

Imperialism in India

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Background

- Unlike the continent of Africa, or the country of China, both of which were dominated by *multiple* European nations, the country of India was dominated by only *one* – Great Britain.
- By the 1700s, the government that ruled India (the *Mughal Dynasty*) had grown weak. Starting in the 1500s, they allowed Europeans to trade at various port cities, but by the 1700s the British in particular, had expanded their influence and control in the nation.
- British control came through a powerful corporation: *The British East India Company*. This company not only held much Indian territory, but also had their own army!



The Jewel in the Crown

- By the mid 1800s, India had become the single most important colony in the British Empire.
- India provided cotton for British textile mills, which was important because by the 1860s, Britain's other big supplier of cotton, the United States, was embroiled in a civil war.
- Additionally, Indian climate was good for growing coffee & tea – products popular in the British diet. This also eliminated the need to trade with China for these goods.
- The Indian climate was also good for growing opium – a highly addictive drug that the British were exporting in large quantities to China.
- Finally, the Indian population totalled more than 300 million. British industries viewed India as a large market for their goods.



Sepoy Rebellion

- The British East India Company employed native Indians in their private army. These soldiers were called *sepoys*.
- In 1857, a rumor spread among the sepoys that the gunpowder cartridges for their rifles were greased with beef & pork fat. (In order to use the cartridges, a soldier had to bite off one end.)
- This offended both Hindus (who considered the cow sacred), and Muslims (who did not eat pork).
- The sepoys began a rebellion against the British, and in order to put it down, the British *government* had to send troops.
- By 1858, the rebellion was crushed, and as a result, the British government took direct control of India.



The Raj (1858 - 1947)

- The **Raj** is the name of the era of British colonial rule over India.
- During this time the British brought many modernizing changes to India including railways, telegraph and telephone lines, modern hospitals and medicines, and more educational opportunities.
- However, the Indians lost all political independence, and were discriminated against by the British in their own country!
- It was difficult for India's Muslims and Hindus to work together against the British because they distrusted each other. Eventually an important nationalist group was founded -- the Indian National Congress.

