

Chapter 1: The Expansion of the British Empire in Africa

How did Britain Govern the Empire in 1857?

- By 1857 Britain controlled a vast territorial empire which was spread across all continents of the world
- The territory eclipsed those of its formal rivals- the Portuguese, Spanish and the Dutch
- Britain had the largest, most powerful navy in the world. It was also the richest, most developed industrial economy in the world and was therefore able to dominate global affairs
- Many Britons viewed the Empire with indifference, some believed it was a burden rather than a benefit
- The way the Empire was ruled was inconsistent largely because there was often a political 'tradition' which prescribed what forms of power were legitimate in the eyes of the local elite – which the Empire relied on their support. The 'policy' therefore was to accept wide local variations and leave much up to the discretion of the men of the spot. This was also partly because of the slow communications
- **Colonies of Settlement:** these were colonies that were largely peopled by white settlers from Britain. They gained a form of 'responsible government' which meant they had their own government ministers who were answerable to an elected parliament
- **Crown Colonies:** The rest of the Empire was made up of crown colonies. Most of these colonies were almost entirely non-European so was seen by the British as not fit for 'responsible government'. These colonies were administered directly by a governor appointed by the British crown. They were mostly developed for trading purposes
- **India:** India stood apart from the rest of the Empire because of its size, importance for trade, riches, immense population and because it was ruled by the East India Company until 1858 who had been given a royal charter to do so
- **Informal Empire:** These were territories that were influenced by the British even if not directly ruled by them. British traders backed by the powerful Royal Navy could exert influence over local rulers through advantageous trading agreements. These were not officially part of the Empire
- **Protectorate** – an area with its own ruler, but placed under the protection of the British crown which controlled its military and influenced domestic policy through advisers
- **Settlement** – a loose term to denote an area containing British settlers and under British control
- **Occupied** – an area containing British settlers/military force but not under British control
- **Client State** – an area with its own ruler but with strong British influences which restrict the ruler's independence politically, militarily and economically
- **Chartered Company Rule** – an area ruled by a trading company with a special licence by the government which gives it political and economic rights
- **Veiled Protectorate** – a state controlled by another in an indirect manner

Why did the British Empire Expand in Africa?

- **Moral factors:** Christian missionaries saw it was their duty to spread their faith among non-Christian peoples. Empire was a force for 'civilisation' and 'enlightenment' and there was a powerful body of Christian philanthropists
- **Trade and the Economy:** The industrial revolution had made Empire possible. British merchants opened up new routes inland to discover new raw materials which could be used to manufacture a product which could then be sold back to Africa (materials such as rubber, gold, diamonds, ivory and oil). The Empire also provided investment opportunities
- **Strategic factors:** Britain wanted to have global dominance: France and Germany had emerged as a new threat. The loss of the American colonies in the 18th century caused the 'swing to the east'. Britain's coastal interests in west Africa demanded protection so forts were built along the Gold Coast. The Cape Colony in South Africa protected Britain's sea routes to India and other areas of the Empire
- **Personal Influence:** Merchants- Imperialists such as George Goldie and Cecil Rhodes capitalised on new commodities. Victorian explorers sought and traced the continent's waterways, publishing their findings, producing maps and spreading tales of adventure

The Ottoman Empire

- The Ottomans were a dynasty of Turkish rulers
- In the Middle Ages the Turkish Empire was huge: it dominated parts of Eastern Europe, Asia, the middle East, North Africa and bits of Spain and the Mediterranean
- The Turkish Empire moved with the spread of Islam and was regarded as a threat to Christianity
- By the 1800s, the Turkish Empire was struggling – sometimes referred to as ‘the sick man of Europe’
- Other powers e.g. France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Britain exerted influence over Turkish territories
- The decline of the Ottoman Empire was actually problematic for the British. Britain would benefit from Turkey remaining strong, because it didn’t want other powers to benefit from their decline and thus alter the power balance in Europe. Britain tried to support Turkey
- This decision was controversial because Turkey often treated its people harshly
- In 1914 Turkey sided with the Germans in WW1 so Britain had to stop supporting it. When WW1 ended, Britain won a lot of Turkish land

Britain’s Involvement in Egypt

What was Britain’s attitude to Egypt in 1857?

- In 1857, the idea that Egypt would fall under British control was laughable
- British traders had used Egypt as an important route between Europe and Asia
- Britain was largely hostile towards the Muslim rulers of Egypt

Why did Britain’s interest in Egypt grow?

- During the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865 the British military became starved of cotton
- Egypt, with its good quality cotton, therefore attracted the attention of British companies who began investing heavily in the production of Egyptian cotton
- Isma’il Pasha, who came into power in Egypt in 1863, had the ambitious project of cutting the Suez Canal through Egypt to connect the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. This canal meant the trading route to India was 55000 miles shorter than via the cape
- The Suez Canal Company, set up in 1858 by a Frenchman, began work in 1859 and it was completed 10 years later
- At first, Britain had little interest because they thought it wouldn’t be suitable for larger ships
- The canal had an immediate effect on world trade, so in 1875 when Isma’il Pasha sold his companies shares in the canal for £4 million, Benjamin Disraeli stepped forwards. This gave Britain more control over Egypt and subsequently encouraged further interest in the country. France still had a greater number of shares in the canal at this time

How did Britain establish control in Egypt?

- **Suez Canal Shares** – Disraeli bought the shares in 1875 off the Khedive Isma’il Pasha who was selling them because Egypt had accumulated large debts. This gave Britain a large stake in the canal and a say in its running
- **Dual Control** – Due to mounting Egyptian debts the economy seemed on the verge of collapse. British and French ministers were brought in to run the Egyptian economy in 1878. Britain was placed in control of government revenue
- **Deposition of Isma’il** – Isma’il was deposed in 1879 by the Ottoman Sultan for economic mismanagement. His son Tewfiq became the new Khedive.
- **British Influence** – British money and support kept the Egyptian economy afloat. British Commissioner Lord Dufferin was therefore able to wield considerable influence on Tewfiq
- **Unemployment** – Dual control meant taxes were imposed on food and goods. Additionally, the Egyptian army was reduced to 2/3. This led to increased unemployment
- **Arabi Pasha Revolt** – Unrest increased and led to a nationalist rebellion led by Colonel Arabi Pasha. Tewfiq was forced to appoint Arabi’s allies to key government positions – these ministers were anti-European
- **British concerns** - Britain was concerned about what the Arabi Pasha revolt would do to British trade and investment. They feared for the safety of 100,000 Europeans in Egypt and the security of the Suez Canal, which had become a key route to India

- **Alexandria riots** – In June 1882 there were riots in Alexandria. Fifty Europeans were killed. The British Prime Minister Gladstone finally decided to intervene. The Royal Navy bombarded Alexandria
- **British campaign to gain control** – British launched a military campaign to restore order in Egypt. Despite initial success at Kafr el-Dawwar, Arabi Pasha was defeated by British forces at Tel el-Kebir and Cairo was retaken
- **Establishment of the ‘Veiled Protectorate’** – Tewfiq was restored as a puppet ruler by the British. Tewfiq was forced to create government amenable to British interests. He was made to employ British military personnel to supervise the Egyptian army and relied on British advisors. Evelyn Baring was made Consul-General. In reality it was Baring who ruled Egypt from behind the scenes

What was Britain’s Involvement with the Sudan up to 1885?

Who was General Gordon?

- Colonel Charles Gordon was sent from Britain to act as Governor-General of Egyptian-administrated Sudan, on behalf of their ‘puppet’ Khedive Isma’il between 1877 and 1880. He was a military leader
- He was against the slave trade and was appointed to try to root it out
- He was eventually considered to be ‘quite mad’ and a ‘Christian lunatic’ by ministers and officials in London
- He had a ‘courageous and chivalric character’ ‘ a charismatic gaze’ and a ‘personality which seemed to glow with the beauty of holiness’

Who was the Mahdi and what did his followers want?

- The Sudanese Islamic cleric Muhammad Ahmad opposed the British administrators. He self-proclaimed himself the Mahdi (saviour of mankind)
- Drawing on long-term hostility towards Egyptian rule, combined with recent resentment of British influence, Mahdi transformed an emerging political movement into a jihadist army
- They sought to liberate Sudan from outside rule and by 1882, they had taken control over the area surrounding Khartoum
- Both Gordon and Gladstone sympathised with the Mahdi, saying that they were ‘struggling rightly to be free’

What did PM Gladstone order General Gordon to do after the death of General Hicks?

- In 1883, a joint British-Egyptian military expedition under the command of General Hicks launched a counter attack against the Mahdi in which Hicks was killed
- Gladstone ordered General Gordon to evacuate the Egyptian and British troops from Khartoum in 1884

What happened to General Gordon and the Khartoum garrison?

- Gordon defied Gladstone’s orders and stayed at Khartoum. He was extremely popular and the British public were angry with Gladstone for not sending relief
- Eventually Gladstone sent the ‘Gordon relief Expedition’ of 15 000 troops led by Wolseley. However, there were several setbacks and they arrived 2 days after the death of Gordon
- In 1885, the British-Egyptian forces were overrun
- Virtually the entire garrison were killed and General Gordon was beheaded during the attacks
- Gladstone went from the Grand Old Man to the Murder of Gordon

Why didn’t Gladstone retaliate?

- He was anxious to avoid further loss of life and money for no obvious gain
- No other campaigns took place until 1896