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BRITISH EMPIRE QUOTES CONTENTS - Misc Quotes - Saul David - Victoria's Wars - Fintan O'Toole - White Savage - Linda Colley - Captives - MISC QUOTES We seem ... to have conquered and populate half the world in a fit of no spirit. - Sir John Seeley, The Expansion of England (1883) The reason the sun never sets over the British Empire is because God does not trust the British in the dark. - Anon The Paradox of the British: the weak who wangled the earth and were cursed for it and by it. - Felipe Fernandez Armesto I think I can save the British Empire from everything except the British. - Winston Churchill For better or worse - just and rude - the world we know today is to a large extent a product of the era of the British empire. The question is not whether British imperialism was spotless. It wasn't. The question is whether there could have been a less bloody path to modernity. Maybe, in theory, there could have been. But in practice? - Niall Ferguson, Empire The political mix favoured by the Victorian imperialists reads as something that has just been published by the International Monetary Fund, if not the World Bank: free trade, balanced budgets, healthy money, common law, incorruptible administration and investment in infrastructure financed by international loans. - Niall Ferguson, The Empire Slinks Back, New York Times The British Empire is no longer, but curiously, the English common law and the structure of our institutions and those of the United States and the Western world maintain and expand many of its philosophies. - Tony O'Reilly I thought Benjamin Zephaniah showed ignorance of history when he refused an honor because he was associated with the British Empire, denouncing imperial domination as cruel and oppressive: if he had read some accounts of missionaries trying to stop the little girls of 9 being sold in a dubious marriage or the widows being saved from the funeral pyre by the intervention of the Imperial Crown, surely he would not take such an ill-informed view. The British Empire was often a force for good. It is the analysis of my rational mind. - Mary Kenny, The Times Now it is fashionable to advise esp of the British Empire today: but for all its faults - and there were many - India, the largest democracy in the world, is what it is today because it still draws, in law, parliamentary democracy and its armed forces, on the best of the imperial heritage. This legacy, for good or evil, is partly Irish. From the very beginning, the Irish have been involved in the exploration and conquest of the British Empire. - Kevin Myers, The Irish Independent It is not fashionable these days to see the good side of the British empire, but it is inconceivable that Tata could have prospered as it did without the law British domination: this is probably why Tata called its first big company, The Empress Mill. He also founded the Taj Mahal Hotel, which, unlike most major European hotels in India, allowed Indian guests. Genius does not normally survive generations, but it did so in the case of tatas, which extended Tata companies in the coming decades after the death of their founder... Tata Industries now employs about 20 companies, employing 250,000 people in the technology, sub-dyes, steel mills, food, chemicals, aerospace and tea sectors. Tea, ah tea: and this is where you can see the first elegant turn of a historic wheel. A few years ago, Tata bought Tetley Teas, The largest tea company in England. Thus, the country whose economy has been transformed by the English (and even Irish) appetite for tea now has the company most responsible for this development. - Kevin Myers, The Irish Independent There is something unifying about politicians who apologize, at no cost to themselves, for the sins of their predecessors while deploying all the black arts of their craft to suppress criticism of their own performance. The same is true for society as a whole. It would be more admirable for Britain in the 21st century to try to imagine what our successors would see as an incomprehensible moral blindness on our part than to take easy pictures of the morality of two centuries ago. What will look like a fault for the British of 2306 as slavery does to us now? We don't really want to know, because the answers might be embarrassing. Abortion? The consumption of animals? It is the people who are doing things right at the time who deserve to be celebrated. That is why we should honour the remarkable people who put Britain in the lead by first abolishing the slave trade and then slavery itself after thousands of years of acceptance of both by all the important societies of every continent. - William Waldegrave, reviewing Tom Pocock's Breaking the Chains, The Spectator The story of the reverence and fear in which India has been held in certain currents of Western thought is a notable correction for those who see the history of imperialism as the highest and brutal imposition of Western values on indigenous peoples. - Jonathan Beckman, reviewing The Bloodless Revolution, The Observer Now I know it's old-fashioned to refer to colonialism in something other than negative terms. And certainly, no part of the world indifferent to the excesses of empires. But in the Canadian context, the actions of the British Empire were largely benign and sometimes brilliant. - Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada If you look at GDP per capita in countries with more than 20 million people, the first four are a sweep of the Anglosphere: America, Canada, Great Britain, Australia. When it comes to implementing and economic growth among a large number of people, there is simply no comparison with British heritage. And, as Mr. Harper also pointed out, through the horrors of the 20th century, these countries have also done more than anyone else to defend and advance the cause of freedom. - Mark Steyn, Western Standard Like most things in the political field, the 1807 abolition of the Slave Trade Act was not perfect: beyond the metropolis, in the British colonies, slaves were owned (but could not be sold) for another quarter of a century. But William Wilberforce's life reminds us that great men don't avoid things because the focus group numbers seem inconclusive. For his pains, his compatriots are now raised in schools where they learn that the British Empire was the main source of racism and oppression, and they never learn that the greatest force to end slavery around the world were some English and Royal Navy ships. - Mark Steyn, National Review It's not so much a story as a call to arms. Andrew Roberts dressed in Winston Churchill's coat and picked up where Churchill had left off. The united phalanx

of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, he says, saved the world in a century-long global struggle between the democratic pluralism of the English-speaking people and the fascist intolerance of different varieties: Prussian imperialism, Nazism, Soviet communism and now the feudal, theocratic, tribal, obscurantist challenge. - Tim Gardam, Observer Review of A History of English Peoples Since 1900 Unlike Stalin's Russia, the British Empire has always been an open society. What happened in all parts of the empire was reported in the press and debated in Parliament. Much of the evidence of torture of prisoners in Kenya has been disseminated in the Commons. In addition to railways, schools, universities, hospitals and sanitation projects, the empire introduced political and social ideas dear to the British. These included extending civil rights to women, a free press and, above all, a culture of popular consent and reasoned debate. English has spread as a language of learning, law and commerce. After 1945, a combination of domestic exhaustion, American pressure and local nationalisms, which we had neither the will nor the means to resist, led to the retreat of the empire. Unlike the French, Portuguese, Russian and Yugoslav, the process was largely in good spirits and little bloodshed. Words such as gulag and holocausts and crude comparisons with the murderous despots of the 20th century are deployed to portray the British Empire as an indelible and depraved institution. Why do we believe such a poppy? One answer is the tendency of some authors and documentary filmmakers to behind the wainscot of history in the hope of finding something nasty that can then be sensationalist. The process is selective and distorting. An empire that lasted 300 years is judged solely on the misconduct or mistakes of a handful of its servants. The crimes of a vicious intelligence officer in Kenya erase all the patient and caring work of hundreds of district commissioners across Africa. - Lawrence James, The Lie of the Evil Empire, The Times Britain and France were almost constantly at war during the long 18th century from 1688 to 1815, a war waged to determine who would be master of the world. The so-called Augsburg League War lasted eight years until 1697. After a short pause, the two nations clashed again in the Spanish War of Succession (1702-1713). A long but tense interlude ended with the outbreak of the War of Succession of Austria in 1740. Seven years after the Treaty of Aachen, which ended eight years of fighting, the Seven Years' War broke out. France tried, and succeeded in part, in recovering some of the catastrophic losses suffered by the Treaty of Paris in 1763 by a five-year war from 1778 to 1783, which ensured that the United States managed to get away with it as an independent nation, but thus bankrupted France and precipitated the French revolution. Finally, there were twenty-one years of revolutionary and Napoleonic war against Great Britain (with a meaningless half-time interval in 1802), ending only with Waterloo in 1815. In 127 years, France and Great Britain were at war for sixty of them. ... In 1755, Great Britain and France were really competing for global hegemony. China and Japan had retreated into a fearful and self-imposed isolation, sealed by the outside world... In 1759, the world conflict between Great Britain and France fought in three main arenas: North America, Latin America and India. It is part of the fascination of the year 1759 that, in each case, we can discern another crucial element in our history: the presence of a third military force, affecting both the strategies to be used and the end result. In Latin America, it was the decline of Spain's imperial power that complicated the situation; in North America it was the Amerindian tribes, and in India it was the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. ... France made the fatal mistake in the Seven Years' War to devote most of its energies to the continental war, largely fought in the name of Maria Theresa of Austria, instead of focusing on the crucial areas where the battle for world supremacy with Britain would be decided: in South America West Indies and India. The smartest British policy on the continent would have been to confine land-based military activity to the periphery, as was done during the Napoleonic Wars until 1814. This option was not open to Britain due to the Achilles heel, the electorate of Hanover. By placing the elector of Hanover on the British throne in 1714, the post-1688 elite gave hostages to the continental fortune for a hundred years thereafter. The obvious fact was that, as far as British interests were concerned, George II as King of England and Elector of Hanover was a responsibility. - Frank McLynn, 1759: The Year Britain Became Master of the World The most dramatic example, however, of the Anglo-French rivalry in the Caribbean was the controversy, to the peace treaty of 1763, as to whether Britain should restore to France Canada or Guadeloupe, both conquered during the war. The simple equation of the two domains is now derisive. Yet the external offices of both governments were seriously agitated on the issue, and in England, at least, it gave rise to a violent pamphlet war. Eventually, Britain re-established Guadeloupe and retained Canada. But this decision does not mean that Guadeloupe, in the eyes of the British government, is less valuable than Canada. In fact, the exact opposite has happened. Choiseul, the French foreign minister, boasted of a successful diplomatic coup in which he had preserved a precious sugar island and abandoned a vast territory that many French people mocked, like Voltaire, as a few hectares of snow. - Eric Williams, From Christopher Columbus to Castro - VICTORIA'S WARS: The Rise of Empire When the young Queen Victoria, politically naive but fiercely conscientious, ascended the throne in 1837, Britain was the world's leading industrial power, with seemingly unlimited supplies of coal and iron, and a quasi-monopoly on steam energy. London was not only the largest city in the world, but also its main financial exchange. The Victoria Navy was recognized as the ultimate arbiter of world affairs, while its army backed in the reputation it had earned at Waterloo. Yet the British empire was, if anything, in decline. The American Revolution had helped to sour the notion of empire, and powerful commercial interests advocated for free trade and against the protectionism of the 18th century imperial system. In 1837, the empire consisted of a confused collection of territories acquired in pieces over generations, administered in part by the government and partly by chartered companies. Nevertheless, it covered some 2 million square miles and had a population of more than one hundred million. An estimated 1.2 million Britons lived abroad, including 56,000 soldiers in imperial garrisons (including one India). During the period known as the double monarchy - from Victoria's accession in 1837 to the death of her husband Albert in 1861 - the empire increased almost fivefold in size through territorial acquisitions in Asia, Africa, the South Sea and the Far East. Its cities, canals, railways and telegraphs changed face Continents. He was on track to become the greatest empire the world has ever seen. It is the story of this extraordinary quarter century of imperial conquest and the people who made it happen: politicians, colonial administrators, businessmen, generals and ordinary soldiers. This is, in particular, the history of the two great and nine medium-sized wars that were fought in the name of trade, civilization and the balance of power. Of these many conflicts, only the Crimean War was not strictly an imperial war, although it was waged with the security of the empire in mind. When Victoria became queen, the British army fought battles in a way that her 17th-century ancestors would have recognized. But his reign was to coincide with some of the greatest technological advances of all periods of history. By 1861, the advent of steamships, telegraph communications, rifles and breech-loading guns had revived the business of war. But the conservative nature of the British army meant that it rarely learned from its previous campaigns; she preferred to adapt to work. All of Victoria's early wars were successful, but often only after the initial setbacks. Incredibly, the world's largest industrial nation does not always enjoy tactical or technical superiority over its enemies. A monarch could no longer make or break governments, as George III had done. The constant erosion of royal patronage and the changes made by the Great Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 had increased the influence of the House of Commons on the government and weakened that of the monarch... All this has left Victoria in a curious constitutional position: nominally powerful, but in reality the weak partner in the precarious balance between monarch, government and parliament. [Afghanistan] Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary in 1836, was well aware that Russia was using Persia as a hunting horse, testing Britain's determination to maintain Afghanistan's territorial integrity. The best way to thwart Russian drawings, he decided, was to counter a pro-Russian leader in Persia with a pro-British leader in Afghanistan... in what became known as the Great Game, the often secret struggle between Britain and Russia for control of Central Asian gateways to India. The members of the Afghan tribes were, in fact, mounted infantrymen par excellence and presented the British army with the same kind of challenge at the beginning of Victoria's reign as the Boers at the end. Siege operations may not be such a problem, but to fight them on the ground, the British would need more than their traditional virtues of discipline, courage and massed firepower. In particular, they would require the skills learned by their carabinieri and light infantry in the two peninsular wars of 1808-1814, when each company knew how to skirmish and act independently. [Sindis and Sikhs] A paternalistic conservative, Sir Henry Henry arrived in India in September 1844 as governor general with good intentions. His accomplishments during his four-year tenure were numerous: progress in education, with more schools and universities, and promises of government jobs for college-educated Indians; an extensive public works programme, with construction work on the Ganges Canal and a national railway network, and the extension of social reforms to the Prince's States, such as the discouragement of suttee, infanticide and human sacrifice. Yet if for the first war fiercely fought against the fearsome Sikh nation of Punjab that the term Hardinge so mainly recalled. Because most independent states in India had powerful artillery, and no more than The Sikhs, it was common practice for Indian artillery, when attacking, to engage enemy guns to eliminate the threat of anti-personnel fire. British artillery, on the other hand, still clung to the traditional tactic of engaging enemy infantry. Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, referred to a number of people present, later described the Battle of Chilianwalla as an unfortunate battle in which British courage was a more distinctive characteristic than the strategic or tactical capability of the General Command. A crisis of domestic politics has led all thoughts of colonial wars to the back of the Queen's mind. Sir Robert Peel, whom she had learned to admire and trust, had recently introduced legislation to repeal protectionist corn laws over a three-year period. But the majority of his party was vehemently opposed to the bill, making it appear to be a betrayal of the landed interests, and these protectionists were led in the Commons by a then obscure MP, Benjamin Disraeli. Victoria and Albert unheededly supported Peel's measure, mainly as a means of mitigating the Irish famine. The Queen had already donated her own money to a famine relief fund. Albert overcame this by providing moral support to one of the first debates on the corn law from the house of commons... the prince had overstepped the constitutional mark by betraying his political bias, not to mention the queen. He wouldn't make the same mistake. Royal support could have helped the measure pass through Parliament, but it could not save either Peel's government or his party. The quarrel over Albert's misjudged support for Peel's repeal of the corn laws in 1846 merely confirmed his belief that the crown should be seen as a policy above the party, or even within the Albert also made his influence felt in the military sphere. This is a direct result of his successful effort to heal the gap between the Queen and the Duke of Wellington by asking the Duke of Wellington to act as a proxy godfather at the baptism of their first child. As Commander-in-Chief, the Duke showed his gratitude in encouraging Albert to recommendations for the military - some of which were followed for some time. Born Henry John Temple in 1784, the son of an Irish peer who was ineligible to sit in the House of Lords, Lord Palmerston had become a Conservative MP at the age of 21, a minister at 24, and in 1850, after passing through the floor, had served a total of 14 years as foreign secretary under three Whig prime ministers. In: Lords Grey and Melbourne, and now Lord John Russell. His guiding mantra on foreign policy was to consider constitutional states as Britain's natural allies. He tended to support nations fighting for independence, which in turn brought accusations of interfering in absolutist states like Tsarist Russia and Imperial Austria... Victoria and Albert had long disagreed with Palmerston's heavy foreign policy, particularly his hostility to France. They did not disapprove of his scandalous private life. It took a while to convert the Royal Navy to the steam idea. This was partly because the pallets of a steamboat were considered vulnerable to enemy fire and did not provide enough room for a wide face of cannons. In 1840, when the British merchant fleet numbered no less than 720 large steamships, the Royal Navy did not. But all that changed with the launch of the first iron-hulled ship, the SS Great Britain, by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1843. Within two years, the Royal Navy had launched the world's first steamship, HMS Ajax... From 1851 to 1871, when HMS Devastation became the world's first mastless warship, all new British warships had sails and screw propellers. The best hybrid was HMS Warrior, the first iron-hulled battleship launched in 1860. It was the fastest and most powerful warship afloat. In 1852, however, a much smaller steamship gave the British armed forces a crucial tactical advantage: the gunboat. Less than 200 feet long, with pivot-mounted guns and a crew of about 30 feet, its greatest asset has been its maneuverability. A two-masted sailing platform gave him speed and agility in the open sea, while his steam engine allowed him to climb navigable rivers deep into hostile territory. The gunboat, writes a naval historian, made the Royal Navy for the first time a power on land and at sea. Without the gunboat, the navy would never have been able to fulfill its role as a global policeman, acting at the request of British officials and merchants virtually anywhere in the world. [Crimea] Peace is a thing, and war is a great misfortune. But there are many things more precious than peace, and many things far worse than war. The maintenance of the Ottoman Empire belongs to the First Class, the occupation of Turkey by Russia belongs to the Second. - Lord Palmerston No nation, writes Garnet Wolseley, has never been engaged in a great foreign war for which it was unprepared. There is a lot of truth in As a result of the Napoleonic wars, military spending had been reduced to bone by the time Victoria's accession. During the same period, the size of the army increased from a wartime peak of 250,000 men to just 109,000 men; and of these, more than half were garrisoned abroad. One of the reasons the Duke of Wellington refused to consider any military reform was his belief that it would give the Treasury an excuse to make further cuts. But the consequences for the army were an ossified administration... The 25,000-strong British Expeditionary Force, which finally took the field in Crimea in 1854, was a hotbed of semi-independent departments that reflected the administrative chaos. Part of the reason why the army had failed to adapt its strategy and tactics to deal with the realities of a modern European war was that it did not expect to fight one. The army thought small, writes Hew Strachan in his book on the reform of the post-Waterloo army, because it fought small: the problems had been solved to meet the demands of the imperial garrison and the home police, and were therefore adapted to the regimental level. After 1815, the empire became the raison d'être of the army. Military involvement in the empire had at least some popular appeal. Radicals were happy to see the military renounce their aid to national civilian power. And finally the overseas soldier became a Christian missionary and the harbinger of British civilization. He also became a military valet of all trades with the experience of many varieties of war: he had met the Sikhs in battles remarkably similar to those of the Napoleonic era; he had fought in the mountains of Afghanistan, and in the bush of Kaffaria and New Zealand; and he had campaigned in the cold of Canada and in the heat of Sindh. He had learned many lessons - such as the value of mounted infantry, massed heavy artillery and looser infantry formations - but few of them applied to a European war. At a time when Royal Navy officers were becoming more professional and technically competent, with the introduction of entrance exams and a gunman's school in Portsmouth, most of their army counterparts were little more than amateur gentlemen. This was largely due to the fact that the army's procurement system gave little space for enterprising men to study their profession. Most of the officers came from a social class educated in the literary tradition of public schools. A more that Lord Raglan would have used all the troops at his disposal to turn a victory into a rout. It is impossible to imagine one of the great commanders of history - from Alexander to Napoleon - acting with such caution. It is only by taking risks that overwhelming victories are won. And the Battle of Alma could have been a landslide victory; he could even have ended the war. Although competent, neither Raglan nor had the genius or nerve to destroy the Russian army in a single battle. Instead, he was allowed to withdraw largely intact to fight another day - with disastrous consequences for the allies. The three directors - Raglan, Lucan and Nolan - were partly responsible for the blunder (the charge of the Light Brigade). Raglan's justification for sending the cavalry forward - that the Russians were about to withdraw from the causeway plateau - was wildly optimistic. Even if interpreted accurately, therefore, his final order was both unnecessary and irresponsible. Moreover, he should have taken into account the fact that Lucan's vision on the battlefield was much more limited than his own and made the order more precise. Lucan should have insisted on getting clarification from Nolan. But he allowed his pride to get the best out of him and seems to have come to the inexplicable conclusion that Raglan expected him to seize the eight-gun battery in the heavily defended Northern Valley. He also did not support the Light Brigade with the artillery on horseback and asked for the cooperation of the French cavalry. As for Nolan, he was so dismissive of Lucan's ability, so desperate for the cavalry to show its worth, that he failed in the only essential duty of a staff galloper: to provide the officer who received the message with the necessary clarifications... And he may have gone even further by talking about an attack when Raglan had simply wanted a show of force. If so, he takes primary responsibility for what followed. This was the view, according to Frederick Maxse, of most riders. If the Frenchman had not repeatedly foiled Raglan's plans to take Sevastopol with a helping hand, especially in the days following Alma, the long and costly siege could have been avoided. But Raglan's main attribute as a diplomat, his equine and friendly temperament, was also his greatest weakness on the ground. He may have kept the alliance intact, but he did not put enough pressure on successive French commanders to act decisively when the time was right. Would another British general have done better? It's hard to say. At that time, the country did not have a single exceptional soldier of sufficient rank and experience to take command. Given the difficulties of fighting in an alliance, Raglan was probably the best man available. He was not the most imaginative general Britain had ever produced, but he took the Frenchman out of a solution in Alma and tried to do the same again at the Redan. It is not his fault that his French, hampered by Napoleon III in Paris, were even more reluctant to take risks than he was. The war had claimed the lives of the British nearly 21,000 soldiers, only a quarter of whom had been killed in action. Such a brutal statistic serves only to support the traditional view of conflict as a vision of incompetence and waste: Ni Ni its conclusion, in the opinion of many commentators, will result in positive gains for Britain. One historian writes: The treaty left England largely isolated. Russia has been, and would be, hostile for decades, and Austria and Prussia had not fixed their participation. Moreover, England's only great ally, with the exception of Turkey in disintegration, was an unstable France only as reliable as its unreliable emperor. But was that the case? Trevor Royle, the author of the best recent book on the conflict, insists that the war resulted in significant gains for Britain: Russian military power had been revealed as a sham, the threat to India had been neutralized and the Royal Navy still controlled the Mediterranean. Moreover, the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, apparent reason for going to war, had been maintained. Now Britain, having shown that it would fight if it had to, would be drawn into another continental war for another 60 years. As for the British army, the war helped to accelerate the pace of the reforms that Hardinge and Prince Albert had begun in 1852. [The jewel in his crown] The great rebellion (or Indian mutiny) officially ended on July 8, 1859 with the declaration throughout India of a state of peace ... The Canning continued as viceroy until March 1862, introducing a series of measures aimed at making the British Raj more inclusive... he encouraged the establishment of universities in Calcutte, Madras and Bombay, and gave grants to private colleges. Such initiatives were designed to create a westernized Indian middle class that would cooperate rather than confront. Yet the plan finally backfired in that it was this English-speaking elite - Gandhi, Nehru and others - who would lead the campaign for independence. Canning's other post-mutiny initiatives included the introduction of a penal code and the acceleration of railway construction. But the most important reform of his vice-regional administration was that of the Indian army. The Canning government introduced a number of changes to prevent further uprisings: raising the ratio of European troops to Indian troops from pre-mutiny levels from 1.7 to 1.2; concentrate all the artillery in the hands of the Europeans; and brigade both Indian regiments with at least one European, so that no major station was left without a European presence. But he also tackled the root cause of the mutiny by particularly disappointing the conditions of service of the army and, above all, by moving bengal army recruitment base from high-caste Hindus to Sikhs, Dogras, Pathans, Gurkhas and other martial races... These reforms were so successful that, until independence in 1947, there was only one mutiny involving Sepoy's violence: that of the 5th Light Infantry in Singapore during the First World War. Otherwise, despite the occasional industrial action, the army remained loyal to its colonial masters at the [Epilogue] Perhaps Albert's greatest achievement was that he helped save the institution of the monarchy from the depths in which it had sunk in the 1830s and reinvented it as a pillar of the nascent constitutional state... Albert's vision of a modern monarchy, with shared executive functions between Windsor Castle and Downing Street, was probably never achievable for long. But it is tempting to speculate on the role that the monarchy might have played in British politics if he had not died when he did, and if Victoria had not withdrawn so long in mourning and isolation. That he deplored, in the words of one biographer, the glamorous, ornamental and helpless Crown that emerged in the next century is beyond doubt. If he could have prevented another case. For those born during the 20th century, the idea that a previous Britain regularly fought wars of aggression could come as something like a surprise. The two world wars, Korea, the Falklands and even the First Gulf War were all, in the most fundamental sense, just wars caused by the aggression of a third party. Part of the reason for the fury during the Second Gulf War is that preventive conflicts became, for the British of fear, extremely rare. The last real example was the Zulu War in 1879. But during the early years of Victoria's reign, wars of aggression (if not always strictly pre-emptive) were much more common than we might admit. You can dress Opium, Sindh, the Second Sikh, Burma and the Persian wars in all the clothes you choose - autocratic leaders refusing the march of progress, the extension of British trade, strategic security, prestige - but in the end everything comes back to power. Not that all the first wars in Victoria were aggressive or acquisitive - the first Sikh war, the Indian mutiny, the beginning of the Crimean War... the invasion of Crimea was the time when the Allied war became a war of aggression. Of course, not all aspects of imperialism - whether practiced by Britain in the 19th century of the United States today - are not necessarily pernicious. The imposition of law and order, improved communications and more stable trading conditions will always be welcomed by certain sections of a conquered people. Others marginalized by the former regime might even encourage foreign intervention. Yet it is difficult to move away from the immutable fact that few indigenous peoples like their leaders to be imposed on them by foreigners. They nor did the benefits of civilization include bombing ancient cities like Canton, looting of national treasures like the Koh-i-Nor diamond and the endless destruction of fabulous buildings like Kabul's Grand Bazaar and the Summer Palace in Beijing. The irony of Britain's rapid imperial expansion during the early years of Victoria's reign is that little of it was directly sanctioned by the house house None of his prime ministers, even gunboat Palmerston, were pro-imperialist per se. Most tended to regard the territorial empire as an expensive luxury, believing instead the power of trade and moral prestige. That it took place at all, therefore, was mainly the responsibility of individuals on the ground: diplomats, soldiers, trading houses and sometimes mavericks. For those at home, it seemed that the empire grew without thought or design, or, as the Victorian historian J.R Seeley put it, in the absence of a spirit. Albert's demise coincided with a change in the fundamental character of the empire. Before the Indian mutiny, most Britons saw the empire as a means of spreading civilization through trade and the imposition of superior codes of conduct. The events of the mutiny were so bloody that, when it was over, many Britons concluded that the peoples of the empire were not capable of being civilized. The imperial rule was therefore not a mission but a duty, or as Rudyard Kipling so eloquently put it, the burden of the white man ... there has also been a shift in the axis of imperial expansion from Asia to Africa that reflects the changing trade and strategic concerns of the British government. Of the fifteen major wars fought by Victoria's troops after Albert's death, eleven took place on the black continent. At their simplest level, the wars in Victoria can be seen as little more than the bending of Britain's imperial muscle... yet the climate in which Britain exercised its power changed considerably during Victoria's rule. In general, for most of the first 30 years, it functioned as the only superpower in the world, just as the United States does today. The British were mainly those of consolidation and coercion against inferior indigenous peoples, rather than wars aimed at extending the empire or maintaining the traditional balance of European power. The Crimean War is the exception... on the other hand, most of Victoria's later wars were fought by Britain with half an eye on its European rivals. The rise of a Prussian-dominated Germany, the resurgence of France after its disastrous defeat to Prussia in 1871, the ambitions of a nascent Italy and the relentless Asian expansion of Imperial Russia - all posed serious threats to Britain's position as the world's leading power. The British African wars were no longer conducted primarily to expand trade and but rather to prevent other European powers from turning into territories that Britain considered strategically essential to the safety of its steam routes to the east, via Suez and Cape Town. Britain at the end of the Victorian era was no longer the only superpower in the world, although it is still pre-eminent at sea, and its wars reflect how an increasingly tense Europe has changed the priorities of the empire. It was a rivalry that required two world wars to resolve. WHITE SAVAGE: William William The invention of America The Irish involved in the formation of modern America goes back almost to the beginning of history, allowing us to take a long view. And this intermingling has often had to do with mediation among other cultures, the ambivalence of the Irish situation as colonizers who became colonizers, as wild who came to see themselves as civilizers, and as whites who often appeared to the official Anglo-American eyes as virtual blacks, tended to place the Irish at certain interesting crossroads. Remembering how some of them behaved at these intersections can help unravel not only some American myths, but some Irish ones too. In the world of the Iroquois, grief was a terrible force that must be appeased. The dead wanted to take the living with them, keep them in the grip of pain and loss so that their disturbance would threaten the order necessary for survival. Grief has created paralysis, inability to function. The bereaved covered their faces and clothes with ashes. They lay in the dark, unable to prepare food or hunt or care for children or go to war. Rituals were needed to dispel the madness of grief. Without them, in a culture that had experienced so much grief, it would be impossible to survive. Death would have its way. William Johnson, like the Iroquois, had grown up in a culture that felt in danger of extinction, and which responded with a system of ritual in which every individual death had to be treated as a moment of immense danger to society as a whole. Just as the mourning hall of an Iroquois village sang songs of death, the Irish Catholic culture of Johnson's childhood had a formal system of elaborate lamentations. The Iroquois had the female institution of Ogi'weo'a'no - the Chanters of the Dead - whose job it was to sing songs that would free the earth's spirits from those who had died and allow them to move away from this world. The Irish had the same all-female institution alive. In America, Johnson found himself in a culture where belief was not just a matter of accepting true faith and rejecting all others, but of placing the comprehension system on the other so that they form strata that change meaning. Just as the culture in which he grew up encompassed Protestant rationalism, the Catholic faith and an older layer of Pre-Christian ritual and myth, the Indian culture in which he had entered did not see presence in the Church, honoring the Great Spirit and assailing the spirits that invaded the natural world, as activities Exclusive. The Iroquois vision of the world as a vision in which parallel realities coexisted and sometimes met, in which the power of the dead must be taken seriously, was not as foreign to this white European Christian as one might say. Johnson had come to live a life in which multiple historical forces - the fall of Gaelic Gaelic Ireland the rise of Protestant Britain, the ambition of a European exile and the Iroquois struggle for survival, the reality of conflict and the dream of civility - were in constant motion. Competing visions of the world have spun around him. They met, but did not always cohere, and were collision kpt only by the force of his own multi-layered personality. The Jacobite culture from which Johnson originated was a kind of archaic, mnnial and even apocalyptic radicalism in his dreams of a restored golden age, but pre-modern in his ideal of a good king who would do everything right. Reasons... to make us believe that the natives of this country once had among them a kind of cult; for they set aside the seventh day as sacred; but when I entered one of these holy houses that day, I could not observe any circumstance of devotion in their behaviour... Most of them bowed and bowed to each other, and a considerable number slept soundly. - Joseph Addison, satirical of English society from a sweet and playful Indian point of view as it was, Addison's essay had important implications for British colonial policy in North America. He lashed it out of an alliance with the Mohawks based not on their assimilation to a higher civilization, but on mediation between different cultures, equally valid. We are all guilty of this narrow way of thinking, which we encounter in this abstract of Indian magazine, when we believe that the customs, dresses and manners of other countries are ridiculous and extravagant, if they do not resemble those of our own. - Joseph Addison, The Spectator Joseph Hendrick and his Mohawk nation have come to inspire in the heart of the empire of feelings of wonder. - Joseph Addison, The Spectator Joseph Hendrick and his Mohawk nation have come to inspire in the heart of the empire feelings of wonder. , admiration, excitement, dread, panic. They were noble and majestic, austere and skeptical - a moral rebuke to the English dissolution. They were also wild creatures of the night. Success of need partners in between. They need to deal with people like them, people who are useful to their own side precisely because they have become a bit like the others. Hendrick needed someone from the British Empire who imagined him and his fellow Indians, not as wild bogeymen, but simply as human beings with different notions. As an Indian who became partly European, he needed a European who could become partly Indian. He needed a counterpart that could match his own ability to be at home simultaneously in different cultures. In confident, expansionist and triumphalist England it was difficult to find such in Ireland, on the other hand, they were thick on the ground. Without the Mohawks, there could be no Iroquois alliance for the British Empire. Without William Johnson, as Hendrick had made clear, the British would have no alliance with the Mohawks. William Johnson inherited defeat. The new order in which he was born was one of the that all civil and political powers were reserved, under criminal laws, for members of the Protestant state religion, the Church of Ireland. Catholics and dissident Protestants were excluded from the armed forces and most professions. Catholics faced, in law at least, severe restrictions on the practice of their faith, their access to education and their property rights. For the poor, who have never enjoyed such rights anyway, the consequences of defeat were most strongly felt as an alienation of cultural and religious power. For the very rich, there were always ways to maintain a position of privilege. The hardest hit, however, were those in the middle, like the Johnsons, with high notions of their own place in the world, but without the means to support them. They had to be able to transform the benefits of education and ties into military, ecclesiastical or professional careers for their younger sons. People like the Johnsons needed their poor neighbors because they were the only ones who remembered or recognized their former status as important people. These neighbors, in turn, needed their nobility to defend the oppressed honour of the tribe in the face of ethnic and religious insult. They indulged in them with residual respect, provided they played their role as local champions. Johnson's cousins, the Corduff Warrens, had begun in the same place and under the same political and economic circumstances; they had been minor Catholic and Jacobite intermediaries of the fertile plains west of Dublin; and they had found themselves in the same bond of violent imperial struggle, exile and self-advancement. Yet they had fought on both sides in conflicts that shape the world. While Peter Warren and William Johnson had chosen the British Empire as the arena in which they would reclaim the prestige and wealth of their families, John, William and Richard Warren of Corduff had chosen the Frenchman. One of the reasons Why William Johnson took so well to the border lands between the French and British empires in North America was that he had grown up along such a border. Spiritually and culturally, but not literally, Johnson's youth community was a Franco-British border. The creation and satisfaction of new requirements are at the origin of the emergence of industrial society. Global trade and the expansion of European empires have led both to an awareness of new products and the possibility of bringing them to Western markets. A new type of person - the consumer - was emerging late 17th century and early 18th century. Tea and coffee, cotton and porcelain, sugar and spices have all become symbols of status and luxury whose value went far beyond their mere usefulness. Indian companies in northeastern America have come to depend on the purchase of manufactured goods. In their adaptation to European colonization, they created a new type of economy, and it could not survive without commodities that he did not do for himself. The basics of daily life - culture of crops, hunting game, cooking, fighting, wearing clothes, even holding traditional ceremonies - have all involved the use of European consumer goods. The high quality and relatively low price of the English fabric were so appreciated by the Iroquois and other Indian nations that they represented perhaps the greatest advantage the English enjoyed over the French colony in Canada in the competition for trade and allies. The warrior's sense of self has been reinforced by another European object: the mirror. The same rise of male vanity that created the fops and European beauties of the 18th century was experienced by the Indians. The mirror also separated women from war preparations to some extent. Previously, a woman or sister had applied war paint to the warrior's face. Now he could paint himself, weakening the power of women to veto or sanction war. The mirrors themselves have generated a new consumer demand among Iroquois: cosmetics. It was not the European products themselves, but the inability of the Indians to learn the mysteries of their manufacture that revolutionized their culture. The European industrial revolution had resulted from centuries of change, and could not be suddenly replicated within Indian cultures. Not only did the Iroquois come to depend entirely on colonial traders for the basic tools of their subsistence, but they also did not have the capacity to maintain and repair these goods. The guns were useless without gunpowder, which only Europeans could provide and the repairs that only European blacksmiths could perform. If they are to be killed, there are too many of them; if they want to fight, there are too few of them. - Joseph Hendrick, opposing Johnson's detachment from a troop in the ideology of European war, honourable enemies had to be treated honourably, even in defeat. The dead were not scalped. As weapons had become an established profession, the enemy could be considered other professionals. When the work was done, it was in the mutual interest of both parties to behave well, not least because the same conventions would apply to today's victors when they became defeated tomorrow. The Indian war was different. Indian warriors were not paid professionals. They fought to pay tribute to their nation and the tangible proofs of honour were looted brought back to the village, trophies and captives. Loot, scalps and prisoners were the point of the struggle, to return without them had to be defeated, even if their European allies claimed victory. At the end of his first real battle, Johnson found himself occupying each of these conflicting European and Indian positions. As General Johnson, he was a representative of the British Empire. As Warraghiyagee, he was a Mohawk war captain, expected to return victory tokens to the villages of Iroquoia. If he his Indian allies to scalp the prisoners or take European captives to replace their dead, he risked being considered a savage. If he did not do so, he risked his prestige with the Indians, who were still of his power. Although he did not know it, Johnson was an official military hero of the British Empire, triumphantly victorious not only over France, but over (local rival) Governor William Shirley. The delay in the transmission of correspondence between America and England meant that Johnson's complaints against Shirley and Shirley suggestions that Johnson be replaced reached London alongside reports of Johnson's apparent victory at Lake George and Shirley not mounting an attack on Niagara. After a terrible year in the war, the crown needed a glorious triumph to celebrate and Lake George equipped the bill much more cleanly than any other event. It was decided that Johnson had indeed won a great victory and that he was therefore a hero. It followed that Shirley, whose denunciations of the hero were pouring in, was a villain. Johnson was now to be Sir William Johnson, new York's first baronet. If Shirley had known, he would surely have tempered his attacks on the now official hero. As he was, he fell headlong into the communication deficit. Johnson's former Iroquois policy of neutrality in the mid-1740s helped keep the pro-British and pro-French factions of the Grand League together. Johnson's success in attracting the Mohawks and some members of the other nations to action on the British side had, however, broken the façade of unity, and by 1755 the pretext for a single political strategy had disappeared. The Mohawk villages, under Johnson's influence, were resolutely pro-British. The Oneidas were divided in the middle. The pro-French or neutralist schemers took him to Onondaga, the ritual center of the league. The Cayugas and The Senecas favoured the Frenchman. As a coordination force for political and military strategy between nations, the confederation was indeed dead. Disunited, the Iroquois could no longer maintain the balance of power between the British and the French. Although he had never seen it, William Johnson had a long eye for Fort Niagara. It was heading towards the western end of Lake Ontario, a provocative outpost of Europe in the New World. At its centre, a beautiful grey granite cable, built on a cliff at the mouth of the Niagara River, overlooked the lake. The citadel was the only fort in the American interior protected by vast European-style earthworks. The quality of these defences what Johnson understood to be the strategic importance of the place. The distant colonies of France in North America - Canada, forts and trading posts in the Ohio Valley, Louisiana - were connected by water. The point where, 17 miles from Lake Erie, the Niagara River descends a series of rapids and his frightening plunge over Niagara Falls was a nerve centre without which the movement between Canada and France's possessions in the rest of North America was not viable. Whatever joy Johnson felt at the end of the conflict in which he had been involved, from time to time, for most of his time in America was tempered by his realization that his world had changed profoundly. His dominance - the exercise of influence among the Indians who held the balance of power between rival European empires - had disappeared. One side of the scale, the Frenchman, had been unbalanced and the delicate operation of shifting the balance through Indian influence was now a redundant skill. He himself was partly responsible for this change, of course. He had kept the Mohawks loyal and, through them, had limited the ability of the French and their Indian allies to sweep the border settlements of New York. At Lake George in 1755, he had won a victory, however equivocal, which has long distinguished itself as an island in a successful French sea. He had educated the British and colonialists in the virtues of the Indian Timber War and, with his creation of rangers, had sowed the seeds of a new American military style. Through skillful diplomacy and cool command, he had taken Niagara and caused the French power collapse in the West. And Johnson's neutralization of the Canadian Indians had not only turned the fall of Montreal into a relatively bloodless affair, but had made the new British territories much more governable than they would otherwise have been. When it was exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition Gallery in Pall Mall, London, in April 1771, crowds eagerly lined up in the street saw the great characters arrive in their cars and went to see Benjamin West's epic painting The Death of General Wolfe. It was the sensation of the hour, the heartbreaking emblem of the conquest of America. Wolfe was a secular martyr for a Protestant country, a hero who had given his life in the capture of Quebec. In West's colossal painting, Wolfe dies just as a messenger is spied on the edge of the image, coming to announce victory. For public consumption in the heart of the Empire, West's painting was the fall of Canada. The chaos, confusion and horror of war are transformed into a glorious picture of sacrifice and triumph. Founding a great empire for the sole purpose of elevating a people of customers, may at first glance appear as a project worthy of a nation of merchants. However, this is a project that is entirely unsuitable for a nation of merchants; but extremely fit for a nation ruled by merchants. - Adam Smith. The Wealth of Nations General Amherst was not entirely impervious to the Romantic European vision of the Indians. He had named the armed sloops on which he had taken his troops on the St. Lawrence to attack Onondaga and The Mohawk, ushering in an American tradition of using Indian imagery to enhance the appeal of advanced military technology. The idea that brother love was a strong currency did not place Jeffrey Amherst. Now that military alliances were no longer necessary, he saw the market as the appropriate arena for relations between Great Britain and India. Once he began to examine Johnson's accounts of spending on Indian relations, Amherst identified the whole idea of giving gifts as both a fiscal and political error. He had begun to see the whole affair of gifts and alliances as essentially a blackmail system. He felt that His British Majesty was being held to ransom by the implicit threat of a revolt by the savages. Johnson's diplomatic system had improved and supported the prestige of older sachems. By giving them gifts to distribute and negotiate with them, he had restored some of their traditional authority, which had eroded over time. This system had created a mutual dependence: the sachems needed Johnson to maintain their position; he needed them to exert influence on his behalf. Now, by cutting off the gift offer, Amherst has undermined this bond of mutuality. As the older sachems lost influence, the young warriors came to the fore. There was an element of the Indian uprising of 1763 that reflected Amherst's genocidal fantasies. Pontiac and many other Indian leaders were driven by a vision of a white-free world. The middle ground of Johnson's cultural, diplomatic and economic exchanges was threatened by both sides. The Indian atrocities spurred Amherst's desire to annihilate his Indian enemies. His underestimation of Indian power, and his overestimation, however, led to a military stalemate. By the end of the summer, more than 400 redcoats had been killed, hundreds more were in captivity and perhaps 2,000 civilians were killed in Indian attacks along the borders from New York to North Carolina. Johnson wrote to Amherst in October to denounce his policy of trying to solve a military solution to the crisis and punctuating his illusions of success. He reminded him that if Johnson had failed to detach their Indian allies from the French without deviating from the known bravery of our troops, we may not yet be in possession of their country. He pointed to the difficulty of having a real defeat on the Indians. Johnson's objectives in organizing Indian war festivals to accompany expeditions against still recalcitrant nations were twofold. The first was to demonstrate tangible the restoration of the British-Indian alliance, and thus, paradoxically, to encourage a general peace. The campaign against Montreal in 1760 had shown how effective an Indian war party could, in fact, be as a diplomatic mission. The great achievement of Pontiac had been the restoration of Sir William William The Indian revolt had not been powerful enough to destroy British America, but the Anglo-Americans were not powerful enough to defeat the wider rebellion. The Indians and the British needed him to make peace. The colonial authorities needed Indians as allies and therefore had to give them, at least collectively, some respect. Slaves, on the other hand, were required not to cooperate, but to obey. For the Indians themselves, the sight of black slaves was a constant reminder of the condition to which they could be reduced. To counter this reasonable anxiety, it had to be made clear that Indians were more respected than blacks. The intertwining of sectarian and imperial struggles in America in the 1740s and 1750s meant that The Catholic Indians were anti-British Indians and pro-British Protestants. Abstract goals such as saving souls made no sense in this context. Johnson's dream of a final settlement between the white colonies and the Indian nations, embodied by the demarcation line, provided predictable illusory. It had pleased the Iroquois, traders and land speculators, but its opening of the Ohio Valley had simply outraged the West Indians without effectively ending the illegal white settlements. Johnson was only faintly aware of the great irony of Britain's victory over France. Just as Johnson's role in this victory had inadvertently contributed to weakening his Indian allies by depriving them of the balance of power, he had also weakened his own imperial masters. Freed from the threat of an assertive French presence in North America, the colonial population had had the opportunity to assert itself as a political force in its own right. William Johnson's ancestors had had their property seized because they were disloyal to Great Britain. His heirs had their American property seized because they were loyal to Britain. The Iroquois and Johnsons had been drawn into the revolutionary war largely against their will. Initially, the Six Nations had been determined to remain neutral between the British and the Americans... but at a council meeting with the British in Oswego in the early summer of 1777, the Six Nations agreed to take the axe against the Americans... The villages of Onondaga, the ritual centre of the confederation, were reduced to the ground by American General John Sullivan in 1779. The great Iroquois confederation, which had lasted for at least 300 years, was torn apart when pro-British Mohawks attacked the Pro-Americans Oneidas. The great longhouse was definitely broken in two, with a new league in Grand River and Buffalo Creek. The imaginary freedom of the Indian - physical, political and sexual - bore an erotic charge, but freedom was also a swampy rank and desert, where energy and justice could be lost. The nobility of a doomed people gave a heroic, tragic throw at the extermination. The rapid clearing of large forests has been hailed as progress, but has also led to immediate nostalgia for the once pristine landscape. The path through this puzzling cultural landscape lies in the figure of the White Savage, the manly, racially pure embodiment of American values that is still at ease in the desert because he had adopted the best of Indian culture. An American with white skin

but Indian dress, Christian decency but Indian simplicity, European achievements but Indian skills, would have the right to take the West. William Johnson began to be woven into this nascent national myth of the triumph of civilization over savagery in James Fenimore Cooper's leatherstocking novels of the 1820s, such as The Last of the Mohicans. Johnson hides behind the figure who came to embody a specifically American style of manly virtue, Natty Bumppo, also called Leatherstocking and Hawkeye. Cooper's White Indian was a protégé of Johnson's, who followed him to the Battle of Lake George. Robert Louis Stevenson wanted a story that would somehow bring together the intimate tragedies of the Jacobite wars with a global epic, and that would end with death and resurrection in the American icy desert. It occurred to him that this ghostly Gothic tale, The Master of Ballantrae (1888), would culminate in the estate of Sir William Johnson. The story dramatizes the painful choices that families like Johnson had to make between pragmatic submission and loyalty to the old cause. The Durie family in Scotland is covering its bets when the young suitor, Bonnie Prince Charlie, invades. A coin is turned over. James, the heir, goes with the suitor. His younger brother, duller Henry stays at home, and when the heir is declared dead, inherits both the land and the love of his brother. The so-called dead James returns repeatedly, however, full of evil intent and sexual allure. His is the undead spirit of Jabotitism, repulsive but seductive, violent but infinitely more convincing than the boring decent Henry, who refused to be excised from history. Read More quotes on Linda Colley's British History - Captives - Read about the conquests and cultures of 'By Thomas Sowell' Back to the index quotes, or home page of the site.

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