Chapter 2: Imperial and Colonial Policy

Governance
What was the Colonial Office?

- First established in 1801, it was initially combined with the war office but it functioned separately from 1854
- It was divided into 5 departments: North America; Australia: the West Indies: Africa and the Mediterranean as well as General from 1870
- Headed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies or the 'Colonial Secretary'
- Most colonial sectaries only served for a few years, the longest-serving between 1857 and 1890 were: the Duke of Newcastle (1859-64); the Earl of Kimberly (1870-4); the Earl of Carmon (1874-8); the 15th Earl of Derby (1882-5) and Lord Knutsford (1887-92)
- The work of the Colonial Sectary increased enormously in the 19th century although some white settler colonies became self-governing in this period
- 'Orders in Council' were issued on the advice of law officers in London as a means of administering the Crown colonies without local consultation
- The colonial office did not have responsibility for all British territories. Some protectorates and other areas e.g. Egypt and treaty ports in China were under the foreign office. There was also a separate India office from 1858

White Settler Colonies Granted 'Responsible Government'

- **Canada** (1848); **Newfoundland** (1855); **New South Wales** (1855); **Victoria** (1855); **New Zealand** (1856); **Tasmania** (1856); **South Australia** (1857); **Queensland** (1859); **Cape Colony** (1872); **Western Australia** (1890) and **Natal** (1893)

How were the white settler colonies administered?

- Following the Durham Report in 1838, Britain moved towards responsible government in the white settler colonies
- British governors ruled with the support of representative assemblies, appointing ministers who could command a majority
- The West Indian colonies remained under direct British rule because the number of voters (who had to be white) was small e.g. white people represented only 1 903 of 456 000 Jamaicans in 1864

How was India Administrated and Defended?

How did the governance of India change in 1858?

- Expansion in India had originally been overseen by the British East India Company
- Under its control, millions of subjects had been added to the Empire through conquest and annexation
- The company had been granted a monopoly over English trade with Asia. After Robert Clive defeated France at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the company ruled India until 1858. It became increasingly expansionist, provoking the mutiny of 1857
- The mutiny of Indian Sepoys serving in the British East India Company's army in 1857 lasted a year and brought 1000s of deaths. British troops were disputed to support the EIC
- After the mutiny had been quelled, a change of rule was necessary to prevent recurrence
- In 1858, the EIC handed the control of India over to the British government and the company was dissolved

What were the terms of the Government of India Act (1858)?

- The EIC's territories in India were passed to the Queen and the company ceased to exist
- The position of Secretary of State for India in the cabinet was created. They received powers and duties formerly exercised by the EIC's directors
- An Indian Council of 15 members, with experience of Indian affairs, was appointed to assist the SoSfI and act as an advisory body for Indian affairs
- The Crown appointed a Viceroy to replace the Company's Governor-General
- The Indian Civil Service was placed under control of the Sectary of State

How was India administrated from 1858?

- The Viceroy of India ruled with a legislative council (5 people) who were responsible for finance, law, the army, economy and home affairs
- Provincial governors represented the Viceroy in the provinces and had their own legislative councils
- On a day to day basis, District Officers oversaw local councils and reported on practical issues
- Approx. 1000 British Civil Servants were employed as a member of the Indian Civil Service. Official posts were open to all but senior posts were virtually all white
- The basic administrative functions were the collection of taxes, maintenance of law and order and the running of courts (English law prevailed)
- After the mutiny, greater respect was shown for traditional Indian practices and customs. The Queen assured that there would be no further meddling with traditional Indian religious culture
- The Queen became Empress of India in January 1877
- From an India perspective, the change from company to crown rule brought little change

In what ways did the British rely on the cooperation and collaboration of the native population?

- The Viceroy relied on native rulers, in charge of the 565 nominally independent Princely States
- Until 1858 a 'doctrine of laps' had ensured that eh Princely States fell under British rule when their ruler's line of descent ended
- The removal of this doctrine helped ensure the prince' loyalty and although they all accepted the ultimate sovereignty of the British Crown; an elaborate hierarchy of status bolstered the Princes' prestige
- The British community was forced to rely on increasing numbers of India bureaucracies, part of a growing middle class that demanded a greater say in the administration of the country. British refusal drove them towards nationalism and support for the India National Congress (set up in 1885) which became a vehicle for India's eventual independence
- Within the civil service, bilingual Indians were recruited as low-level clerks to act as intermediaries between the British elite and the mass of the population

How did Britain change how India was defended after 1858?

- The East India Company's armies were brought under the control of the Crown and the proportion of British to Indian troops was raised to a ratio of roughly 1:2
- The regiments of native Indian troops were cut off from one another to prevent any sense of unity. They also deliberately mixed different casts and religions
- The army enlisted greater number of Gurkhas and Sikhs who had been loyal during the mutiny to replace the Bengali troops who had not
- All field artillery was placed in British hands
- Indians were denied officer rankings although the British were ordered to show greater respect for their beliefs and traditions
- Indian troops were sometimes sent abroad deliberately to lessen the risk of rebellion in India
- The growth of railways also helped India's defense: 3000 miles of track was added in the decade following the mutiny, exaggerating British presence and enabling swifter deployment of troops in the event of trouble
- An armored gun train was introduced and Lucknow railway station was purpose-built for disembarking reinforcements
- In every major city, a garrison was built so soldiers could emerge at a moment notice to quell any challenge to British rule
- The first Viceroy also set up the Imperial Police Force as an extra layer of security and to avoid reliance on the army

Threats to the British Empire 1870-1890

- Industrial rivals imposed high duties to protect their own economic interests. This threatened Britain's global trading position which had been dependent on free trade
- Britain was suffering from the economic depression that started in the 1870s. Failing profits for British businesses and unemployment in Britain added to fears about the scarcity of markets
- During the period 1870-1890, the British Empire was never likely to be seriously threatened b anyone. Th relative threat varied over the period, perhaps the greatest threat from Russia in the 1870s, then France after 1882, with a brief but remarkable German involvement in empire in the mid-1880s. However, If Britain had ever really felt threatened it would not have been able to avoid the need to think about defensive alliances

Why did Germany pose a threat to the British Empire?

- It became united in 1871. Germany now had the potential to dominate central Europe and disrupt the peace that had existed from 1815; Britain did not want this distraction from their wider global interests
- It had a powerful military that had just defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. However, at this point, Germany was yet to build up a navy which rivaled Britain's
- Germany sought to emulate Britain's path to great power status by acquiring an empire of its own. In 1870, Prussia had no colonies or imperial ambitions, by 1890, Germany controlled a vast colonial area which amounted to five times the land size of Germany itself
- Germany's expansion in SW Africa was seen as a threat to the Cape Colony. Bismarck extended German claimed to include the entire territory between the NW border of Cape Colony and the southern border of Portuguese Angola. He also took Cameroon, Togo, a third of New Guinea, most of the Solomon Islands, the Marshall and Caroline Islands in the Pacific and German East Africa (Tanzania). Having established Germany's credibility in Africa he then called the Berlin Conference. Most of this was gained between 1884 and 1885 but that was largely because it was mostly deserts and dry river beds that no one else wanted. This early German expansion was also sort of done with British permission, Gladstone said that 'he welcomed with joy he expansion of Germany'
- Germany was a growing industrial strength with a large population (1880 approx. 45m) and had access to a larger reserve of raw materials than Britain. Its economy overtook Britain's by the early 1900s
- British merchants feared that they would be squeezed out of markets by Germany, especially in East Africa
- More German merchant ships on the sea threatened to break Britain's virtual monopoly
- Germany did not pose a great threat until the final decade of the century because they were trying to keep friendly with Britain and their main aim was to keep France diplomatically isolated so they couldn't seek revenge for the Franco-Prussian war. Bismarck liked Disraeli and even suggested an alliance between Germany and Britain. But he disliked Gladstone believing liberalism was idealistic so Germany's brief excursion into imperialism took place while Gladstone was PM
- The German public was not interested in having an empire, by 1914 only 25 000 Germans had moved to the empire and even this figure included people temporarily based there

Why did France pose a threat to the British Empire?

- It had recovered from the political upheaval in the first half of the 19th Century. Their new-found stability meant that they posed a threat to Britain for the first time since 1815
- It was determined to recover its prestige after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War by increasing its empire. It took part in a naval building programme which allowed it to explore more places
- It established a foothold in Indo-China in the 1860s and began to gradually expand north. This was seen as a threat to the eastern frontier of British India in Burma with only Siam (Thailand) as a 'buffer state'. It was also seen as a threat to the British access to trade in the far east
- Due to the long depression, the French pursued new markets n Africa which was a threat to Britain, particularly in West Africa
- France chipped away more readily at the Ottoman Empire than the British
- After Egypt became a vailed protectorate of Britain, France wanted to act fast before Britain took over more of Africa. Originally the Suez Canal had been a more of a French venture so they were bitterly resentful of Britain's occupation. They retained their ambitions for the Sudan, with the ultimate aim of uniting French West Africa with French Somaliland on the Red Sea. With control of the headwaters of the Nile, the French would also threaten the British position in Egypt

- The French threat remained until after the Fashoda incident, however, the French government was unlikely to want a full-scale war with Britain over African colonies, especially as Britain was not its main concern – anger with Germany and about the lost regions of Alsace and Lorraine surpassed that by far

Why did Russia pose a threat to the British Empire?

- It accumulated large areas of territory in central Asia in the 1870s which brought Russia closer to Afghanistan and this was seen as a threat to the Raj. The fear was highlighted when Russia perused diplomatic relations with the Amir of Afghanistan. The British and Russian empires were barely 20 miles apart
- Russia planned to conquer parts of the Ottoman Empire (particularly the Turkish states and Constantinople) and therefore where a threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal. Russia defeated Turkey in a short war in 1877-8 but Disraeli worked alongside Bismarck to make sure Russia did not gain too much
- It had an extremely large population (1870 approx. 77m) so it could potentially muster a large army. However, the British-Indian army had an even larger population to draw upon and the Tsarist governments were usually too badly organised to take full advantage of the vast resources and manpower available to them
- Whilst economically quite backward it was beginning to expand industrially. Russia had the power to dominate markets in Asia particularly in Persia and the Far East
- It undertook large railway building projects such as the Trans-Caspian Railway. This was seen by the British as being primarily for military reasons to transport troops to Afghanistan, therefore a threat to the NW frontier. The British that a military attack on India would encourage potential rebels. However, the mountainous and inhospitable nature of Afghanistan and the fact the Himalayan mountains seemed to block all other possible routes to India so the intensity of the threat needs to be considered
- Russia appeared set on imperial expansion in the north of China
- After Alexander II's assassination in 1881, Alexander III concentrated on avoiding wars so the international threat from Russia seemed to have reduced

Britain's Response

- As a response to the French activity in Indo-China, Britain annexed territory in Malaya (from 1874)
- Britain also took Sarawak, North Borneo (1881), Brunei (1885) and upper Burma (1885)
- They may have expanded more than originally planned because they didn't want to lose their dominant position in the world
- Afghanistan was invaded in 1878 to force the Amir to accept British control, effectively setting up a British protectorate which reduced Russian influence and securing India
- Most politicians were generally cautious about expansion, concerned with the cost of the Empire

Conferences leading to the 'Scramble for Africa'

'The biggest game of monopoly was about to begin, Africa was the board'

The Brussels Conference 1876

- Hosted by King Leopold of Belgium, included explorers and leaders and was largely motivated by the desire to protect Belgian interests in the Congo. It drew attention to the land available in Africa and led to more competition
- It concluded that: Africans were incapable of developing the national resources, therefore European intervention was necessary; the route to Africa's great lakes needed to be developed by building roads or railways and an international African Association should be established to coordinate the European's efforts
- The cooperation that the conference supposedly promoted actually heightened the competition as people were suspicious of Leopold's intentions
- The IAA hired Henry Morton Stanley to advise in the Congo region but it soon became apparent that Leopold was intent on establishing his own Congo Empire
- The French hired an Italian-born explorer, Pierre de Brazza, to stake their own claims in the region
- The Germans hired the explorer Gustav Nachtigal to assert their influence
- France extended its control from Senegal into Western Sudan in 1879
- Portugal asserted its claims to control the mouth of the Congo river in 1884

The Berlin Conference

- By 1884, although 80% of Africa was under local control, the European powers largely restricted to the coastal areas, the need for regulation became apparent
- The German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck hosted the conference which was attended by the foreign ministers of 14 European statues and the USA. France, Germany, Great Britain and Portugal were the major players because they controlled most of colonial Africa at the time. Bismarck saw Africa as an opportunity to sow tensions between Britain and France, in the subsequent decade the two powers clashed repeatedly over Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda and the Sudan
- Its initial task was to secure agreements that both the basins and mouths of the Congo and Niger river would remain neutral and open to trade
- Representative of major powers negotiated their respective claims to territory which were then formally mapped out
- The conference concluded with saying the General Act: all nations should be permitted to trade in the base of the Congo and its outlets; there should be free trade in those regions; the powers with influence in the area should help protect indigenous people and suppress the slave trade; the powers should support and protect religious, scientific or charitable undertakings; if any power took possession of further land on the coast of Africa it should notify the signatories of the Act, in order to enable them to assert any claims of their own
- Th principle established was known as 'effective occupation'. A European power could assert there claim to land that is 'effectively' occupied and notify other powers. Only if another power could put in a rival claim was its right to colonise questioned
- The General Act triggered a further scramble for territory across Africa and, by 1900, 90% of the continent was in Europeans hands
- The conference was a success because it allowed European countries to expand their empires without the risk of conflict with one another
- Africa acted as a 'safe arena' for competing countries where, thanks to its size, there were unlikely to come into conflict
- The conference did little for indigenous populations. There was no African representation at the conference and European ministers mapped out spheres of influence with little concern for natural borders of ethnic, linguistic or religious division
- Despite the apparently good intentions, it the following years there was no concerted effort to combat the African or Arab slave trade, nor much attention was given to indigenous concerns. The well-being and religious customs of the locals were frequently overlooked

The Informal Empire

- In addition to British Crown Colonies and protectorates, there were also areas where Britain had no legal claim – this comprised the 'informal empire'. It comprised of places influenced by Britain, particularly in economic ways, either through free trade agreements or British investment there. Often, they were placed where trade took place which provided profit for companies, bankers and insurance firms
- This allowed Britain to enjoy power around the world without the cost of the responsibility
- Sometimes the links were so strong, the areas became settled by British citizens and the British culture and language was adopted

China

- By the treaties of Nanking (1842) and Tientsin (1858), the British gained trading bases e.g. in Shanghai and Hong Kong. These were settled in by British people and governed by British laws
- Their influence was originally a product of needing to finance the activities of the British East India Company through the sale of opium to the Chinese
- In 1863, Robert Heart was appointed head of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs office which acted as a branch of the Chi'ing government to protect British interests
- Britain used its power to threaten to disrupt the lucrative opium trade

East Africa

- Britain was able to exercise its influence of the Sultanate of Zanzibar in East Africa through the activities of the trader John Kirk
- In 1891, a government was established which made the Sultan's first minister British

Middle East

- Iran was brought under British influence through trade treaties
- Afghanistan – threat of a full invasion in 1879 secured the Treaty of Gandamak which provided Britain with the strategic territorial gains and control over its foreign policy

South America

- It accounted for 10% of British exports and imports in the second half of the 19th century
- Sometimes threats of force were used to maintain trade agreements e.g. Mexico was out under pressure to uphold fair trade treaties in 1861 and the royal navy ensured compliance in Peru in 1857 and Chile in 1863
- Argentina – 10% of all foreign investment between 1850-1900 was here. 100s of miles of railways were constructed with British investment, expertise, and hardware. Britain had a strong influence on the business aspect of Argentina as immediately as if it were a colony. British citizens lived an elite lifestyle in Buenos Aires – with their own institutions and way of life. Mutton, beef, wheat, and maize were all imported in abundance form here. A British financier, Chares Morrison, acquired the Mercantile Bank of the River Plate in 1881 and invested directly in the countries utilities