starving and in poverty and famine. Britain's principal motive was economic in its imperial adventures across the world, including India. So too were the major consequences of its rule, both for India and for Britain itself.

As India became increasingly crucial to British prosperity, millions of Indians died in famines. As a result of what one can only call the British Colonial Holocaust, thanks to economic policies ruthlessly enforced by the British Empire, between 30 and 35 million Indians needlessly died of starvation during the British Raj. Millions of tonnes of wheat were exported from India to Britain even as famine raged. Four million Bengalis starved to death in the 1943 famine, when Winston Churchill deliberately ordered the

diversion of food from starving Indian civilians to well-supplied British soldiers and to top up European stockpiles during World War Two.

Bengal was one of the richest provinces of the Mughals and famed for its textiles. For centuries the handloom weavers of Bengal had produced some of the world's most desirable fabrics, especially the fine muslins, light as 'woven air', coveted by European dressmakers. Britain's Industrial Revolution was built on the destruction of India's thriving manufacturing industries. Textiles were an emblematic case in point. The British systematically set about destroying India's textile manufacturing and exports, substituting Indian textiles by British ones manufactured in England. The British used Indian raw material and exported the finished products back to India and the rest of the world. Once in power the British were ruthless. They stopped paying for textiles and silk in pounds brought from Britain, preferring to pay from revenues extracted from Bengal. They cut off the export markets for Indian textiles, interrupting longstanding independent trading links. As British manufacturing grew, they went further. Indian textiles were remarkably cheap—so much so that Britain's cloth manufacturers, unable to compete, wanted them eliminated. The soldiers of the East India Company obliged, systematically smashing the looms of some Bengali weavers and breaking their thumbs so they could not

ply their craft.

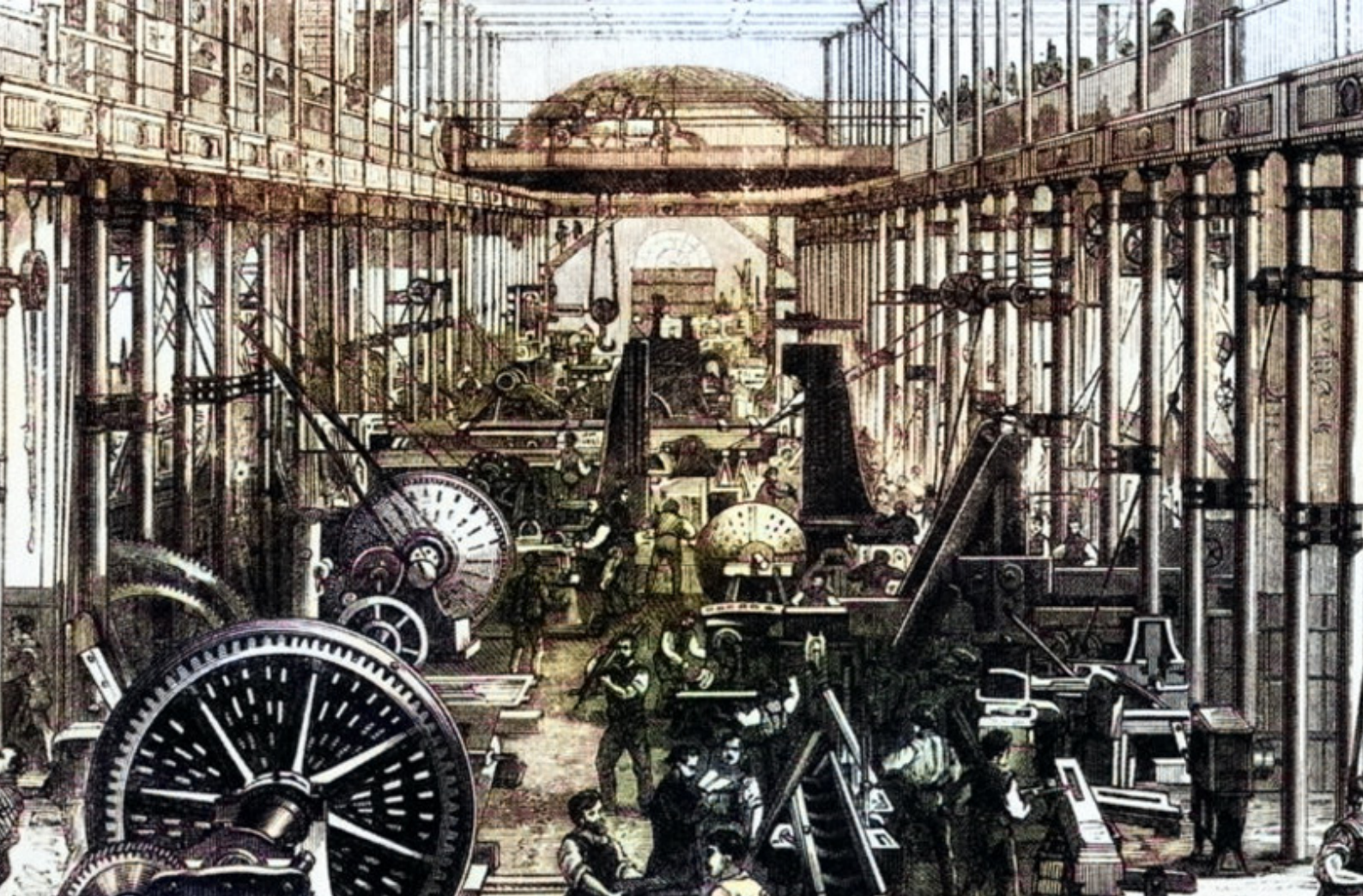
By the end of the 19th century, India was Britain's biggest source of revenue, the world's biggest purchaser of British exports and the source of highly paid employment for British civil servants and soldiers all at India's own expense. That India contributed such a significant amount to Britain's imperial expansion can be seen from the frequency with which troops were dispatched overseas for wars which had nothing to do with India. The British had a standing army of 325,000 men by the late 19th century, two thirds of which was paid for by Indian taxes. Indian labour was used to foster plantation agriculture in

Malaya, southeast Africa and the Pacific, build the railways in Uganda, and make Burma the rice bowl of Southeast Asia.

According to research by the Eminent Indian economist, Professor Utsa Patnai, she believes Britain robbed India of \$45 trillion between 1765 and 1938. Britain enriched itself by enslaving the people of India through a policy of divide and conquer and instead of investing in the development of the countries they ruled, the British survived by doing deals with indigenous elites to sustain their rule at knock-down prices. The British colonial rulers had no interest in the well-being of the people.



Nehru (left), Lord Ismay – Chief of Staff to Lord Mountbatten (centre left), Lord Mountbatten – British Viceroy of India (centre right), and Muhammed Ali Jinnah (right), 1947



Why Were the British the first at Industrialising and Abolishing Slavery?

When the Spanish and Portuguese kicked off the era of imperialism in the 1500s Britain also wanted its share but lacked the resources, military capabilities or power. With the decline of the Spanish in the latter half of the 1500s Britain was able to establish colonies in the Caribbean and North America.

Despite successive English monarchs having imperial ambitions, the lack of resources on the British Isles meant England's early forays into imperialism were led by private enterprise, merchants and its aristocracy. The wealth that was made was from the sales of commodities generated within the British colonial system. When the Americans broke away, much of that wealth went with them.

The wealth of colonial Britain was coming from two main sources by the 18th century. In Britain's factories goods were crafted and this was slow work that required skilled craftsmen. Training craftsmen took years, if not decades, and Britain's population was extremely small when compared with Europe's. Manufacturing was a huge handicraft industry and a

one-at-a-time process.

The other source of wealth was slavery. Beginning at the end of the 1400s, African people were kidnapped from their families, crammed into the dark pits of slave forts and were then piled into the bowels of ships. Pirates such as John Hawkins in the 1560s, became some of the first British men to make huge fortunes from this trade in kidnapped Africans. By the late 17th century, the British came to dominate the slave trade, having overtaken the Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch. Tens of thousands of merchant ships made the "middle passage", the voyage across the Atlantic that transformed captives from Africa into American slave commodities. Half of all the Africans transported into slavery during the 18th century were carried on British ships.

In the Caribbean, English companies and merchants established one of the first modern slave societies. Slavery had certainly been practised in many parts of the world since ancient times. But never before had a territory's entire economy been based on slave labour for industry. Beginning in 1627, the enslaved

were put to work in the intense cultivation of sugarcane, working in chain gangs in shifts that covered a 24-hour production cycle. This system of plantation slavery expanded over the following centuries across the Caribbean, South America and the southern United States.

Fear and torture were used to drive African workers to cut, mill, boil and “clay” the sugar, so it could be shipped to Britain as part of a lucrative “triangle of trade” between the west coast of Africa, the Americas and Britain. The trade in slaves, and the goods they were forced to produce – sugar, tobacco and eventually cotton created immense wealth and led to the first lords of capitalism. The British ruling class received much of their wealth from the slave trade. Admiral Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, Prime Minister William Gladstone as well as institutions such as the Royal Family, the Church of England, banks such as Barclays and insurance houses such as Lloyd’s of London all had their hands in the slave trade. British slave ships sailed to Africa, where they supplied locals with British manufactured goods in exchange for kidnapped Africans. The ships then carried these kidnapped Africans to the Americas, where plantation owners bought them to hold as slaves—providing British traders, as payment, with sugar, cotton, molasses and other New World products, which the British traders then transported to Europe, and sold for cash.

So effective were the British their legacy of this success led to buildings being named after slave owners such as Colston Hall in Bristol; streets named after slave owners such as Buchanan and Dunlop Streets in Glasgow; and whole parts of cities were built for slave owners, such as the West India Docks in London.

Using their profits from slavery and seaborne trade, a host of British businessmen in the late 1700s combined a series of nascent technologies such as coal, oil, the assembly line and interchangeable parts. This led to steam power, mechanised looms, the factory system, and canals and eventually steel and electricity to develop new production systems. Britain’s Industrial Revolution began in textiles but quickly spread to tools, furniture and railroads. Within a half century, industrialised Britain was producing vast volumes of cheap, high-quality goods that could outcompete those slow-moving, skilled pre-industrial craftsmen in almost any product set anywhere in the world. In the 1840s came the age of railways, telegraphs, and

steamships. The British ruling class had an empire and its merchants, corporations and aristocracy had direct access to 25% of the world’s population.

Industrialisation is what put an end to slavery, but not for the reasons you may be thinking. Many believe the enlightenment ideas about liberty began to spread, especially after the French revolution and this made slavery morally indefensible. At the end of the 18th century there were frequent and more intense slave rebellions, making the plantation system more costly. There was also a growing abolitionist movement in the west against slavery.

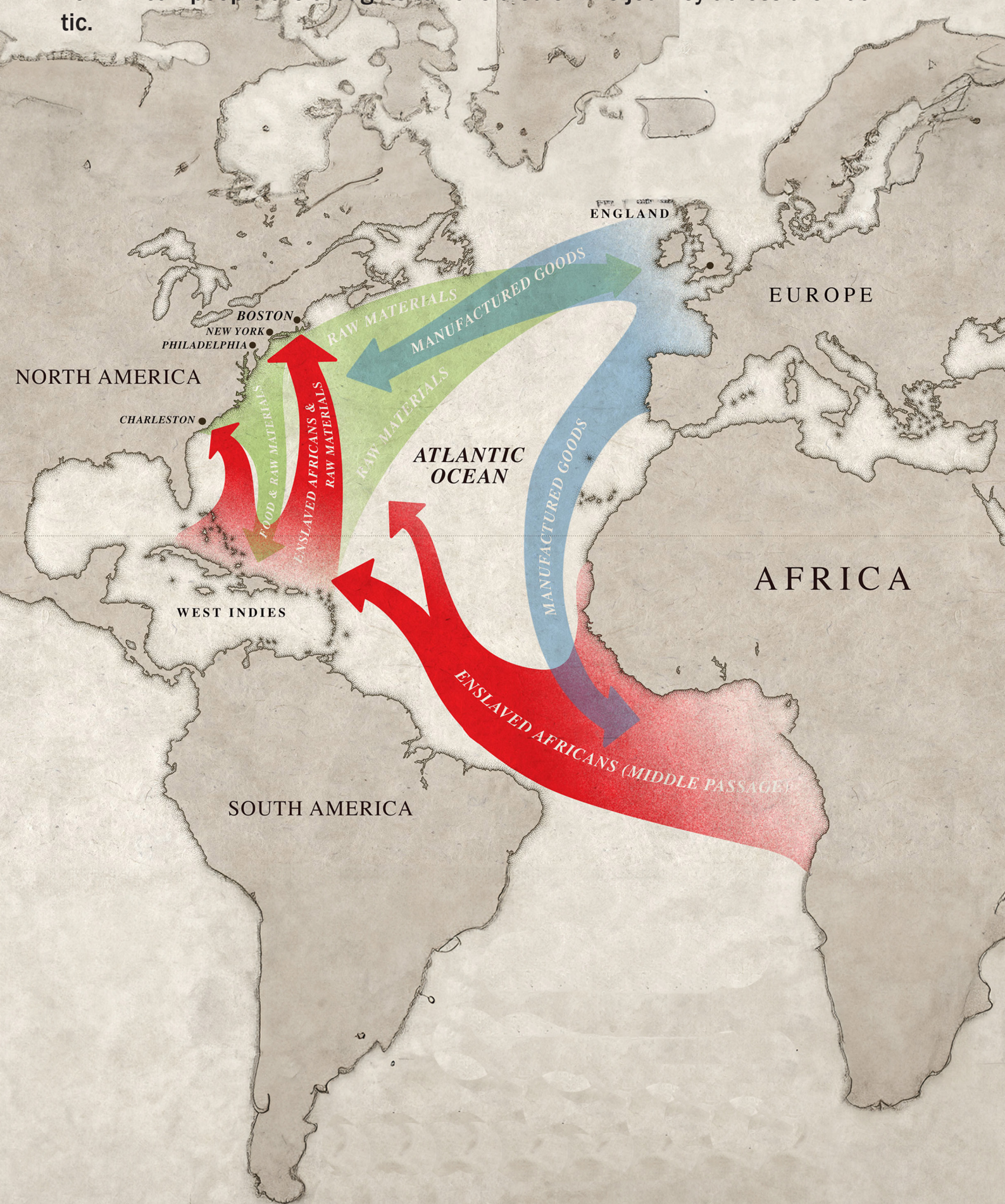
Slavery played a crucial role in pre-industrial European economies. But with new technologies, tools, machines, organisation, energy and the factory floor emerging from industrialisation, this made slavery as an economic model obsolete. Slavery was as inefficient as it was brutal. It was also costly to maintain slaves who despite living in horrible conditions needed to be fed for them to be economically useful. Industrialisation brought in a new economic model which was more dynamic, innovative, productive and efficient than any previous economic system. Industrialisation, for the British, was a more efficient and less capital-intensive method of manufacturing goods. Thus, the slave trade had become obsolete.

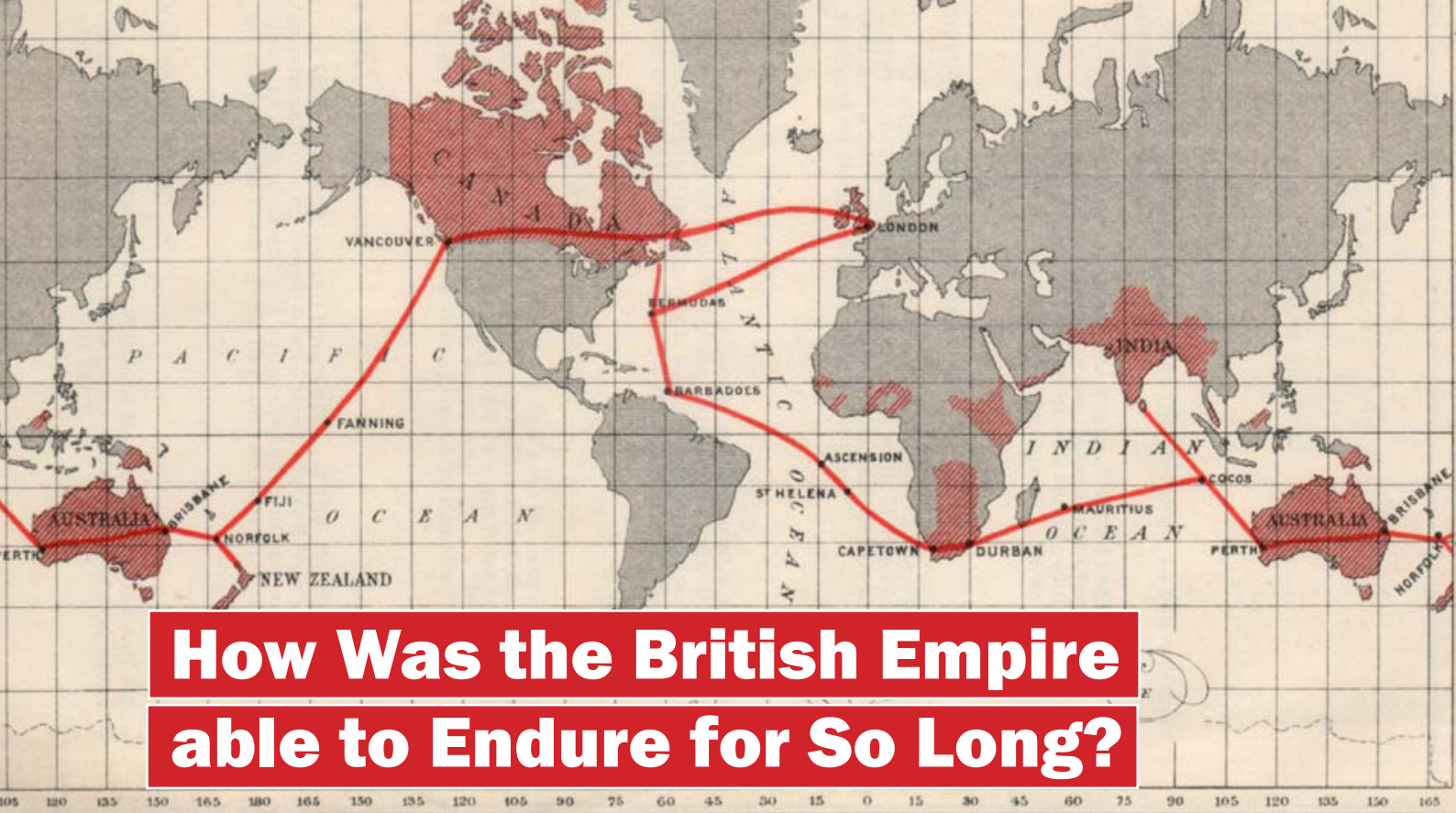
Why were the British the first to industrialise and abolish slavery? The slave trade as well as the wealth from the colonies allowed Britain to accumulate the capital to fund industrialisation. After making this economic transformation Britain abolished slavery through the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, largely arguing on humanitarian grounds. The British thereafter called for slavery to be abolished across the world and used this for political purposes against her European rivals who engaged in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade but had not yet industrialised.

In a final act against those brutalised by slavery the British government took a loan from the Rothschilds in order to compensate slaveholders upon the abolition of slavery. The payments represented nearly 40% of the state budget – or 5% of GDP at the time. This debt was not fully repaid until 2015. Not a penny was ever paid to those who were the victims of slavery.

The Triangular Middle Passage

The slave trade is estimated to have forced 15 million or more people from Africa to provide enslaved labour in the Caribbean and Americas. Over 2 million African people are thought to have died on the journey across the Atlantic.





How Was the British Empire able to Endure for So Long?

After the Congress of Vienna in 1815 Britain enjoyed its imperial century. What makes this unique was how the British Empire was able to achieve this with so little resources. Britain had colonies in the Caribbean, Africa, Middle East all the way to Australia. European nations had colonies totalling 40 million square kilometres, Britain ruled over 25 million of those. Britain also informally controlled or shaped places such as Egypt and China. India's population would grow into the hundreds of millions by the turn of the 20th century, this was an awful lot of people to manage, even if you're the colonial power.

Britain overcame this challenge by not pursuing a large land force but by building a navy to control the oceans. If any power wanted to challenge Britain, they would need to transport a large land force to a British colony. This required a large navy to transport them there. The Brit-

ish Empire built and maintained a navy that was always the size of the next two largest navies. When Napoleon attempted to take Egypt and sever British lines of communication with India in 1798 the British navy destroyed his forces at Alexandria.

The only nation that could build a navy to rival and thus challenge the British would have been another European power. Here Britain played the role of a diplomatic balancer to prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon upon the continent. The British cabinet once stated at the congress of Aix-la-Chapelle: *"Our true policy has always been not to interfere except in great emergencies and then with commanding force."* The traditional balance of power strategy has always dominated British foreign policy. This was due to the nation's geography where Britain was an insular power; since the stopping power of sea hampers the ability to transport

an army onto hostile shores and then move inwards to overcome a hostile populace. The continental powers in Europe needed to contend with the emerging threats on the continent due to their geography, but not all of the European threats posed a danger to Britain and British interests.

Throughout the imperial century Britain maintained a global force of 176,000 troops, on average, for its whole empire. It ruled over a quarter of the world's population, maintaining an empire on a shoestring. This was achieved mainly because for a century from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and for probably the first time in centuries, the global power faced relatively little opposition. When the 20th century began, a rival power emerged and normal business in the form of global rivalry restarted, causing devastating consequences for the world.



Why Did Britain and Russia Engage in the Great Game?

The Great Game refers to the strategic rivalry and struggle between the British Empire and the Russian Empire in the 19th century. It primarily revolved around their competition for influence and control over Central Asia, specifically the region between their respective spheres of influence in India and the Russian territories.

Both Empires sought to protect and expand their respective imperial domains. The British aimed to safeguard their colonial interests in India, which they considered the 'jewel in the crown' of their empire. The Russians sought to secure a warm-water port and establish a land route to connect their territories with Central Asia.

Central Asia was viewed as a buffer zone between the two empires, and control over the region was seen as crucial for maintaining security and influence. Both sides aimed to prevent the other from gaining a dominant position in Central Asia and potentially posing a threat to their interests.

Whilst no direct confrontation took place both the British and Russian empires engaged in extensive intelligence operations, including mapping, exploration, and espionage. They went to great lengths

to gather information on each other's activities and intentions in Central Asia.

The rivalry between the British and Russians significantly shaped the political boundaries and power dynamics in Central Asia. The British sought to establish influence in Afghanistan to counter Russian expansion in Central Asia and installed puppet regimes and would engage in a series of Anglo-Afghan wars that led to the evolution of the graveyard of empires. The Russian Empire embarked on a series of military campaigns and expeditions to annex Central Asian territories, gradually expanding its control over the region.

In 1907, after nearly a century of tensions a convention was signed between the UK and Russia relating to Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. It ended the long-standing rivalry in Central Asia and enabled the two countries to become allies against a rising Germany who was threatening to connect Berlin to Baghdad with a new railroad that could potentially align the Ottomans with Imperial Germany. This was one of the factors that drove Germany to launching World War One.

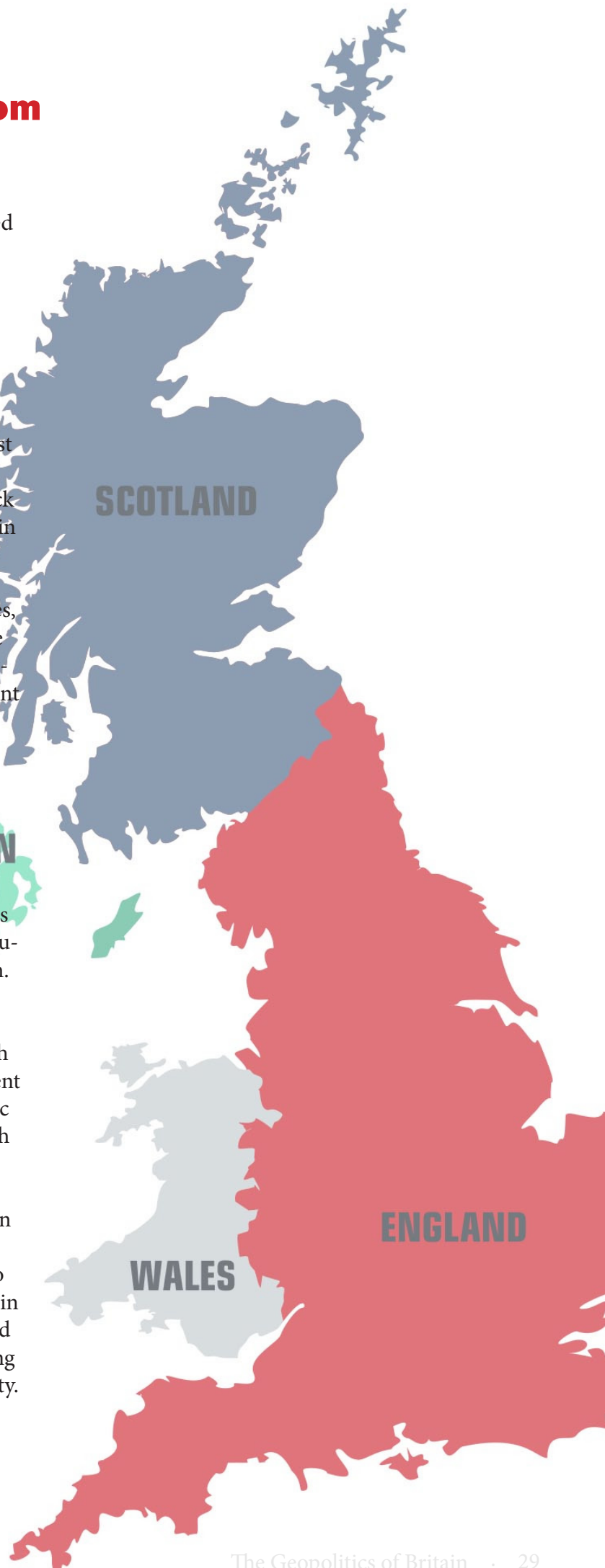
How Did the British Isles Become the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom came together over a long period of time through a mixture of conquest, immigration and Acts of Union. England always played a leading role on the isles because it was the largest part of the isles and closer to the European Continent. England had been part of the Roman Empire and the Viking invasions, which gave the English a strong sense of unity.

The English had been fighting the Welsh regularly since Saxon times. The Normans began the conquest of Wales, and for many years, parts of Wales were ruled by the Normans. Whilst the Welsh fought back it was King Edward I who finally conquered Wales in 1284.

Scotland also began as a collection of different tribes, which over time formed into a nation. Well into the sixteenth century the Scots maintained an anti-English alliance with France. Scotland and England spent a lot of their history at war with each other, but not all Scots were anti-English. The English negotiated marriage alliances with the Scots – Henry VIII's sister became Queen of Scotland. When the Reformation took hold in the sixteenth century, Scottish Protestants looked to Tudor England for support against the Catholics of the Scottish Highlands. When Elizabeth I died childless in 1603, King James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne. A century later the Act of Union of 1707 legally joined both.

Ireland proved to be a much more difficult prospect. When the Reformation started in the sixteenth century, the descendants of the Anglo-Normans went along with the new Protestant religion, but the Celtic Irish stayed Catholic. To tackle this, Queen Elizabeth I planted Scottish Protestants in Ireland as settlers to shape Ireland. Over time the province of Ulster became the most fiercely Protestant and loyal area in the United Kingdom. Ireland remained restive and to deal with this England brought in various laws to take away Catholics' civil rights, which kept Ireland in poverty for generations. For centuries, England (and later the United Kingdom) brutalised Ireland putting down occasional rebellions with documented cruelty.





Why Has Ireland Proven So Trouble- some?

Controlling Ireland has always been essential for London as it protects the UK mainland's western flank. This is what drove the English conquest of Ireland and the Plantation of Ulster, a colonial project that had the aim to stop Irish rebellion against the crown. For more than five centuries Britain ruled over Ireland, almost unfailingly incompetent as well as cruel, England inflicted misery on the Irish people and self-inflicted military and political crises. The fact that the English were a protestant society, while most Irish people were catholic, made matters worse. Until the mid-19th century, England was in a state of almost permanent strife with Catholic Europe.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Irish nationalist movement gained momentum and sought independence from British rule. The Irish people, especially those in the south, increasingly identified themselves as a separate nation and sought self-determination. For all of Britain's ruthlessness, it never succeeded at eliminating the Irish nation. Britain's colonisation of Ireland was unlike its colonisation of America, Australia or New Zealand, where native populations were eliminated by sword, musket and disease. Like in India, the native population of Ireland endured and eventually sought its independence. The struggle for Irish independence culminated in the Easter Rising of 1916 and eventually led to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, which later became the Republic of Ireland. But

London excluded from the independence the protestant settlement on the North of Ulster. The protestant plantations were hived off and became what is now Northern Ireland, one of the United Kingdom's four countries.

The Irish Free State had neither the capability nor the will to retake Northern Ireland from the British. But Northern and Southern Ireland were very different. Today, several decades on the demographic shifts mean that the arrangement is becoming untenable. But there are many other factors that made matters worse. The protestants who sought to maintain Northern Ireland's political union with Great Britain, held significant political power and controlled institutions. This Protestant domination caused reinforced divisions. The unionist leaders discriminated against the Catholic minority in areas such as employment, housing, and voting rights. This fuelled resentment and frustration within the catholic community.

From the 1960s numerous paramilitary groups emerged during what is called the 'troubles,' representing both the nationalists and unionists. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), which aimed to end British rule in Northern Ireland and reunite it with the Republic of Ireland, and loyalist paramilitary groups, which sought to maintain the union with Britain, engaged in violence and attacks on each other's com-

munities. This resulted in a British military intervention in 1969. The presence of the British Army only escalated tensions, and their actions, such as Bloody Sunday in 1972 (when British soldiers shot and killed unarmed civil rights protesters), further fuelled resentment and violence.

The troubles resulted in thousands of deaths, injuries, and widespread destruction. Efforts to find a peaceful resolution were pursued through various political initiatives, negotiations, and ceasefires. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 established a power-sharing arrangement in Northern Ireland which saw tensions reduce and the eventual departure of British soldiers.

The population of Northern Ireland today is nearly evenly split between Catholics and Protestants. Going forward, Catholics are expected to outnumber Protestants soon. This factor and Great Britain's departure from the European Union are seeing calls for a referendum on Irish reunification. In January 2024, Michelle O'Neill, who is from an IRA family became the first nationalist leader of Northern Ireland.





Why did Britain Enter World War One?

The British Empire's imperial century came to a devastating end in 1914 with the beginning of what was at the time the most devastating war in history. There is one reason why Britain entered World War One and why that war occurred and that is the emergence of Germany. A unified Germany emerged at the centre of Europe in 1871 and rapidly developed and was looking to take its place amongst the European powers. Germany was bordered by France on its west and Russia on its east and only saw war as a means to deal with these European powers.

For Britain, Germany's rapid industrial development, expanding army and navy and claims on African colonies threatened the balance of power that had been in place since Napoleon's defeat in 1815. As Germany was centred on the European continent, remaining aloof from European affairs was not an option now as a major power was emerging. Britain expanded its great game treaty with Russia in 1907 to include an alliance in the case of war. Even prior to this, seeing the blocs that were emerging that could threaten Britain's position she entered into the Entente Cordiale 1904 which would support France in any war against Germany.

Germany launched World War One in August 1914 accusing Russia of supporting Serbia who orchestrated the Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, on the 28th of June 1914. In accordance with its long term strategic plan, Germany ignored Russia and moved first against France, sending its main armies through Belgium to capture Paris. The German strategy was to first defeat France, then attack Russia. This failed,

and by the end of 1914 and for much of the remainder of the war the main theatre was on the Western Front along a line of trenches stretching from the English Channel to Switzerland. The Eastern Front was more fluid, but neither side could gain a decisive advantage, despite a series of costly offensives. The US entry with a million soldiers in 1917, decisively shifted the balance to the Entente powers.

The prolonged conflict had a huge impact on Britain's economic position. Britain incurred 715,000 military deaths (with more than twice that number wounded), the destruction of its human capital and the expenditure of well over 25% of its GDP on the war effort ballooned the national debt. The national debt had increased to over half of the country's GDP when the war ended and throughout the 1920s interest on government debt was costing 44% of all government expenditure, comfortably exceeding spending on defence for decades.

Whilst the economic devastation was huge, politically Britain in many ways came out stronger after the war as the US did not use the opportunity to dethrone the UK. US troops all returned to the US continent after the war ended in 1918 and despite the US president working to establish the League of Nations to maintain global peace, Congress refused to back this. This left Britain the last man standing, especially since Germany was defeated and the Ottomans, the Austro-Hungary empire and Imperial Russia were all replaced with new nations or leaders. Britain and France shared the Middle East amongst themselves creating new nations and rewarding their allies by making them the monarchs.



How Did Britain Decline from being the Global Hegemon?

Germany was defeated in 1918, only to return two decades later - bigger, more united, more industrial and ready to right what went wrong in World War One. Whilst Britain did facilitate the rise of the national socialists in Germany throughout the 1920s, this was never to share the world with it, but to balance France on the European continent. Whilst World War One descended quickly into trench warfare along a line running from the English Channel to Switzerland, this time the Nazis used Blitzkrieg to drive their way through the Netherlands, Belgium and the conquest of France. When the Nazis were conquering France they trapped the British Expeditionary Forces in Dunkirk, forcing them to flee across the channel.

By the middle of 1942 the Nazis controlled directly and indirectly through its allies nearly all of Europe and were 20 miles away from Moscow. Britain's nightmare of a continental hegemon had now come true and it neither had the army, the economy or the resources to take on the Nazis. Britain turned to the US like it did in World War One. After much persuasion and the fact that Hitler also declared war on the US, the US was now at war in both the Pacific and in Europe. But this time the US was not the US of World War One, it was a US that wanted to take its place in the world and no longer remain in isolation.

The US made it a condition for its Lend-Lease programme that the British handover all her naval bases in the western hemisphere. Britain was in no position to resist. *"The British empire is handed over to the American pawnbroker—our only hope,"* said one member of Parliament. The US expected Britain to repay all its loans from World War Two, something she finally did in 2006!

The US became the Pacific hegemon in September 1945 when Japan surrendered. But even before this the US was reshaping the Western hemisphere and the post war settlement. The US led and supplied the most troops in the D-Day landings, codenamed Operation Overlord, which was the world's largest ever amphibious invasion on the beaches of Normandy. It aimed to establish a foothold on the European continent and begin the liberation of Western Europe from Nazi Germany's control.

A year earlier the US had gathered 44 nations at the Bretton Woods Summit to hash out the post-World War Two global financial system. The US ensured it was at the centre of the new system. The photographs of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 were misleading. There were no 'big three' at Yalta. There was a 'big two' plus Winston Churchill who was trying to keep himself

and his country in the game, so that Britain maintained some elements of great powerdom into the late twentieth century.

World War Two left Britain severely weakened both economically and politically. The war exerted a tremendous toll on the British economy and infrastructure, resulting in a huge financial burden. The war shifted the balance of power globally, with the US and the Soviet Union emerging as the new superpowers. The Cold War rivalry between these two powers overshadowed Britain's influence on the world stage. Britain found itself reliant on the US for support, as demonstrated by the Marshall Plan.

The establishment of the global liberal order by the US that established various institutions such as the UN, IMF and World Bank shifted the dynamics of global governance away from Britain. The establishment of a western bloc with US leadership diminished Britain's ability to unilaterally shape global affairs. World War One was the beginning of the end of British power and World War Two sealed its fate.



Why was the Suez Crisis the Final Nail in Britain's Empire?

The Suez crisis in 1956 took place in a context where both Britain and France had been eclipsed by the Soviet Union and the US as the global powers. Whilst post-World War Two Britain was struggling economically and its industrial power had severely declined, there were a number of officials who still believed Britain had a stake in the world and should be respected as a power.

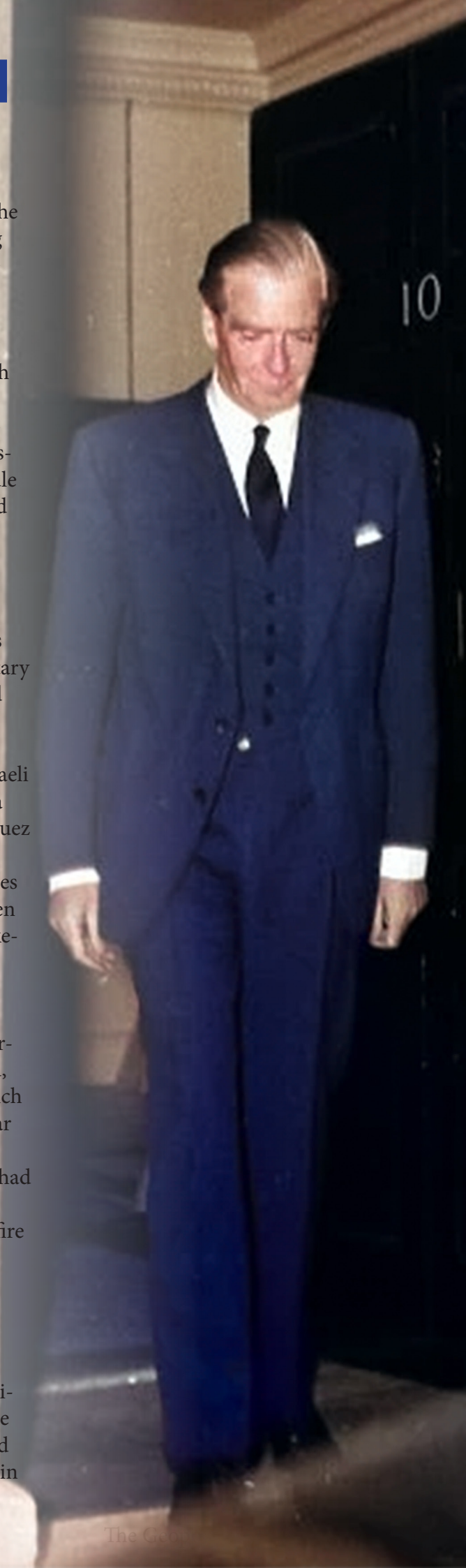
In 1953 a military coup in Egypt led to the overthrow of the British installed monarchy and the emergence of the Free Officers led by Gamal Abdul Nasser. Nasser became a popular leader with his anti-Western rhetoric and won the Arab street by taking on the Palestinian issue. His support of liberation movements across the Middle East and support for Algerian independence saw both London and Paris turn against him.

In 1956 Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal which was a vital waterway for Britain and a major choke point for global trade. The US since the emergence of Nasser supported the Egyptian people's aspirations and in a letter delivered to Nasser in 1953 by US secretary of State John Dulles from President Eisenhower, the US supported Egypt's aspirations to have full sovereignty.

To deal with Nasser, British officials met with their French and Israeli counterparts in a secret location in Sevres, near Paris to organise a military attack against Nasser. This was in order to take back the Suez Canal. Their plan was that Israel would invade the Sinai under the guise of reopening the Straits of Tiran and British and French forces would then intervene in the interest of protecting and keeping open the Suez Canal and using this to argue that this international choke-point should remain under Anglo-French management.

When the invasion began on the 29th October 1956 the Egyptian forces were unable to mount a defence and Nasser was quickly starting into the abyss. It was here the US and Soviet Union intervened, placing immense international pressure upon the British and French to withdraw. Moscow threatened London and Paris with its nuclear weapons, whilst the US pressured them with sanctions and Israel with severe crippling sanctions if they didn't return territory they had occupied from Egypt. The political and economic pressure Britain faced led the Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, to announce a ceasefire before even warning the French and Israelis.

The political and psychological impact of the crisis had a major impact on Britain. Prime Minister Anthony Eden was accused of misleading parliament and resigned from office in disgrace. The British Empire no longer had the economic might, military invincibility nor the political clout to shape events in the Middle East. The event confirmed the British Empire, which had for long dominated the world, was now eclipsed by the US and the Soviet Union even in regions Britain had constructed.





Why Did the UK Establish the Commonwealth?

European powers competed in colonising the world and on many occasions held summits to deal with disputes amongst themselves. After World War Two the global situation had changed which made keeping colonies untenable. The US established the global liberal order after World War Two in which sovereign nations could live in peace and trade freely with each other. This meant all people should be free of their colonial masters and become independent nations. This was also part of the UN charter upon its establishment and pressure was put on all the European powers to give independence to their colonies. For the US this was the best way to weaken Europe's influence in the world and by having independent nations the US could build new relations with these free nations based on economic partnerships.

The Soviet Union also emerged a global power after World War Two and made fomenting global revolution its global call. Liberating people from colonialism, giving them rights and the workers taking power saw Moscow also call for decolonisation and here the US and the Soviet Union were united in their call. In many ways it was the US and Soviet Union against the European imperialists, with both Moscow and Washington supporting independence and anti-colonial movements in colonial territories.

After World War Two the situation was bleak for the UK. She had been eclipsed by the US but the severe debt and decline in economic capabilities made maintaining her colonial empire impossible. In India the UK had already started the process of shifting rule over to the local population. This accelerated after 1945 when calls grew from independence movements themselves to be free of their imperial masters. Britain's strategy was to bring to power those she worked with to maintain the colonies and then to maintain both economic and military privileges. Crucially, it intended to use the colonial possessions as a means to aid economic recovery after World War Two. So, when the UK was apparently granting independence she was not 'throwing in the towel.' Indeed, as David Reynolds states, *"...the British expected, as elsewhere, that formal empire would be replaced by informal influence, sealed by economic ties and defence treaties."* Britain's optimism placed in the Commonwealth to provide a vehicle with which it could maintain influence in its former colonies is a clear illustration of London's desire to maintain an informal imperial relationship with its past dependencies.

The Commonwealth was a British attempt to maintain an informal empire with its former colonies and with rulers she cultivated and put into power.

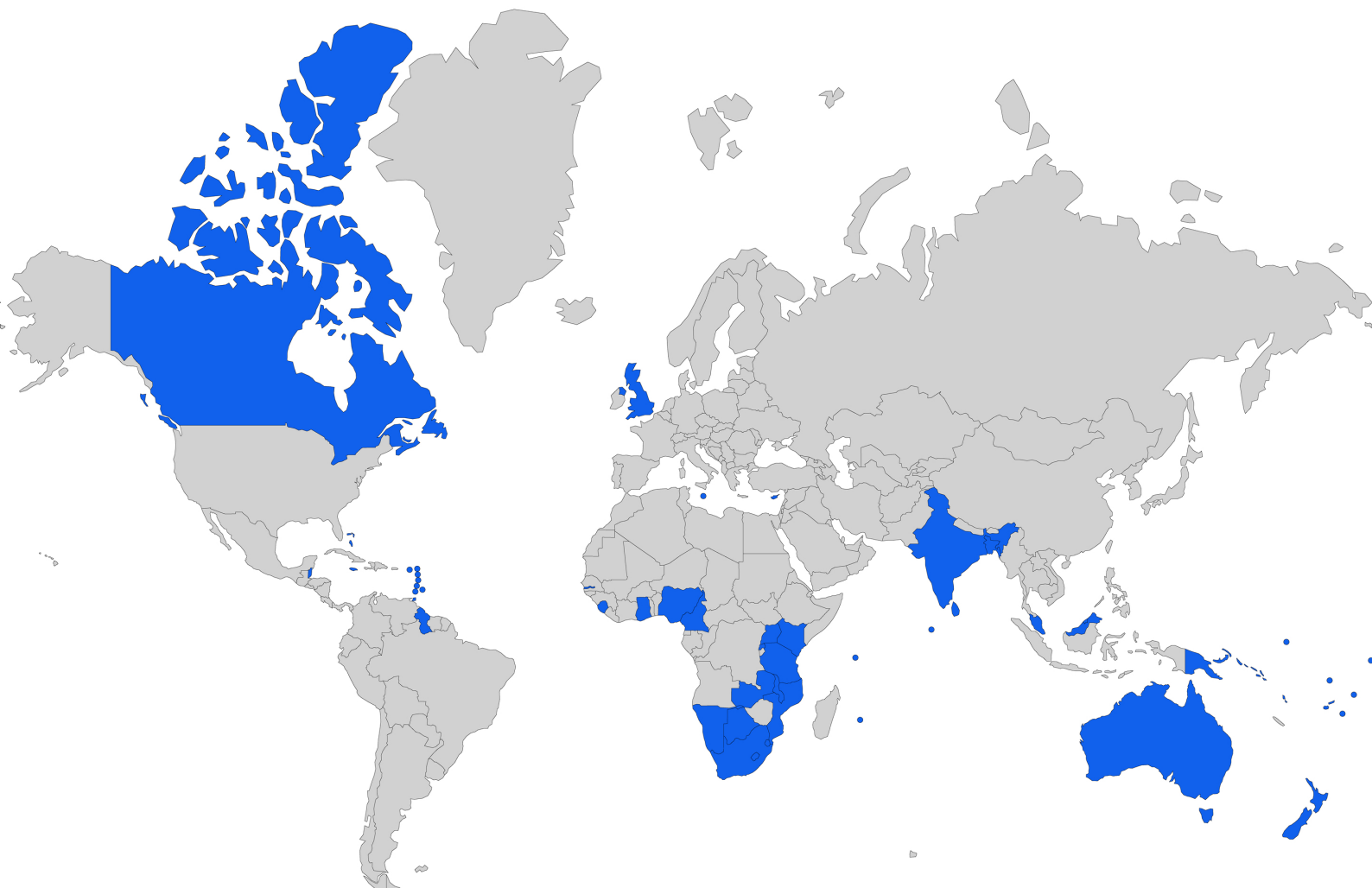
But Britain's economic decline was a second factor that led to its retreat from its former colonies.

Britain's retreat from the Middle East, or the East of the Suez as it came to be known, was announced in January 1968 and completed by 1971. It was due to economic necessity rather than an intentional act. The abrupt nature of this policy was reflected by the fact that just two months before the announcement of withdrawal, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had travelled to the Middle East to reassure the rulers of the Trucial States that the British presence would continue as long as 'it was necessary to maintain peace and stability in the area.' But the

devaluation of sterling by nearly 15% necessitated the reassessment of Britain's global defence commitments, resulting in the realisation that Britain simply could no longer afford to defend the Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf and so she had no choice but to terminate its treaty obligations to them. Ultimately, lack of resources rather than giving independence to the people native to the region was the reason.

The world powers the US and the Soviet Union, and the economic reality are why the UK established the commonwealth which was an attempt to deal with the pressures of decolonisation and maintain an informal empire.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS (BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS)





Why Did Britain Leave the European Union?

The formation of the European Union had its origins after World War Two in 1945, in the desire to unite Europe so there would be no more wars on the continent. Winston Churchill, the UK prime minister at the time supported this idea, proposing for Europe “...a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom... a kind of United States of Europe.” At the time after the devastation of World War Two Britain did not take this idea of a union of Europe seriously and didn’t consider it even possible.

But when the European Coal and Steel Community was established in 1951 and the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, Britain did not join and took a wait-and-see approach to see if the union would survive. A united Europe could threaten British power and with Britain not joining this undermined the union from the very beginning as a major power in Europe was not part of the union. One of the architects of the original union, the Frenchman Jean Monnet, said: “I never understood why the British did not join. I came to the conclusion that it must have been because it was the price of victory - the illusion that you could maintain what you had, without change.”

By 1960 the EU had survived, and British politicians

realised being outside the EU meant it had no influence over it. Britain’s politicians realised they needed to be at the leadership table of Europe in order to influence it and to ensure it did not unify to an extent that made Britain weak and irrelevant. So, in 1961 it applied to join the union, only for entry to be refused, twice, by French President Charles de Gaulle. He endeavoured to distance Britain from Europe, because he understood Britain’s strategy was to prevent the unification of Europe. De Gaulle resigned as French president in 1969, and died one year later. His successor George Pompidou met with British Prime Minister Edward Heath in 1971 and after long negotiations, gave Britain membership for the EU.

Britain immediately began calling for a re-negotiation of the terms Britain joined the union, trying to undermine the union. The conservative party led Britain into the union and the Labour party leadership who came to government in 1974, then used the renegotiation to threaten the EU leaders as the terms of negotiation were to be put to the public for a public referendum. The West German leader Helmut Schmidt and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson made a deal where Britain would stay in the EU and Schmidt would give some concessions to show the British government had achieved its goal of a re-ne-

gotiation. In reality no renegotiation took place. All three of the main parties in Britain fully campaigned on Britain staying in the EU and after the referendum in 1975, 67% of people voted to stay in the union, which at the time was just a free trade area.

By the 1980s the union's leaders were focusing on further integration and steering towards a more federal Europe and a single currency. The EU was moving towards political union and a single market which would make Britain just another state integrated into Europe like Belgium. It would also mean Britain would have to give up some of its sovereignty and power and parliamentary laws to the European parliament in Brussels. Despite being pro-Euro initially, Margret Thatcher in a 1988 speech in Bruges, Belgium, made the British position clear, she rejected *"...a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels."* This led to a split in the conservative party and eventually led to her downfall and the division continued into the 21st century. Britain failed in keeping the EU divided and eventually signed the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. This resulted in huge transfers of power to the new European Union, but Britain secured opt-outs from the single currency.

It was under Margret Thatcher's government from 1979–1990 that differences amongst the conservative party politicians and political class became much more profound. Several ministers resigned, including Geoffrey Howe, the Deputy Prime Minister. Whilst there was no opposition to the EU in 1971, opposition grew by some politicians who saw Britain giving up too much power to Europe. Professor Bogdanor, an expert in British history highlighted *"Europe has been a toxic issue in British politics, not just because it caused division between parties, but also deep divisions within the parties. Some might argue that the fundamental conflict in post-war*

British politics is not so much between left and right as between those who believe that Britain's future lies with Europe and those who believe it does not."

There were two issues that divided politicians and much of the British public - one of sovereignty and one of nationalism. Joining the EU meant many powers were transferred to EU institutions. This included many laws being made in Brussels rather than the UK Parliament. This went against national sovereignty, for secular states making your own laws and policies is a sign of independence. As the EU has integrated, more and more powers were being lost by the UK and this caused many divisions amongst the political class. The EU was also a transnational organisation that goes across national borders and this has challenged British identity and Britain's history of being a separate, English state.

These issues caused major splits and were a big problem for successive governments in using the EU for its own interests. The establishment of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) on the issue of being anti-Europe led it to gain much support from the British public causing further divisions within the conservative party and led to much anti-EU public opinion. Their popularity was confirmed in the 2015 general election when it came third in the national election vote.

Since the financial crisis began in 2008 Britain clashed with the EU over numerous issues. British



Prime Minister David Cameron clashed with Europe over plans to introduce a levy on banks and restrict London's financial sector. In 2015 the UK won a court case against the European Central Bank at the European Court of Justice. The ECB had been attempting to move the clearing function for euro-zone transactions within the union. The move would have excluded London and made Paris and Frankfurt more attractive as financial centres, which would have weakened Britain's economic position.

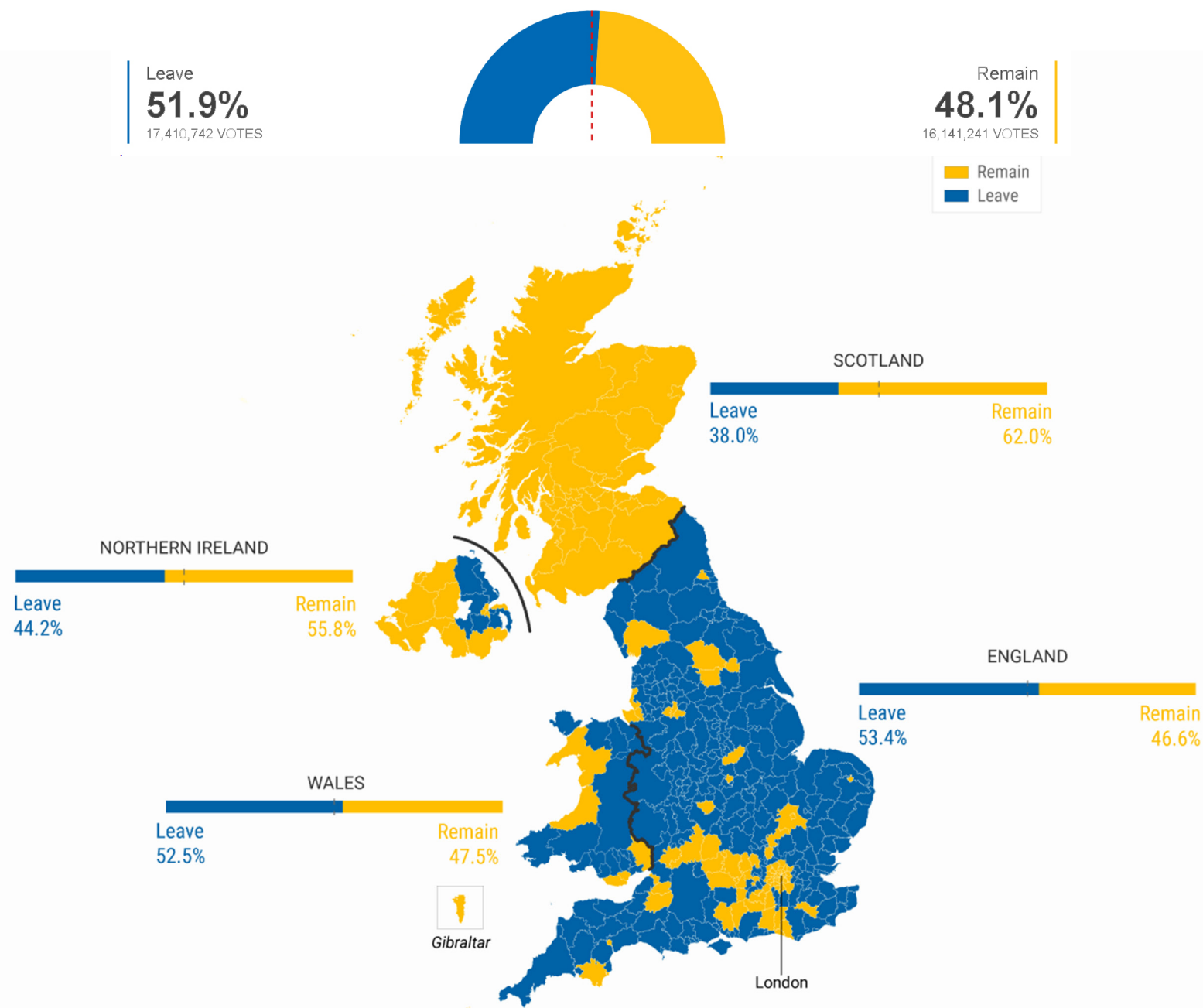
For Britain, a unified EU was a threat to its power and keeping it divided has always been its aim. Britain on the one hand wanted to keep the EU divided and wanted to use it for its own benefit in international issues. Britain, at every opportunity under-

mined the EU, from joining the union and then immediately calling for negotiations, which then led to a referendum. It called for a single market in the EU and then stood against it and criticised a European super state, as it undermined its sovereignty. Britain called for unity in Europe and then opted out of joining the Euro. At every opportunity Britain worked to disunite the EU and keep it weak. It joined the EU in order to achieve this after it saw it could not achieve this from outside the EU.

After the Brexit vote in 2016, 51% of the UK electorate voted to leave the EU, Britain officially left the European union on the last day of January 2020.

EU Referendum Result

23rd June 2016





Why Did Britain's Economic Power Decline?

In 2022 Britain was pushed out from the 5th spot in the world's premier league. India's GDP was bigger than the UK and the former colony replaced its master in the premier league of nations. Since the end of World War Two the UK was not just replaced as the global super power but its economy struggled and declined and this has had a knock on effect on how much the UK can invest in its military capabilities and therefore how much political influence the UK has in shaping the world.

Prior to World War Two Britain's key industries were coal, steel, textiles, steam engines and Ships. These were the industries that propelled the industrial revolution and along with her colonies Britain had a secure supply of raw materials and markets to export her goods to. But World War One weakened Britain, it was the first industrialised war in history and left its mark. Britain was in no position to enter another war in 1939.

The war had stripped Britain of virtually all its foreign financial resources and the railways and coal mining industries were desperately short of new equipment and in bad repair. Britain faced numerous economic difficulties following World War Two. The country struggled with high inflation, debt, and a decline in industrial productivity. The loss of markets from former colonies and the emergence of new economic powers further weakened Britain's economic position.

Britain could not keep up with the new powers and rising industrial powers after World War Two. The nationalisation of most of the British economy didn't improve things but made them worse. The creation of the National Health Service and dependency on imports made British finances even worse. By the time

Margaret Thatcher came to power in the 1980s her government didn't just privatise much of the economy, the UK's economy shifted from industry to services.

This led to the situation today where the UK is dominated by London, which currently generates 22% of the UK's economic activity with just 13% of the population. In the service sector financial and business industries make up 55% of the economy. The UK's goods trade is so depleted, the entire country now relies on the sector as its source of foreign capital. This makes Britain's economy weak from an international standpoint.

British industry has around 3 million people with food processing the largest industry. Britain today produces transport equipment, which is undertaken by car manufacturers such as BMW, General Motors, Honda, Nissan, Toyota and Volkswagen. Brush Traction and Hunslet manufacture railway locomotives and other related components. Rolls Royce manufactures aerospace engines and power generation systems. Britain's military industry is dominated by BAE Systems, who manufactures civil and defence aerospace, land and marine equipment, which include the Type 45 destroyer, aircraft carriers, the Eurofighter Typhoon and maintains Tornado and Harrier jets. Only the Type 45 destroyer is built entirely by British engineers, all other heavy military equipment is either imported from overseas or developed with partners. Very little military systems are indigenously constructed by Britain today.

Britain's biggest problem today is its economic reality, its economy is unable to support the aims the UK has for global influence. As a result, London has played a declining and weakening hand in international affairs.



Why Has the UK's Military Power Declined?

Britain's economic decline after World War Two directly impacted the nation's defence capabilities. Unable to fund the empire and politically unable to influence the global situation, conscription was abolished, and the size of the Armed Forces was reduced from 690,000 to 375,000 by 1962. The Cold War slowed down Britain's shrinking army, but it didn't stop it. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Britain's industrial base and army reduced at an accelerated rate. Government arsenals were then privatised, and today very little defence is in government hands. Following successive Strategic Defence and Security Reviews (SDSR) successive British governments continued to cut the military budget and the head count as well as retire lots of equipment, leaving the armed forces less of everything.

Britain's combined armed forces today consist of 183,000 personnel, with a further 37,000 in reserve. The ground forces dominate the forces with a force strength of 138,000. As Strategic Defence and Security Reviews continue to call for further reductions, this will mean going forward there will remain only two fighting (i.e. deployable) divisions that will command the bulk of the forces in the regular army. The UK will soon have one of the most land-centric force structures. These cuts and redundancies mean when the UK needs to send regular soldiers to any conflict straight away then that really means a fighting force

of 20,000 with 60,000 soldiers to support them and carry out logistics.

The British armed forces are now so intimately linked that, except for the simplest of deployments, all operations are approached from a joint perspective. As a result, the Royal Air Force (RAF) is based on smaller fleets of more sophisticated, capable and expensive platforms. This has led to a decrease in the range of design and development products for military fixed wing aircraft and extended the gaps between new platforms.

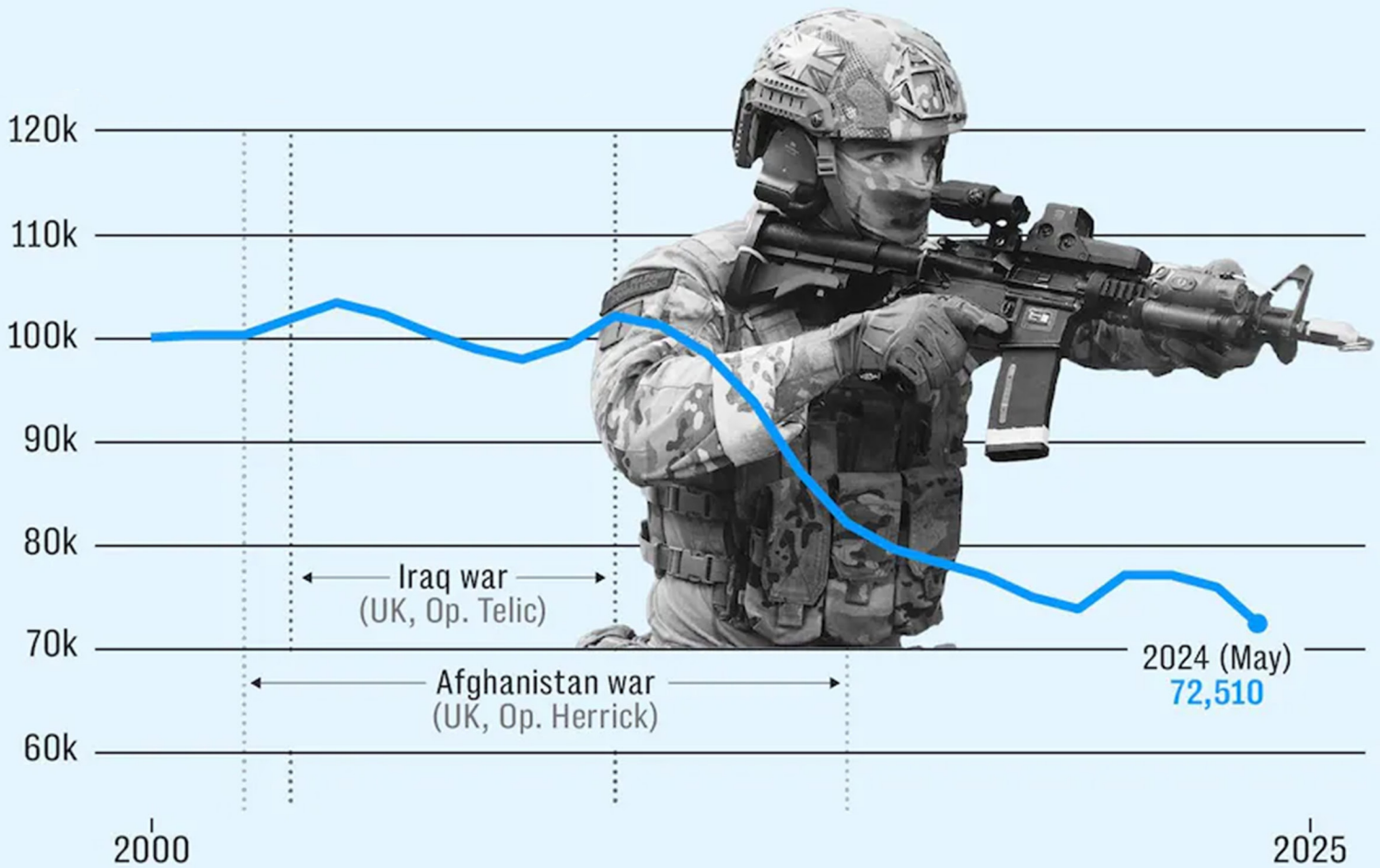
The Royal Navy has also failed to escape from the overall reduction in size. Since the end of the Cold War the navy began a series of projects to improve its fleet, with a view to providing enhanced capabilities, although many of these were cut or cancelled. This led to the replacement of smaller and more numerous units with fewer, but larger, units. The cuts over the last 20 years have severely undermined the fleet's ability to deploy its forces, even to the levels that the government commits it to. The 15 destroyers and frigates currently in service are not enough to deploy warships to the Falklands and Persian Gulf and maintain escort duties. The reality is the British marines, and the navy are unable to operate independent of the army.

Unable to fund a large military industry and large armed forces, Britain's capabilities are limited. Although its overall forces are small currently, they are set to get even smaller. Even Britain's nuclear capability has not escaped the decline. But Britain has never had an independent deterrent. In 1958, the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) allowed the US to provide the UK with nuclear weapons designs, nuclear weapons, manufacturing and nuclear reactor technology, designs and materials. A secret British government assessment of 'The Dangers of Becoming an American Satellite' released after 1988 stated "*The UK, in its relatively weak position, is already greatly dependent upon United States support. It would be surprising if the United States did not exact a price for the support, and to some extent it does so...the*

more we rely upon them, the more we shall be hurt if they withhold it." Britain completely relies on a small submarine fleet, just barely large enough to sustain a continually patrolling presence of one nuclear boat.

The UK's economic decline means it does not have the resources to fund a military force that can achieve Britain's political ambitions. As a result, the UK has tried to maintain a small, largely token force to present an image of strength. The current reality is Iran's revolutionary guards (IRGC) who are Iran's unconventional forces, are larger than Britain's active forces.

British Ground Forces Personnel





What is the UK's Global Strategy in the 21st Century?

British foreign policy today is built upon having a role in Europe and influencing the US. British policy makers have accepted the nation's weakness after World War Two and developed a policy of preservation rather than open competition with the US. Britain has managed to achieve its interests through a policy of preserving its global ambitions by working with the US and Europe, whilst at the same time working to divert, alter, complicate and limit the aims of both. Beyond this Britain lacks the resources or the economy to achieve more.

Britain can complicate the plans of other world powers to the extent that it is taken seriously in the world. Britain's influence remains in North Africa and the Gulf, but all of this is due to historical links rather than economic or political strength. Britain is purely looking to maintain rather than expand its place in the world, a far cry from the days when the sun never set on the empire.

When the US invaded Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11 the UK joined the US coalition but in both wars British forces complicated the US invasion. In Afghanistan UK forces in the Helmand province cut deals with Taliban commanders, despite the ire of US generals. This was in order to reduce the likelihood of attacks. Similarly in Iraq UK forces in Basra region made deals with Shi'ah militia to safely supply forward bases. Something once again US generals complained about.

In Libya, Sudan, Lebanon and Yemen, Britain along with France backed factions who were fighting directly against factions backed by the US. In these places where the UK has historical and current influence it used its proxies to challenge US strategic plans. These challenges have all been indirect and none have ever gone to the point of creating a fracture in relations with the US.

Today, Britain's political ambitions are out of sync with her economic and military reality. As a result, she is limited in what she can achieve, especially with the overwhelming power the US possesses. As a result, in some cases the UK has worked alongside the US and even strengthened the US political strategy.

The UK enquiry into Iraq – the Chilcot enquiry found Prime Minister Tony Blair had made the decision to commit UK troops to the US Iraq invasion before any parliamentary vote. The enquiry also found many British soldiers were not equipped for a long-term presence and the force the UK did deploy was never large enough to achieve any strategic war aims. The UK Prime Minister sent troops to Iraq so the UK's credibility and influence remains, even if this cost the lives of British troops.

Britain's global strategy, despite all the rhetoric, is to remain involved in global issues, at whatever cost, including the lives of its own servicemen, even though she neither has the economic or military resources.



How Special is the Special Relationship?

British relations with the global superpower are usually described as a ‘special relationship.’ This is the apparent close relations due to political, diplomatic, cultural, economic, military, and historical relations between the two countries. Britain since World War Two viewed the US as an infant in the international arena and someone who needed the experience of the British to navigate the world. So the British tried to work with the US as an ally and use America’s new found power to preserve its Empire.

But very quickly the US and Britain had different views on how the world should look. The US believed there should be two states in Palestine, rather than one, whilst the British strategy was to have the Zionists rule over both Jewish and Muslim populations. The US plan is what succeeded in the end. In the broader Middle East the US supported military officers who overthrew the monarchies the British had established in Egypt and Iraq as well as targeting Jordan and the Gulf nations.

Britain wanted to maintain its colonies after World War Two in order to revitalise her economy. But the US took the position of decolonisation and such col-

onies gaining independence. India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan were given independence only for the US to align them with her global political agenda. Due to Britain’s economic and military decline, there was little she could do.

Britain aligned her defence and intelligence with the US. Britain joined NATO and was part of the containment strategy of the USSR. The US–UK Mutual Defence Agreement, 1958 led to American nuclear weapons to be supplied to Britain. The UK today is completely reliant upon the US for its nuclear programme.

The story of the “special relationship,” is really the story of how successive British politicians and diplomats have tried, with mixed success, to guide, cajole and manipulate the US from a position of ever-increasing weakness. But the US views Britain as a mostly useful client state, junior military partner and gateway to Europe. The American establishment loves the theme park pageantry and royalty. Despite this, for the US, Britain is just one nation amongst many.

Did the Cold War End in Britain?



In 2018 the quiet Cathedral town, Salisbury, in Wiltshire, south-west England, was thrust into global headlines after passers-by found a grey-haired man, in his sixties, slumped on a park bench with his daughter. Anywhere else in the UK, they would have been viewed as junkies who had a good night out. But as the days went by it was confirmed the two individuals were Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia. They were not junkies and neither were they your average individuals. Skripal was a former officer from Russia's GRU military intelligence agency, who in 1995 began secretly working for MI6. He was arrested in 2004, convicted of treason and sent to a penal colony. In 2010, Skripal got out, less than halfway through his 13-year sentence. The FBI had captured a group of Russian sleeper agents in the US. In a scene from the Cold War, Skripal was swapped on the tarmac of Vienna airport. The sleepers went home to Moscow. Skripal's destination was Salisbury, England. The UK went into a tailspin with Sarin and VX nerve agents becoming dinner time discussions across the UK. Although such incidents are often described as "reminiscent of the Soviet era," espionage between Russia and the west never subsided after the Cold War.

Russia and Britain have long been competitors, and this has defined their historical relations. The Russian empire was always looking to expand into Europe

and Britain has always seen any European power as a problem. Despite this, there have been many occasions, due to strategic reasons where Russia and Britain cooperated. The rise of Germany saw both nations cooperate to halt German supremacy.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union Britain supported the ascension of former Soviet republics into the EU and NATO. From 1997 the UK government sought to integrate Russia progressively into the Euro-Atlantic community and pursued a vision of a strategic partnership. This was the view also of the US as the 1990s was a period of chaos in Russia. In June 2003, Putin became the first Russian leader since 1874 to pay a state visit to the UK.

As the 21st century began, and Putin consolidated his control of Russia, the UK became a destination for two types of Russians. Russian oligarchs who had risen to prominence in the chaos of the 1990s were given an ultimatum by Putin to stay out of politics and run their businesses for profit purposes only and not to support other agendas. Those oligarchs that ran foul relocated to the UK. Many former KGB officials also came to the UK who no longer had jobs or left Russia due to the chaos of the 1990s.

Relations nosedived between Russia and the UK in 2003 when the UK refused to extradite Boris Bere-

zovsky to Russia. In 2006 relations nosedived further when Aleksandr Litvinenko, a former officer in Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) who had been granted asylum and citizenship in the UK, was murdered in London with radioactive polonium by what was believed to be FSB operatives. Russia refused to extradite the prime suspects in the Litvinenko case and the UK expelled four intelligence officers from Russia's embassy in London and cut engagement with the FSB.

By 2015 the UK placed Russia as its main adversary in its regular Strategic Defence and security reviews. In the 2015 SDSR report, it stated: "Russia has become more aggressive, authoritarian and nation-

alist, increasingly defining itself in opposition to the West." It went on to assert that Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine "... have shown Russia's willingness to undermine wider international standards of cooperation in order to secure its perceived interests."

Both nations have self-aggrandizing views of themselves. Russia sees itself as a great power alongside the US and China in a multipolar world. By contrast, the UK is viewed as a second-level power that does not treat Russia with due respect. From the UK's perspective Russia is a major power but is flawed and less influential than it thinks.



Alexander Valterovich Litvinenko was a British-naturalised Russian defector and former officer of the Russian Federal Security Service who specialised in tackling organised crime. A prominent critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, he advised British intelligence and coined the term "mafia state"

On 1 November 2006, Litvinenko suddenly fell ill and was hospitalised after poisoning with polonium-210; he died from the poisoning on 23 November.

A British murder investigation identified two former member of Russia's Federal Protective Service (FSO), as the main suspects. The United Kingdom demanded that their extradition; Russia denied the extradition, leading to a straining of relations between Russia and the United Kingdom.



Has Britain Lost its Influence in the Middle East?

Much of the architecture in the Middle East was created by both the UK and France after World War One. France established Syria and Lebanon, whilst the UK created nations such as Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Yemen, Oman and the Trucial nations. The British established monarchies in most of these new nations and ensured Egypt and Iran also had British backed monarchies.

But since World War Two and the emergence of the US, Britain has been trying to maintain its influence in the Middle East but the US has managed to dislodge British influence through military coups and bringing to power rulers who were loyal to her. This began in 1953 with the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy by officers who the US brought to power. The emergence of Nasser and his capturing of the Arab street allowed him to target those rulers that were loyal to Britain.

After Egypt the US targeted both Syria and Iraq. The British attempted to keep Syria in European hands, but France was a shell of itself after World War Two. The US embassy and the CIA supported several mil-

itary coups in Syria throughout the 1950s and 1960s against their European rivals, this was an era of instability that lasted over two decades. This ended when Hafiz al-Assad undertook a coup in 1970 and ended what European influence remained. In Iraq the British supported monarchy was overthrown in 1958, but it would take the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 and subsequent US sanctions and interference and then the invasion in 2003 after 9/11 to completely bring to an end what influence Britain had.

Whilst the UK brought Reza Shah Pahlavi to power in Iran, by the time World War Two came around he was despised by his people due to the tyranny of his rule. As Britain and Russia needed a stable supply of oil for the war effort. Reza Shah was replaced by his son Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. He also in time became more tyrannical than his father and openly attacked the US and saw himself as the power in the region. The Shah and his British supporters were all removed in 1979 when the US supported the revolution that brought the clerics to power.

In Saudi Arabia the US has through the emergence of King Salman and his son Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman (MBS) brought Saudi under its influence. Saudi Arabia has shifted from Kings who were closer to Britain to Kings that are now closer to the US. With the structural changes MBS has made by bringing the National Guard under his authority this has effectively ended British influence in Saudi Arabia.

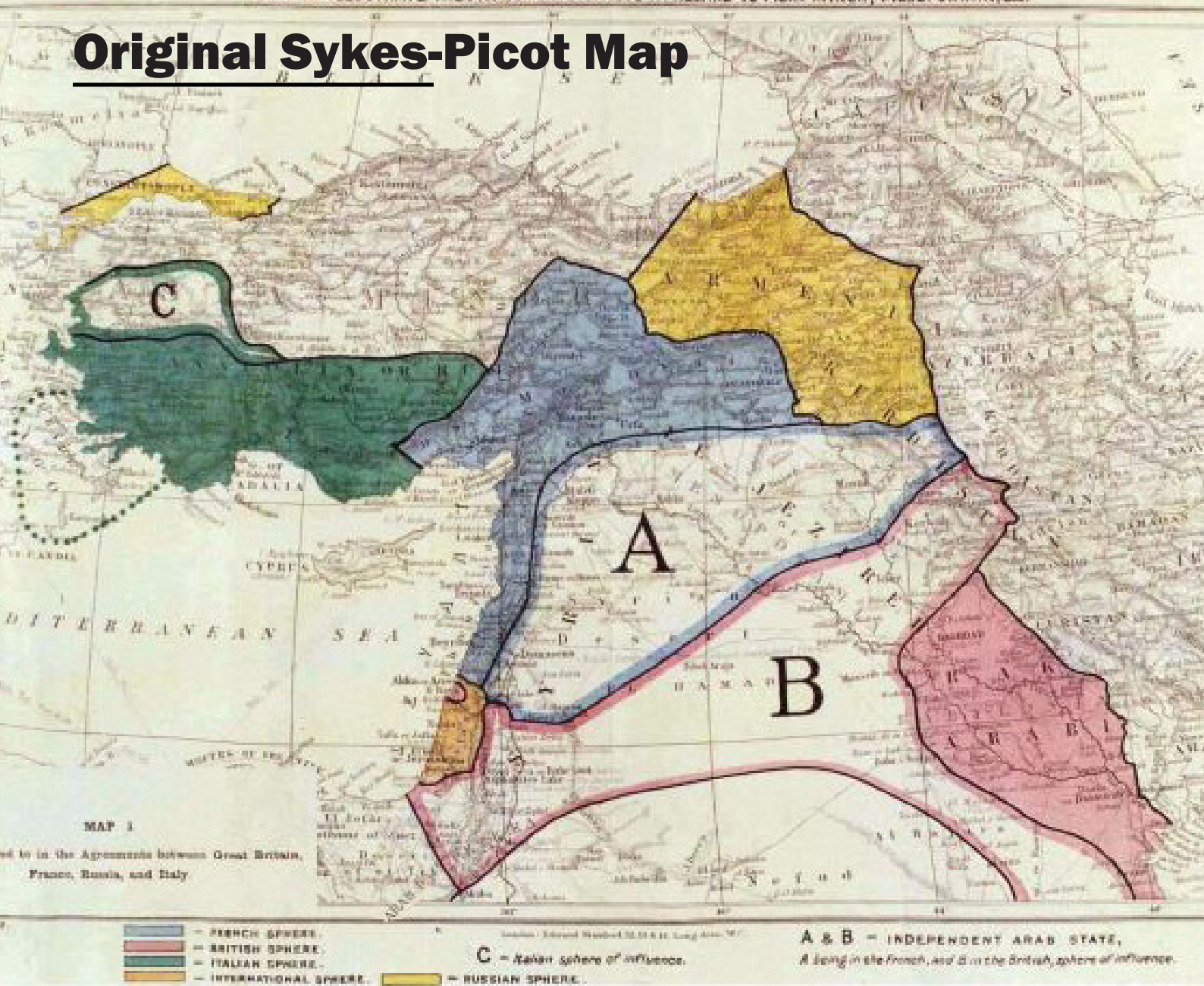
The US for long used tensions with Saddam Hussain as well as Iran in the region to bring the Gulf nations under its influence. The US used the war in Iraq beginning in 1990 to increase its military presence in the region and increase ties with the regional sheikhdoms. It was Britain that brought the Gulf tribes to power and created nations for them. In 1971 Britain removed what military presence it had East of the Suez as it was no longer able to afford a presence there. The UK believed the Gulf monarchies would remain loyal to them and project UK policy in the re-

gion. As the US piled on pressure there was little the UK could do as Kuwait grew militarily closer to the US. Qatar has grown its soft power over the years and has become a hub for the royal family to get involved in regional issues, to the chagrin of the US, Qatar did a good job in getting in the way of US regional plans and this is why the US supported the Saudi isolation campaign against Qatar in 2017. Similarly the UK could do little as the US enlisted the UAE in regional issues. British officials still feel confident they can get the al-Nahyan family to support their plans in the region, even if this means working with the US.

Over the decades with British influence in decline it has been unable to hold onto the many countries she created after World War One. The US has worked hard to remove both French and British influence over the different regimes and monarchies and Britain has been forced to look on.

MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE AGREEMENTS OF 1916 IN REGARD TO ASIA MINOR, MESOPOTAMIA, &c.

Original Sykes-Picot Map





What are Britain's Long-Term Challenges?

One amongst many - Britain's territorial unity raises serious questions about Britain's medium to long term place in the world, if London fails to keep a unitary state. But many trends are already moving against Britain globally and it's likely Britain will be just another nation amongst many, rather than an influential nation in the world. India replaced Britain as the world's 5th largest economy in 2022, pushing the UK to 6th. A former colony has a larger GDP than the UK and the right to be at the decision-making table over the UK at international organisations. Since World War Two Britain's influence was replaced by the US and despite Britain creating many of the monarchies and nations in the Middle East, British influence has been gradually replaced in these nations. With Russia returning to power after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the rise of China and with other middle tier nations such as Turkey, Brazil and India playing major regional roles, Britain is looking at falling out of the premier league of nations to be replaced by other more influential nations. Whilst Britain may like to promote its soft power, the reality is her economic hard power has weaknesses and her military power requires external accompaniment to be effective.

Dis-United Kingdom - All of Britain's Prime Ministers will now face the daunting task of trying to halt the rapidly moving trend of the long-term splitting of the UK with both Scotland and Northern Ireland pushing for secession. Britain's departure from the EU has given fresh impetus to this debate. Whilst Brexiteers promised a utopia when the UK left the EU, this has inadvertently given fresh impetus to the different counties in the UK to seek leaving the UK in order to remain part of the EU. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland publics voted to remain within the EU during the Brexit vote in 2016. As matters stand it's unlikely Scotland will become independent in the short term. But in the long-term London lacks the influence, power or capabilities to keep the UK isles united. The days of empire are well behind her now, which was one of the main reasons Scotland joined the union and now that the UK has left the EU, this is a major reason for the Scottish National Party (SNP) to pursue independence and this also lends to calls for Irish unification.

The Haves and Have Nots - The economic situation of the UK, is in many cases dire, despite being the 6th richest nation in the world. Britain, like many other nations, went through a cost-of-living crisis, which saw inflation reach record levels. But much of Britain's working class had been living through a cost-of-living crisis for over a decade which began with deep cuts called 'austerity', and the astronomical sums printed to bail out the financial industry after the global economic crisis in 2008. The further amounts printed during COVID-19 only added to more and more money chasing a shrinking and then stagnant economy.

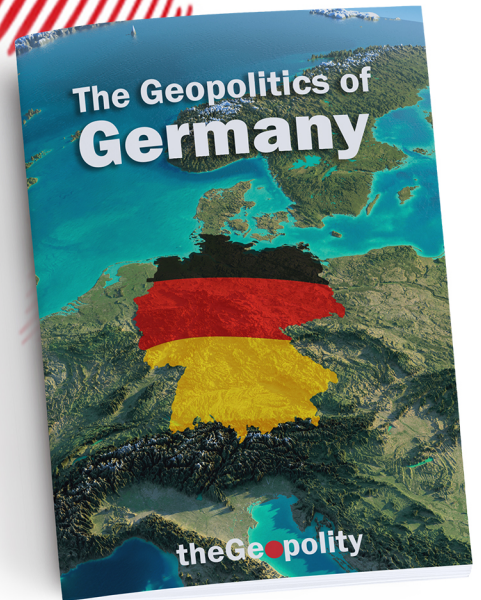
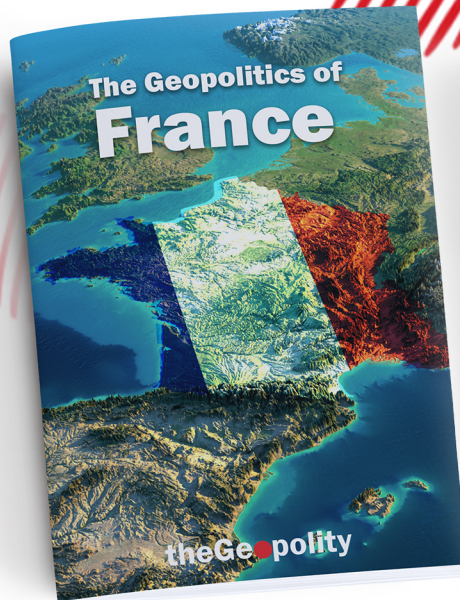
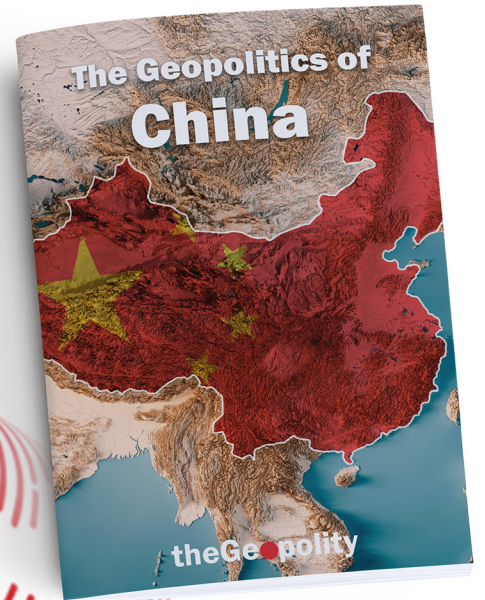
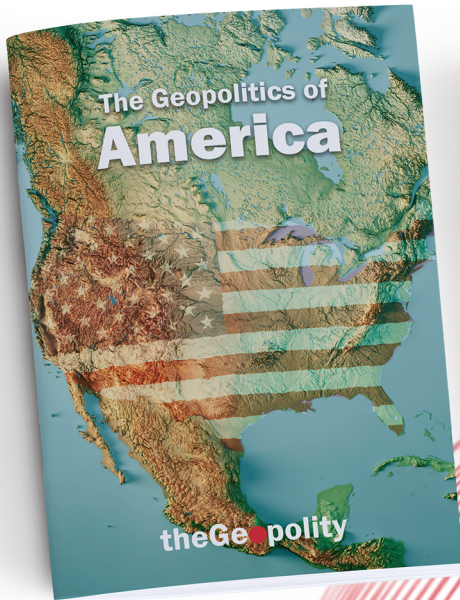
The UK economy has had structural problems for decades. After World War Two Britain's industrial base rapidly declined and was culled during the era of Margaret Thatcher, from 1979. The British economy was restructured and completely shifted from manufacturing to services, with finance taking a dominating role, a drive termed as neoliberalism by many. Today Britain's 1% own 20% of the nation's wealth, whilst the top 10% own half the nation's wealth. Under successive Conservative governments and under Tony Blair's New Labour this structure has been institutionalised as governments both red and blue have come to serve this small, rich elite. Successive

governments continue to manage the economy, rather than solve the deep structural flaws. Consider the following in the world's 6th largest economy:

1. 22% of the UK population, 14.5 million people live in poverty.
2. 13.2% of UK households are in fuel poverty i.e. they cannot afford to heat their homes adequately.
3. There are more food banks in the UK than outlets of the fast-food chain McDonald's.

Whilst Britain's EU membership has always divided the Conservative Party, Britain's final departure from the European Union was driven by a handful of billionaires who saw the EU's encroachment into Europe's financial sector as a threat to them. They used their wealth to back anti-EU politicians, who then utilised every prejudice to build public opinion. This small class was able to drive through Britain's departure from the EU. These billionaires paid for the campaign to block former Prime Minister Theresa May's EU deal, then went on to back Boris Johnson's rise to power. The successive failure of Conservative Prime Ministers is because they do not represent the masses and therefore they fall out of favour very quickly with the masses.





Our Mission

The world is a complex place with daily political events taking place which affect us all in different ways. The sheer number of events happening makes making sense of the world even more complex.

Geopolity.com aims to help in making sense of this complex world.

At geopolity.com we look at the world through the lens of power and ideology. We see forces such as geography, politics, economics and military capability constrain world leaders and nations. Through understanding these forces, we believe we can make sense of what nations are attempting to achieve. We also believe by determining the ideology nations embrace we can appreciate why the US is interested in the Middle East and why much of the world worries about Pakistan's nuclear capability.

This allows us to filter out all the noise and focus on the important political actions, moves and developments.

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The mission of geopolity.com is to analyse the political events and empower you the reader to understand and successfully navigate the constantly changing and complex geopolitical environment. Geopolity aims to do this by regularly and vigorously analysing political events as they take place.



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