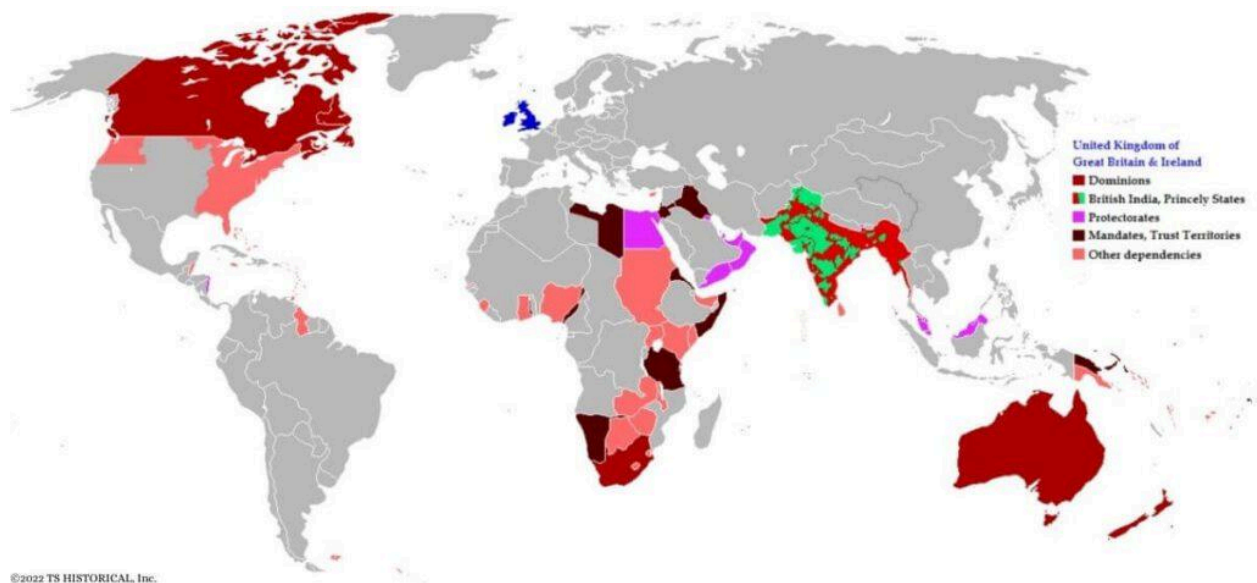




# British Empire | History, Flag, Rise & Fall

## History of the British Empire



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An anachronous map of the British Empire.

The British Empire was once the largest [empire](#) in the world, ruling over a quarter of the globe's land and people. But what led to its decline? In this article, we'll explore the reasons behind the fall of the British Empire.

### Origins (1497–1583)

The British Empire began with the union of England and Wales in 1536. This was followed by the union of England and Scotland in 1707, which created the Kingdom of Great Britain. The British Empire began to take shape during the 18th century when Britain started to expand its colonies in North **America**, the Caribbean, and [India](#).

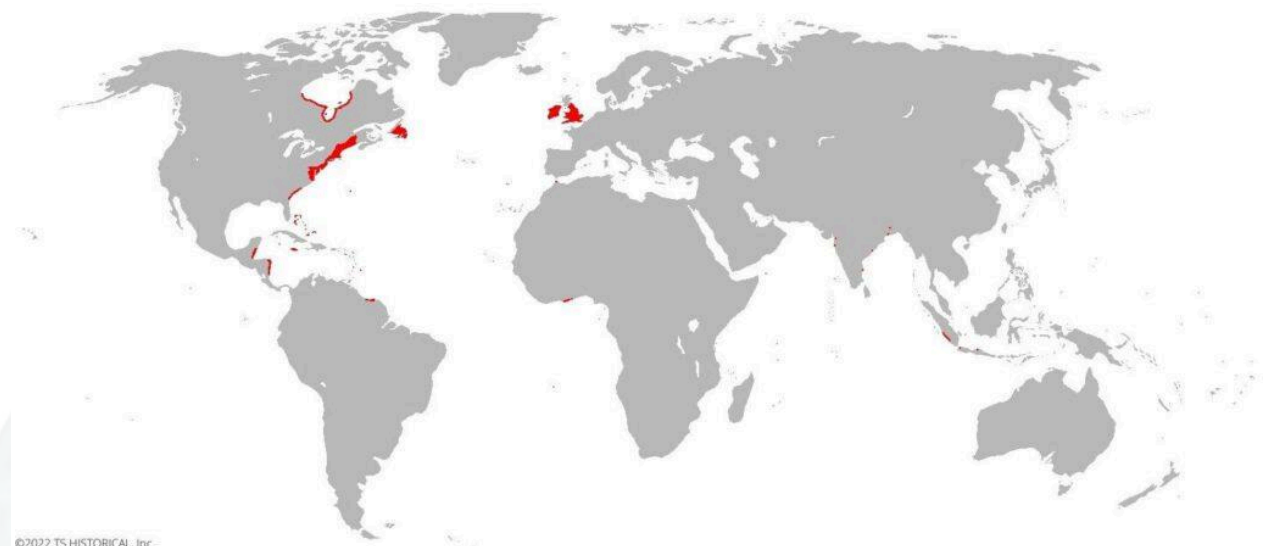


During the 19th century, the British Empire reached its peak. It included colonies in North America, Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Caribbean. At its peak, the British Empire was the largest empire in history.

The British Empire began to decline after [World War I](#). This was partly due to the rise of new rival empires, such as the United States and the [Soviet Union](#). The British Empire also lost many of its colonies during this time.

This was largely due to economic problems and increasing opposition from within the empire itself. The last remnants of the empire were dismantled in 1997 when Hong Kong was returned to [China](#).

### English overseas possessions (1583–1707)



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All English overseas possessions in 1700, shortly before the Acts of Union of 1707

The English overseas possessions, also known as the British Empire, were a group of colonies, protectorates, and other territories controlled by the United Kingdom from the 16th century onwards.

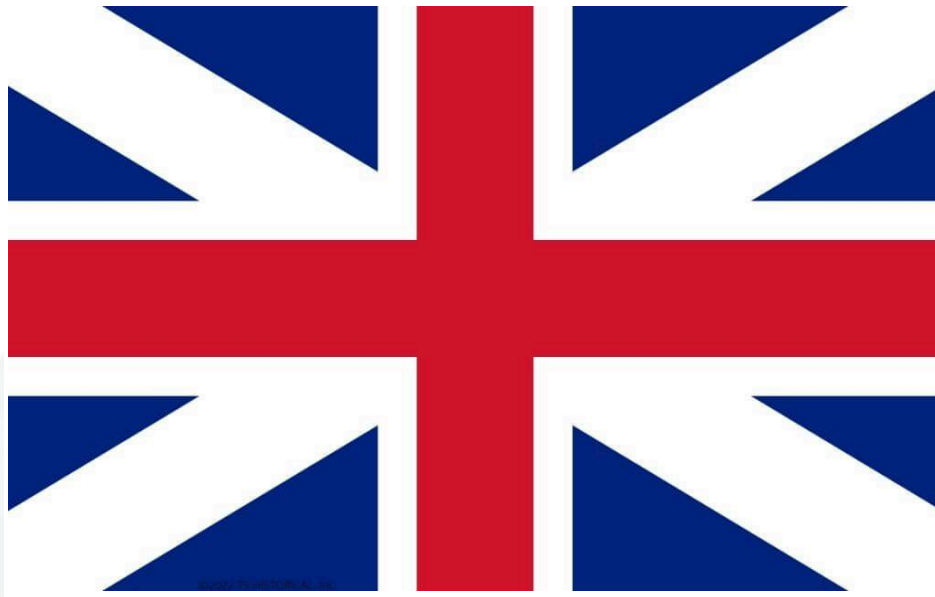


The English first began to establish overseas colonies in North America in the early 1600s. These colonies initially served as trading posts and bases for English fishing fleets. However, they soon began to be seen as potential sources of wealth and power.

In the 18th century, the British Empire reached its height. The British controlled a large portion of the world, including North America, India, [Australia](#), and New Zealand. The British also had a number of African colonies.

This was due to a number of factors, including economic problems at home, competition from other European powers, and rising nationalist sentiment in the colonies. Most of the colonies became independent nations. However, some territories, such as Hong Kong and Gibraltar, remain under British control today.

### **“First” British Empire (1707–1783)**



British Empire Flag



The first British Empire was the largest and most powerful empire in [world history](#). The British Empire was founded in the early 17th century. At its peak, the British Empire covered more than one-third of the world's land area and had a population of over 500 million people.

The British Empire was characterized by its military might and its ability to control global trade. The British Empire was also responsible for many significant cultural achievements, including the development of democracy and the English language.

## Rise of the “Second” British Empire (1783–1815)



The “First” British Empire was a global superpower that dominated the world for over two centuries. However, the “Second” British Empire would eclipse this earlier empire in power and influence. This second empire would span over 80 different countries and stretch from Europe to Asia.



What made the “Second” British Empire so powerful? In part, it was due to the skills and resources of the British people. They were able to build an empire from scratch, using nothing but their own strength and determination.

Additionally, the British Empire was able to maintain its power through a combination of military might, economic prowess, and diplomatic savvy. They were able to conquer new territories, keep them under control, and extract wealth from the people living in these lands.

Ultimately, the “Second” British Empire was a testimony to the strength and power of the British people. They were able to build an empire that was both large and powerful and would remain one of the leading powers in world politics for over two centuries.

### **Britain’s imperial century (1815–1914)**

The British Empire was founded on the principles of free trade and liberty. The British government wanted to spread these values around the world, and they did this by establishing colonies in far-off lands.

The British Empire was very successful in its goal of spreading liberty and free trade. In fact, it is estimated that the British Empire helped to reduce global poverty by almost half.

The British Empire also played a major role in shaping modern-day Europe and Asia. For example, the British Empire helped to create the modern-day European Union. Additionally, it played a significant role in developing independent countries in Asia, such as Japan and India.

Today, the legacy of the British Empire remains alive and well. Many former colonies have become successful democracies, thanks largely to the influence of the British Empire.





## East India Company rule and the British Raj in India



East India Company (British Raj in India)



The East India Company was a British business enterprise that operated in the Indian subcontinent from 1600 to 1858. The company achieved its greatest wealth and power during its rule over Bengal and Bihar, two important regions of the subcontinent.

Under the company's rule, India saw enormous economic growth, leading to increased demands for British goods and services in the region. However, the company's policies also resulted in widespread exploitation of Indian laborers and resulted in an enduring legacy of racism and discrimination against Indians.

## **World wars (1914–1945)**





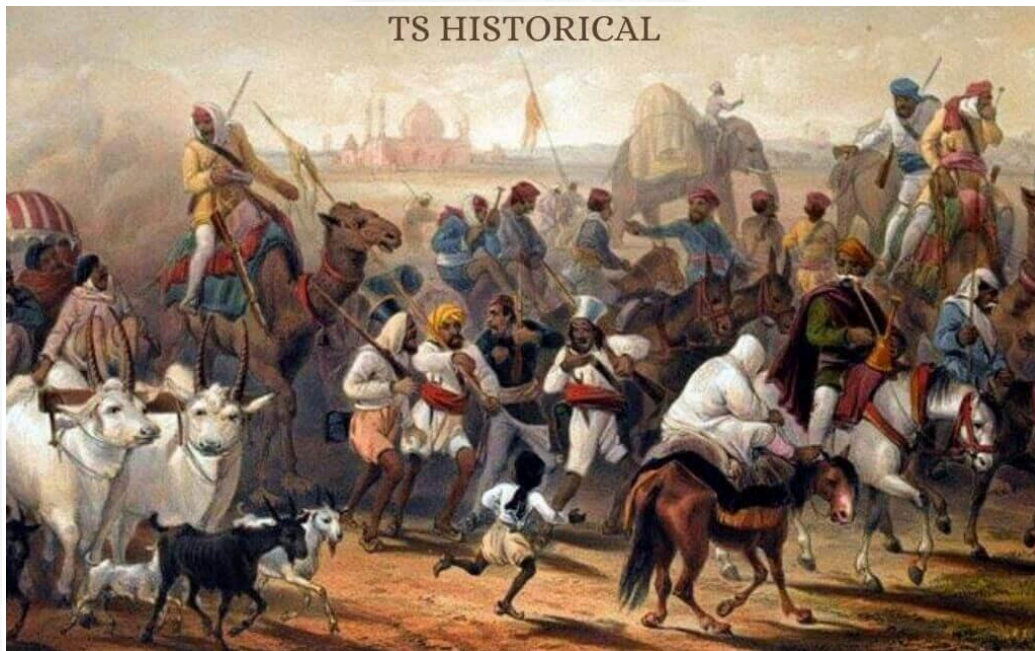


The British Empire began with the colonization of North America by the British in the late seventeenth century. Over the next several decades, the British expanded their territory into Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The British Empire reached its peak in the early twentieth century. At its height, the British Empire covered over three continents and had a population of over 350 million people.

The decline of the British Empire began with World War I. The war resulted in widespread damage to Britain's economy and resources, which weakened the empire. The second major event that led to the decline of the empire was World War II. This war resulted in large numbers of casualties and destruction, which further diminished Britain's resources and ability to maintain its empire. Today, the British Empire is no longer a significant player on the world stage.

## **Fall of British Empire (1945–1997)**







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The United Kingdom experienced a domestic syndicalist revolution as well as the collapse of its foreign colonial empire, which was the largest in the globe at the time, in the years 1924-1925, less than five years after the Treaty of Versailles ended World War I.

Historiographers and political scientists all across the world have researched the fall of the British Empire. The empire's surviving constituent members have little to show for their efforts to recapture their nation, at least as long as the Union of Britain survives.

