

Text

The British Empire is not only the pinnacle of world empires, but also the last chapter in the history of human empires. Although there have been many famous empires in human history, all of which have had a profound impact on the historical process of this region and even the entire world, no other empire has had more impact on the modern world than the British Empire. At its peak, the British Empire covered an area of 35.5 million square kilometers, and the entire empire governed a population of more than 400 million. Both territorial size and population size accounted for nearly a quarter of the world's total at that time. More importantly, the British Empire shaped the political, economic and cultural landscape of the modern world to a great extent. With the huge influence of the British Empire, the free trade system and representative democratic system created by the British have become the most common economic and political systems in the modern world. British language, education, religion, science and technology standards have also become the standards of the modern world. Popular paradigm. As the author of "History of the British Empire" said: For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the British ruled a vast empire, which covered most of North America, the vast area of the Caribbean, and the Sahara Desert of Africa. Huge swaths of land to the south, the entire Indian subcontinent, Australia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and at one time even controlled much of the Middle East. The great influence of the British Empire on the modern world is not only reflected in geopolitics, economics and trade, and population immigration, but also widely reflected in political systems, languages, religious beliefs, science and technology, education models, town layout, cultural tastes, music, sports and Recreation and other different aspects.

What was the reason that created the unparalleled glory of the British Empire, and what was the reason that led to the final disintegration of the "Empire on which the Sun Never Sets"? There is no doubt that the reasons are complex and multifaceted: there are both internal reasons within the imperial system and reasons outside the imperial system; there are both local reasons within the British Empire and reasons outside the colonies. This article does not intend to conduct a comprehensive and systematic analysis of this. It only reveals the political logic of the rise and decline of the British Empire from the perspective of rule and governance. It not only provides a novel analytical perspective for researchers of the empire, but also puts forward some suggestions for the dreamers of the empire. Important warning.

1. The pinnacle of the empire

Exactly when the British Kingdom began to become the British Empire has always been an unclear question. It is generally believed that the British Empire formed later than other European powers such as Spain, Portugal and France. Judging from the existing research results on the British Empire, there are three main representative views on the starting date of the empire. The first view is that the British Empire began in 1603, when King James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth, Queen of England and Ireland, and became James I, King of the entire United Kingdom of Great Britain.), and also became the king of the Empire of Great Britain. The second view is that the calculation should start from 1707, because that year the British Parliament passed the Act of Union 1707. This Union Act refers to two British Acts of Parliament: the Union with Scotland Act 1706 passed by the English Parliament and the Union with England Act 1707 passed by the Scottish Parliament. 1707). The passage of the Act of Union in 1707 marked the merger of England and Scotland into a single kingdom, the Kingdom of Great Britain. The third view is that the starting year of the British Empire should be set as 1878, because in that year the British king was officially titled "Emperor". Some scholars divide the British Empire into two stages, namely the "First British Empire" and the "Second British Empire". Some scholars believe that the "First British Empire" refers to the period from 1707 to 1783, while the "Second British Empire" refers to the period after 1783; some scholars believe that the "First British Empire" refers to the period from 1603 to 1815. "Second British Empire" refers to the period after 1815.

In fact, these distinctions about the starting year and development stage of the British Empire are not very important. They just show that the formation of the British Empire had a long time process. People can intercept a certain time node as the empire according to their own standards. start. Regarding the formation process and start date of the British Empire, German historian Jürgen Osterhamer has a good explanation: The existence of the British Empire did not begin with "creation"; it was not a sudden founding of a country. The results of the action were formed through a long and complex process on many stages around the world. There was neither a "big fission" recorded in time nor any core organization controlling it. In the 19th century, Britain did not need an empire because it had already existed for a long time. It "needs no clear explanation of where its existence came from. Before the mid-19th century, few people were aware of the scattered crown estates and other territories occupied by the British through immigration and colonization. will come together to form a complete 'empire'. Until the 1870s, in people's minds, those immigrant colonies that Britain regarded as its 'mother country' were

still different from other colonies that had no 'maternal lineage' with Britain. 'Relationship, but more of a colony of harsh didactic patriarchal relationships'.

If we only look at the official name, Britain was not named the "British Empire" until 1878. In that year, Queen Victoria was officially crowned emperor in the name of inheriting the legal authority of the Mughal Dynasty. However, in fact, the British Kingdom began to conduct overseas colonial expeditions from the 14th to 15th centuries, and had begun its imperial journey as late as the late 16th century and the early 17th century. In 1584, the Englishman Walter Raleigh announced the establishment of a British colony in Newfoundland on the order of Queen Elizabeth. In 1585 and 1587, Larrey established British colonies on the coast of North Carolina in America twice. In 1607, a consortium based in London successfully established an English colony in Virginia for the first time in America. From the 1750s to the 1770s, Britain forced the Netherlands to accept the Navigation Regulations through three wars against the Netherlands, excluding the Netherlands from sea navigation between Britain and its colonies. In the 18th century, through the "War of Spanish Succession" and the "Seven Years' War", Britain allied with other European countries, defeated France, controlled the Strait of Gibraltar, occupied Canada and a large area of North American territory east of the Mississippi River, and became India actual ruler. From 1793 to 1815, in the war against the Napoleonic Empire, Britain further captured large territories such as Malta, Mauritius, Ceylon, and the Cape of Good Hope. In 1854, Britain took control of Turkey through the Crimean War against Russia and began to set foot in the Balkans and West Asia. From 1874 to 1894, Britain invaded Malaysia and incorporated the Indochina Peninsula into its sphere of influence. In 1875, Britain gained actual control of the Suez Canal from the French. Beginning in 1887, they successively occupied large areas of sub-Saharan Africa such as Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya and the Gold Coast. After Britain's complete victory over France and Russia, the veritable "British Century" truly arrived. At this time, Britain was finally strong enough not only to dominate Europe, but also the world. By the eve of World War I, the British Empire had colonies on every continent in the world. "The area has reached 33.5 million square kilometers, which is equivalent to more than 130 times its native area and about 1/4 of the global land area. The colonial population has reached 393.5 million, more than 8 times its native population, accounting for 1/4 of the world's total population. /4 or so. The 'Empire on which the Sun Never Sets' reached its peak."

In the history of human empire development, the British Empire established the most complete and developed global colonial system. In this largest global colonial system to date, Britain is not only the center of economy, trade, and production, but also the center of politics, military, and administration, as well as the center of culture, science, and technology. Territorial area and

population size are usually the main indicators of measuring the strength of an empire. For the British Empire, although its territory and population size are second to none in the history of world empires, its far-reaching impact on world history is mainly reflected in politics, economy, science and technology, language, culture, education and religion.

Politically, the British Empire created a unique governance model. The power of the empire extensively covered all overseas colonies, and its political influence even transcended the time and space of the empire. Nominally, all territories of the British Empire are dependent territories of the British Crown, and all residents in the empire are subjects of the British Crown. The British monarch is not only the head of state of the British mainland, but also the supreme head of state of all colonies and overseas dependent countries. The people of all colonies have the same obligation to loyal to the British monarch as native citizens. The king of England was once the monarch of nearly a quarter of the world's population and land, which was unprecedented in the entire history of human political development. Before the 18th century, the overseas colonies of the British Empire were only related to the British King. The British King directly appointed governors or governed the colonies through ministers in the Privy Council. After the 18th century, the British Parliament began to exercise greater power over the overseas colonies, especially exercise legislative power over the colonies. Ministers related to overseas colonial affairs are responsible for and report to Parliament, and Parliament has the power to pursue legal responsibility for officials who violate the law in the colonies. Compared with administrative power, legislative power can better reflect the will of the country and is therefore more valued by imperial rulers. During the existence of the Empire, the King and Parliament may cede all other powers, but never relinquish the legislative power of the Empire. Even in the Dominions, laws passed by colonial legislative assemblies had to be approved by the Crown and the British Parliament. "British immigrants in the new colonies also brought British common law to the local areas. At the same time, the original laws of the peoples in the conquered areas could also be retained with the approval of the British King. Laws enacted by the legislative assembly of the colony must be approved by the British King through the Privy Council recognition". The political influence of the British Empire was not only reflected during its existence, but also more profoundly after its disintegration. After the collapse of the British Empire, the British King remained the symbolic head of state for many Commonwealth member states. The responsible government system, representative democracy system, and legislative and judicial system promoted by the British during the colonial period were largely retained by the original colonies after independence and became The basic political system of the newly independent country.

From the beginning of the 19th century to the end of the 19th century, the British Empire's economic aggregate and productivity level were far ahead of all other countries, and it was the only super economic power in the world. Britain is the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and the pioneer of the modernization of human society. The Industrial Revolution promoted the fundamental progress of the entire production system and economic system, and industrial modernization started the modernization process of human society. Marx once said: Steam and machines caused a revolution in industrial production. Modern large-scale industry replaced handicraft industry. Large-scale industry established the world market prepared by the discovery of America. The world market enabled commerce, navigation and land transportation to develop tremendously. This development in turn facilitated the expansion of industry. "The low prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it destroys all the great walls and conquers the most stubborn xenophobia of the barbarians. It forces all peoples - if they do not want to perish - to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it forces They promote so-called civilization within themselves, that is, they become bourgeois. In a word, they create a world for themselves according to their own appearance." This logic of economic development is most typically reflected in the economic expansion of the British Empire. It was precisely because of the Industrial Revolution that Britain built the most developed textile industry, metallurgical industry, coal industry, machine industry and transportation industry in the world at that time. In just a few decades, the United Kingdom jumped from a backward agricultural country to a world-class country. The most advanced industrial power in the world and the famous "world factory". In 1852, Britain accounted for more than half of the 2 million tons of steel exported to the world, and its total steel production was more than all other countries combined. In 1861, Britain produced 31 million spindles, while the United States produced only 5.5 million, Germany only 2 million, and Austria only 1.8 million. Between 1760 and 1830, Britain's industrial output accounted for about two-thirds of Europe's industrial growth and 9.5% of the world's total industrial production; 30 years later, this figure rose to 19.9%. Around 1860, the British economy reached its peak, with its pig iron production accounting for 53% of the world's, coal production accounting for 50% of the world's, and raw cotton consumption accounting for 50% of the world's raw cotton production. "The United Kingdom, which accounts for 2% of the world's population and 10% of Europe's population, has a modern industrial production capacity equivalent to 40% to 45% of the world's industrial production potential and 55% to 60% of Europe's industrial production potential." At that time, the British Empire was not only the center of world manufacturing, but also the center of world trade, finance and investment. By 1860, Britain accounted for 20% of world trade and 40% of manufactured products. "Funds from all over the world pour into the London

financial market from all directions" and "London is the control center of global capital flows and commodity flows."

Strong military power is the primary reason for the expansion and rise of empires, and the British Empire is no exception. The glory of the empire comes first from its military glory. Unparalleled military power is a powerful pillar supporting the British Empire's grand territory and incomparable glory. Economic prosperity and technological advancement gave the British Empire the most powerful military force in the world at that time. The British invented the Ferguson rifle and the Maxim machine gun, which played an important role in the history of weapons development. The advanced weapons and equipment greatly improved the combat effectiveness of its army, "enabling the British army, which did not have an advantage in strength, to defeat the Asian and African armies with outdated equipment." . The British Empire's military superiority lay more in its navy than in its army. In 1588, the British Navy defeated the once-invincible Spanish "Invincible Armada" in the Battle of Gravelines, gradually becoming the most powerful navy in the world at that time. Until the First World War, the British Navy had maintained its maritime supremacy in the arms competition with other powers. Between 1815 and 1885, "the strength of the British navy was equivalent to that of the other three or four naval powers combined." At the beginning of the 20th century, after France and Russia, Germany became the main military competitor of the British Empire, but before World War I, the British navy still had overwhelming superiority. In 1900, the British naval budget was 29.2 million pounds, and its main opponent, Germany, was 7.4 million pounds; in 1910, the British naval budget was 40.4 million pounds, and Germany was 20.6 million pounds; in 1914, the British naval budget was 47.4 million pounds, and Germany was 22.4 million pounds. In 1905, Britain began to build the "Dreadnought-class" battleships with large tonnage, thick armor, and fast speed. The characteristic of this new type of warship is that all medium-caliber guns have been eliminated and all large-caliber guns have been modified. The firepower is twice as powerful as any battleship on the sea in 1906. In 1900, the British Empire's fleet totaled more than 1 million tons, twice the tonnage of all other great powers combined, and it could rely on its numerous overseas colonies to be strongly supported by a series of military bases around the world and a huge merchant fleet. "By the end of the 19th century, there was no important waterway or strait in the world that was not under the control of the Royal Navy." These military advantages that dominated the world made the British Empire invincible in a series of wars for hegemony. First, through the Anglo-Spanish War and the Anglo-Dutch War, it replaced the old colonial powers Spain and the Netherlands and became the maritime hegemon. From 1689 to 1697, in the St. In the War of the League of Augsburg, the War of the Spanish Succession from 1701 to 1713, the War of the Austrian Succession from 1740 to 1748, and the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763, they

defeated their powerful enemy France and captured most of its colonies in North America. A veritable "empire on which the sun never sets" was established.

The reason why Britain became the source of the Industrial Revolution and industrial modernization was mainly because of its advanced science and technology. From the 17th to the 18th centuries, a large number of great scientists and inventors emerged in Britain, represented by Newton (1643-1727), Watt (1736-1819), Maxwell (1831-1879), etc., which made British science and technology far ahead of the world. Newton was the greatest scientist of his time. The laws of physics and scientific system he created represented the highest achievement of human scientific exploration at that time. Engels once commented on Newton's scientific contribution: "Newton founded scientific astronomy by inventing the law of universal gravitation, founded scientific optics by decomposing light, and founded science by creating the binomial theorem and infinite theory. Mathematics, he created scientific mechanics because of his understanding of the nature of force." Watt was the greatest inventor at the time. He invented the first practical steam engine and ushered in the "steam age" of human industrialization. The industrial revolution triggered by advanced science and technology enabled mankind to replace manual production with machine production for the first time, thus greatly improving industrial productivity. For example, the invention of the new spinning machine increased the amount of yarn spun by 200 to 300 times compared with manual spinning. A large amount of labor was liberated. In 1815, there were 250,000 spinning workers in Britain, but by 1860, there were only 30,000 left. Under the wave of scientific and technological revolution, Britain's advanced cable, telegraph, railway, navigation, medical and other technologies not only greatly improved Britain's economic productivity and military combat effectiveness, but also greatly enhanced its overseas colonial development and governance capabilities. Railways knocked on the door of the "dark" continent, medical technology eliminated infectious diseases that were regarded as the "white man's grave", cables shortened the distance between the British mainland and the colonies, and shipping technology enabled British ships to circumnavigate the globe. As Bender Martin and Benjamin Crane said, these new technologies played an extremely important role in enhancing the colonial people's identification with the British Empire and consolidating the rule of the British Empire: In the second half of the 19th century, new technologies solved the problem of long distances. problem, the scattered colonies could be unified and maintain close ties with Britain. The development of railways helped strengthen the connections between the colonies and promoted the formation of political alliances among the colonies. The telegraph effectively overcomes the problem of long-distance communication, and long-distance submarine cables enable information to be transmitted instantaneously around the world; innovations

in shipbuilding technology mean that economic relations between colonies can be strengthened as well as emotions and culture; in the 1870s, steam Hugs increased in shipping capacity ensured that bulk cargo could be shipped to any distant location at low prices; refrigerated ships brought Australia, New Zealand and the UK closer together.

The glory and strength of the British Empire were not only reflected in hard power such as military, economy, and science and technology, but also in soft power such as language, culture, and education. In a sense, language is the foundation of culture and the main way to form national identity, shape national image and transmit national power. In the history of empires, almost all rulers would impose their own national language on conquered peoples and become the official language within the empire, and Britain was certainly no exception. Wherever the British colonists went, they brought English with them and it became the official language of the colonies. In addition, the British Empire developed a vast world market with its cheap and high-quality advanced industrial products. English also spread to all parts of the world along with the British Empire's goods and became the main communication tool in the world trade system. British Christian missionaries, who had firm beliefs and were not afraid of hardships, followed the footsteps of British colonists and traveled around the world. While spreading religious beliefs, they also spread English to all parts of the world. "The popularization of English and the development of local languages have made it possible for people of different nationalities to communicate with each other on a larger scale, and also laid the foundation for the British Empire to establish the largest educational undertaking in the world." The UK has the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge With many first-class universities and advanced school education systems, the British university model also has extraordinary influence. In order to cultivate local management talents and professional talents in the colonies, British colonists also established various schools in the vast colonies, bringing the British The education system has been copied all over the world, making the British education system the most influential education system in the world. Britain's advanced science and technology enables it to formulate many industry standards. Industry standards that are still in use today, such as the Greenwich Meridian and British units of measurement, can be regarded as cultural heritage of the British Empire. In addition, literature, art, academia, publishing, media, film, music, sports, museums, libraries and other cultural undertakings almost all reached their peak during the imperial period. For example, in 1753, the British Parliament issued a decree to establish the world's first museum, which was officially opened to the public in 1759. The rulers of the British Empire regarded the British Museum as a symbol of the glory and civilization of the empire. It not only collected a large number of precious books, manuscripts, documents, cultural relics and artworks from the British

mainland, but also extensively collected cultural relics, books, and art from the colonies of the British Empire. and other various "trophies". The British Museum has become a template for museums around the world in terms of the richness and preciousness of its collections, as well as its management, protection, and exhibitions.

The emergence and glory of the British Empire pushed imperialism to a new stage of development, that is, the colonial rule of the empire shifted from violent control to economic control; or from military imperialism to commercial imperialism Or economic imperialism. Under the model of commercial imperialism, the relationship between the suzerain country and its subordinate countries, in addition to political domination and being ruled, also formed an economic relationship of exploitation and exploitation. The relationship between economic exploitation and exploitation is mainly realized through two major production systems. The mother country is engaged in advanced production, which is responsible for creative capital investment, industrial manufacturing, production technology, business standards and trade sales, while the colony is engaged in primary production and is responsible for supply. Raw materials, agricultural products and simple labor. In the commercial imperialist model, the metropolitan state is like the headquarters of a large company, and the colonies are like production workshops. It can be said that the rise of the British Empire was the formation process of this commercial imperialism. At the height of the British Empire, the wealth of the entire world was flowing continuously to the United Kingdom, and the whole world seemed to have become Britain's production site. It is said that the then British Prime Minister Henry John Temple Palmerston (1784-1865) once proudly described an extremely glorious picture of the empire: " The plains of North America and Russia are our cornfields; Chicago and Odessa are our breadbaskets; Canada and the Baltic Sea are our forest areas; Australasia has our sheep ranches, and Argentina and the prairies of western North America have our cattle herds. ; Peru sent silver, South Africa and Australia gold flowed to London; Indians and Chinese grew our tea, our coffee, sugar cane and spice plantations spread across the East Indies. Spain and France were our vineyards, the Mediterranean was ours ORCHARDS; Our cotton, long cultivated in the southern United States, has expanded to every warm region on earth.

2. The mode of governance

If the Roman Empire is the encyclopedia of ancient empires, then the British Empire is the encyclopedia of modern empires. As the most developed imperial system of mankind to date, the British Empire included various major forms of imperial rule and brought the effectiveness of these different imperial rule models to the extreme. For example, the British Empire's approach to establishing its overseas colonial system included four main forms at the time: the "colonization model", which was characterized by "government leadership, business support and popular participation"; the "company model", which granted specific companies control over the colonies. Trade monopoly and domination; "immigration model", initiated by explorers, people, companies and owners, and supported by the government; "state model", that is, the state controls the competition, possession and governance of colonies throughout the process. In fact, the colonial governance system of the British Empire went through a process of gradual evolution and improvement. As Peter Burroughs has said, "Contrary to what early historians imagined, the rule of the British Empire was a dynamic process that did not have a static structure and an established constitutional framework." In terms of the empire's ruling methods, there are both traditional violence and autocracy, as well as modern consultation and democracy; there are direct control by the British authorities sending officials, and indirect management of the colonies through local agents. In terms of the form of governance, there are both political and administrative compulsory expropriation and voluntary exchange of economy and trade; there are both responsible government systems transplanted from the British system and traditional governance systems that retain colonial native governments. In short, "the empire's government was very diverse. In some colonies, the British would send representatives for direct administration, which often meant autocratic and militaristic government. But in India, the British tried to carefully incorporate the existing local government into the government. hierarchy, and preserve the existing interest structure and customs."

The population and territory of the overseas colonies and dependencies of the British Empire are tens to hundreds of times that of Great Britain itself. The management of imperial affairs is an extremely important function of the British imperial government. Although the Imperial Government also has specialized administrative departments such as the Department of Colonial Affairs and the Department of Dominion Affairs, unlike most other imperial systems, all power departments of the British Imperial Government, from the King, Parliament, Privy Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defense of the Cabinet Government, Trade Commission and other departments are almost all responsible for the management of imperial affairs. The Colonial Department, the Indian Department, and the Dominion Department independently perform the specialized affairs of the empire, while other departments of the cabinet perform comprehensive management

responsibilities for the empire's foreign affairs, military, trade, administration, culture, education, health and other affairs. As Stockwell said: "The fact that the affairs of the empire involve so many departments is enough to show that the affairs of the empire as an overseas part cannot be separated from the country's domestic and foreign policies, and the management of the empire - whether there is Plan - has been embedded in the overall organization of the British government." The British Empire developed the technology of ruling its colonies to an extremely high level. "Federation" and other unique imperial governance modes.

The first way is the imperial rule model based on military conquest. This mode is the most common, simpler and more effective. As long as we have strong military strength and police force, we can suppress any resistance of the colonial people and make them absolutely obey the orders of the British Empire and obey the rule of the British Empire in the colonies. The early British Empire mainly used this method of violent conquest to rule its vast colonies. Violent suppression is the original and most basic way of rule. Once colonial rule is threatened, the British government will not hesitate to use this method of rule. PJ Marshall said that for much of the interwar period, British defense policy focused primarily on imperial needs. The British army continued to play the role of garrison force for the empire in the 19th century, deploying troops less to prevent external invasion than to control internal dissatisfaction. In 1938, Britain had more infantry battalions stationed in India, the Middle East, and the Far East than in Britain itself. Once the ruling order of the empire is threatened, resorting to force is the final solution.

For example, the British government ruthlessly used violent repression against the resistance of the African natives. The most famous of these is the suppression of the independence movement of Sudan's Mahdi Muhammad. "In 1898, British General Kitchener led his army to defeat the Mahdi armed forces, and about 11,000 Africans died on the battlefield. In addition, Africans are relatively Large-scale anti-British actions and the Ashanti War on the Gold Coast were all suppressed by the British army." Even in day-to-day administration, violence was a common way of governing in the early British Empire. Many colonists claimed that their original intention was to spread civilization and develop plantation and industry and commerce in backward areas such as Asia and Africa, so they brought kindness rather than violence. But the opposite was often true, and violence became the main method of colonial rule. As Simon Schama observed, at least until the end of the 18th century, colonial rule had not developed in a benevolent direction: "The British Empire was not filled with farmers and traders, but with soldiers and slaves." "Only violence—— Verbal threats or actual violence — are what keep the system afloat." He gave the example that the British colonists were particularly cruel to African women, often using violent methods to physically

punish and sexually assault women. "In 1765, Thomas Thistlewood, the manager of an Egyptian plantation in Jamaica, whipped 13 women 21 times, each receiving no less than 50 lashes (Equi Arnold wrote that slaves had to kneel down to thank their masters after being whipped). Undoubtedly, adult women had the heaviest workload among slaves because they were required to do too many things-in addition to going to the fields, they also had to cook, take care of babies, Mending and washing clothes, while masters and overseers could sexually assault any of them whenever their bestiality struck them: in the kitchen, in the pantry, in the laundry, or in the yard and barn. I can only endure it."

The second approach is the "Dominion" model of responsible government. The essence of this imperial model of rule was the establishment of responsible government and the gradual expansion of self-government. Compared with violent rule, this mode of governance is more advanced and civilized. In fact, it is the bureaucracy of the metropolitan country that has been appropriately transformed and transplanted to the colonial area. Its main characteristics are reflected in two aspects: First, it establishes an autonomous system in the colonies and restructures the relationship between the metropolitan country and the colonies through "autonomous territories"; second, it establishes a new civil service system and responsible government system in the conquered colonies, and through This bureaucracy not only provided public services to the colonies but also served to maintain imperial order. Beginning in the 17th century, some white settlements in British North America and the West Indies began to establish colonial conferences modeled on the representative democracy and responsible government system of the British mainland. The Assembly was elected by local whites and had the power to make local laws and be responsible for taxation. In 1839, the North American Colonial Affairs Inquiry Mission led by Lord Durham submitted the famous "Report on the Affairs of British North America". The report pointed out that: The British political system is also applicable to overseas colonies in principle, and It is recommended that parliaments and accountable governments be established in white-populated North America, modeled on the Westminster system in the United Kingdom. That is, the local parliament and cabinet government were elected by the voters in the white residential areas of the colony. The local government ministers were no longer directly responsible to the governor sent by the British King, but to the elected parliament. The governor himself was no longer the supreme local ruler, but was accountable to the colonial assembly. Parliament not only has the power to enact local laws and determine the principles for collecting local taxes, but also has the power to dissolve the government when the government fails to perform its legitimate duties. This is the so-called "Westminster System" responsible government system in the UK. The white overseas settlements in the British Overseas Colonies successively implemented the "responsible government" system

suggested by Lord Durham. Therefore, the above-mentioned Durham Report is considered "one of the most important documents in the history of global constitutionalism, which linked immigration and empire." The central principle of balancing interests is incorporated into the shell of a resilient democratic system."

For colonial governments and people, the responsible government system expanded the scope of local government autonomy and enabled colonial residents to enjoy rights similar to those of native British residents, so it was very popular. For imperial rulers, promoting the Westminster system in overseas colonies not only proved the superiority of the British system, but also greatly improved the effectiveness of imperial governance, and was therefore highly praised. Since the responsible government system was both appreciated by the mother country and welcomed by the colonial authorities and the people, after the Durham Report, it was quickly promoted in the British colonies where white people had settled for a long time. By the end of the 19th century, the British Empire overseas mainly white settlement areas basically established local parliaments and responsible governments. "This system was first adopted when Quebec and Ontario were merged into the province of Canada in 1841; in 1857, the Canadian province selected Bytown (Ottawa) as its capital, and the local parliament building also drew on the design of the new parliament building in Westminster. Neo-Gothic style. Other colonies followed the path of responsible government: Nova Scotia in 1848, Prince Edward Island in 1851, New Zealand in 1852, Newfoundland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania Australia and South Australia in 1855, Queensland in 1859, Cape Colony in 1872, Western Australia in 1890, and Natal in 1893."

With the further promotion and improvement of the responsible government system in British overseas colonies, the scope of colonial autonomy has been increasingly expanded. The colonies' parliaments and responsible governments had a high degree of autonomy over internal affairs, except for legislation, defense, and foreign affairs. Moreover, the legislative power of the empire was more symbolic. Although the laws enacted by the colonial parliament needed to be approved by the British Parliament, it was usually just a procedure. As a result, the colonial system of responsible government soon evolved into the larger-scale "Dominion" system. The responsible government system and the dominion system were major innovations in the British Empire's governance model. They not only enhanced the autonomy of colonial nations, but also tightened the ties between the metropolitan country and the colonies, and greatly eased the tense relationship between the metropolitan country and the colonies. In the second half of the 19th century, Britain began to experiment with the dominion system in English-speaking colonial areas. Canada took the lead in obtaining dominion status in 1867, New

Zealand obtained dominion status in 1907, and Australia and the Union of South Africa obtained dominion status in 1901 respectively. Some scholars have high praise for the British Empire's dominion system and believe that it was very successful. In the view of these scholars: "The only effective restraint on the status of the dominions is loyalty to the British crown. The British governor is just a puppet like the local king." "In the two world wars, all the dominions were tied to their The motherland is united."

The third way is an imperial governance model based on the management of British agents, which is characterized by recruiting and training professional colonial managers to manage public affairs in British overseas territories. This is actually a combination of the professional administrative system in the United Kingdom and the traditional political governance system in the colonies. A small number of British colonial rulers and a majority of local agents in the colonies are combined to effectively manage colonial affairs. To rule such a vast colony, it was unrealistic for the British Empire to rely solely on British agents for direct management. In more cases, it had to recruit local agents to participate in the management of colonial affairs, thereby ruling indirectly. Britain's colonial agency management system had three important features that made it significantly more effective than other imperial management systems. The first is to attach great importance to the professional training of colonial officials. In addition to using famous universities in the UK for training, special training institutions or schools are also established in the colonies. The training of colonial officials can, on the one hand, effectively transplant the British system to the colonies through agents, and on the other hand, it can also greatly improve the professional quality of colonial managers. The second step is to select local social elites in the colony to participate in management. These local elites have extensive local social resources and are also locally influential. Using them to manage the colony can get twice the result with half the effort. The last step is to make maximum use of the traditional political resources of the colonies. For example, although India's caste system and hierarchy are not in line with British political values, they are suitable for India's social reality. In view of these characteristics, the cost-benefit ratio of this colonial agent model is often quite high for both the mother country and the dependent country. It not only greatly improves the administrative efficiency of the colony, but also effectively reduces management costs. . For example, regarding the management of India, a populous country, "the British only used less than 1,000 administrative staff to govern India, which has a population of 250 million." Therefore, "for many Victorian Britons, this third form of empire was the more ideal and morally most desirable for Britain".

Among this model of colonial agent rule, the most representative one is the East India Company model of the British Empire. The East India Company was

originally a monopoly trading company established by the British King through a charter in 1600. Its full name is "The Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies". It is mainly engaged in the trade between Britain and India. The trading of spices, cotton textiles, gold and silver and other commodities has resulted in huge profits due to the trading privileges, with profits as high as 100 to 200%. The company "only had a capital of 30,133 pounds 6 when it was first established." By the second half of the eighteenth century, the price of eightpence amounted to £3.2 million, an increase of more than 100 times." As the East India Company's own strength increased and Britain needed for colonial expansion in India, the British government continued to grant the East India Company various extra-economic privileges in the form of charters. The British King successively gave charters to the East India Company to recruit soldiers and form an army in India, build military fortresses, mint Indian currency, appoint local officials, establish local governments and courts, levy taxes, launch wars, and deal with political and financial affairs such as territory gained in wars. , judicial and military privileges, thus making the East India Company gradually become an institution for British military expansion and government management in India, far from being a monopoly trading company. "The more political privileges the East India Company received, the more political it became. It gradually turned into a four-in-one organization of commerce, politics, military, and justice, doing business, invading, and ruling. Of course, these were the characteristics of the company. What adventurers dreamed of was exactly what the British king and government needed for colonial expansion at that time." In fact, the British colonies in India were mainly conquered by the East India Company through many wars or through the bribery of local leaders. captured. "The Battle of Plassey and the annexation of Bengal Province in 1757 began to gradually establish the Company's rule in India, marking a new stage of British colonial aggression in India." After plundering large colonies in India and Bengal, the British government directly entrusted the East The Indian Company exercised colonial jurisdiction. Therefore, from 1773 to 1858, the East India Company was directly the British colonial authority in the Indian subcontinent. It was historically known as "Company rule in India" or "East India Company rule". Company Raj). An important way for the East India Company to rule India was to form a subsidiary alliance with the participation of most local governments in India, and to effectively colonize India through this alliance. The East India Company pledged to "protect the members of the Affiliated League and respect their traditions and honor." The rulers of the British Empire highly praised the East India Company's colonial governance method. They believed that this indirect governance method not only had low governance costs and high benefits, but also would not bring negative political effects. It also gets strong support from local people.

3. Political logic

The rise and fall of the British Empire typically embodies the general laws of the rise and fall of empires. There are many factors that determine the rise and decline of empires. On the surface, a country's military power and the quality of its rulers are often considered the main reasons. In fact, the more substantial factors lie in advanced science and technology, advanced productivity and advanced policy. The fundamental reason why Britain was able to create many miracles in the history of world empires and become an insurmountable peak in the history of global empires lies in its advanced economic system based on advanced science and technology, and its advanced management system based on democracy and the rule of law. People pay more attention to the military, technological, and economic reasons for the rise and fall of empires, but relatively little research is done on the internal relationship between political systems and the rise and fall of empires. However, from the perspective of the rise and fall of the British Empire, political logic is particularly important. As an expert on British history said: "The constitutional monarchy system ensures that the national decision-making process reflects the overall interests of the country to the greatest extent, thereby stimulating the potential of the United Kingdom." In fact, Britain "only started after the Glorious Revolution of 1688" Real rise, the Seven Years War ended in 1763, and Britain became an unshakable world power."

In the history of the development of human political civilization, Britain has made many historic and significant contributions. The UK was the first country in the world to implement representative democracy and a constitutional monarchy. People are now familiar with modern democratic political systems, such as universal suffrage, parliamentary system, responsible government, self-government system, checks and balances, separation of powers, rule of law principles, and judicial independence. , civil service system, etc., most of which originated in modern Britain. These modern Western representative democracies originally originated from the emerging bourgeoisie's struggle for their own political rights from the king and the nobility. In order to have basic political rights such as freedom, equality, and independence, the emerging bourgeoisie created the system of free elections, parliaments, etc. The representative democratic system with the main characteristics of sovereignty, judicial independence, responsible government and constitutional democracy limits the privileges of the monarch and the nobility and expands its own political power. In 1688, the emerging aristocracy

representing the interests of the British bourgeoisie launched the "Glorious Revolution" that overthrew King James II (1633-1701). William III (1650-1702) agreed to Congress's Bill of Rights. Becoming the new King of England, Britain has since entered the era of representative democracy under a constitutional monarchy. The main contents of the "Bill of Rights" include: the king shall not infringe on the taxing power of Parliament; the king shall not have the right to abrogate laws passed by Parliament; the king may not organize a standing army without the consent of Parliament; the people have the right to petition; the king shall not interfere with the parliament's freedom of speech. Members may not be detained for political conduct. It is not difficult to find that the essence of the Bill of Rights is to greatly enhance the power of Parliament and at the same time severely limit the power of the king. The king is no longer the supreme ruler of the empire, and Congress has become the de facto supreme sovereign organ. The representative democracy established by Britain after the "Glorious Revolution" ended the autocratic dictatorship of individuals for the first time in human history. It was an unprecedented milestone in political progress in human history and an epoch-making achievement in human political civilization. .

It is no accident that the Industrial Revolution first occurred in Britain. In a sense, it was a companion of the "Glorious Revolution" and "Constitutional Monarchy." The essence of the constitutional monarchy is the modern Western representative democracy system, or liberal democracy, and its main political values are freedom and equality. The freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and academic freedom that it vigorously advocated and was institutionally guaranteed inspired the unlimited creativity of the British intellectual elite, which enabled British science and technology to develop rapidly and begin to lead the world. The establishment of representative democracy represented that the emerging business class gradually became the British ruling class and mainstream elite, thus inspiring the unlimited enterprising spirit of the business elite. The creativity and enterprising spirit inspired by representative democracy among the British elite were the intrinsic driving force of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, it can indeed be said: "The establishment of the constitutional monarchy, the formation of the cabinet system and the establishment of the modern parliamentary system are the results of the British bourgeois revolution. It adapted to the needs of the British domestic political and economic development, thus becoming the basis for the development of capitalism in the UK and the fundamental guarantee for the Industrial Revolution." The British representative democracy system established after the "Glorious Revolution" not only advocates the political values of freedom, equality, and fraternity, it also advocates free trade, equal exchange, and a market economy that protects property rights, thus It provided the most suitable free market economic system for the emergence of the Industrial Revolution. Even the famous British historian Joseph Toynbee,

who has always been harshly critical of liberal democracy, fully affirmed the close relationship between representative democracy and the Industrial Revolution. He believed that the shift from mercantilism to laissez-faire was the main cause of British industrialization, and that the freedom of business operations was an important driving force of the Industrial Revolution. He also clearly affirmed the logical connection between democratic politics and science and technology: "Although it is different from the connection subjectively imagined by the people of Asia and Africa, there is still a certain logical connection between Western democracy and Western power. In fact, If democracy is one of the sources of strength for Western people, it is also one of the sources of their power to provide a luxurious life. This source of strength is the combination of science and technology, and the reason why they have the opportunity to enjoy democracy is due to the application of science, giving them full capabilities, wealth and security. Democracy is an attractive system of government for most people."

Before the Industrial Revolution, the overall national strength of the United Kingdom was not far behind that of the great powers such as France, Germany, and Spain. However, the Industrial Revolution accompanied by the "Glorious Revolution" enabled the British economy to take off rapidly and stand out among the great powers. It became the "empire on which the sun never sets" that dominated the world. The famous left-wing historian Eric Hobsbawm made a very high evaluation of the profound significance of the Industrial Revolution to the British Empire. He pointed out very clearly that it was precisely because of the Industrial Revolution that Britain rose to a global leadership position and created many "world firsts", including "the world's only naval power" and even "the only imperialist power in the world at that time" By". He described industrialization and the rise of the British Empire in "Industry and Empire: The Process of Modernization in Britain": "The Industrial Revolution marked the most fundamental transformation of human life in the history of the world since recorded history. In a brief period, industry The revolution coincided with the history of only one country, Britain, and as a result, the entire world economy was based on or revolved around Britain. This country thus rose to a position of global influence and domination, unlike any country of comparable size before. Or a status that has never been achieved since then, and I am afraid that no country can match it in the foreseeable future. There has been such a moment in world history. If you are not strict with words, you might as well describe the UK as: the only factory and the only big country in the world. Large-scale import and export country, the only freight forwarding country, the only imperialist, almost the only foreign investor, and therefore the only naval power in the world, the only country with a truly world policy. This monopoly position is largely due to The pioneers are unique, and since there are no other pioneers, Britain is the master of the creation of the world."

The establishment and prosperity of the British Empire's global colonial system were closely related to the participation of many domestic and foreign stakeholders. The constitutional monarchy completely ended the British autocratic monarchy. The country and the entire imperial system were no longer the property of the king alone, but the property of the king and Parliament. "After the Glorious Revolution, the interests of many classes in the UK have been greatly reflected in the government, and they are full of confidence in the new government." After the "Glorious Revolution", the empire's overseas colonial system has become a new common ground for all classes within the British ruling class. An interest platform, the interests of the British Empire and the interests of the emerging British bourgeoisie have become closely related, thus motivating many emerging social elites to participate in the development and management of overseas colonies by the British Empire. The East India Company is the cooperation between the emerging British bourgeoisie and the government. Typical of the development and governance of Indian colonies. The participation of multiple stakeholders, such as public institutions and private organizations, officials and businessmen, governments and private citizens, in the development and governance of overseas colonial undertakings was not only an important reason for the British Empire's overseas colonial industry to reach its peak, but also a distinctive feature of the British Empire's governance model. As Stockwell saw it, "the management of the empire was not limited to state agencies; a large number of private organizations were also involved." Includes merchants and factory owners; colonial settlers with family ties to the native land; missionaries and explorers; various learned societies; slave traders, prisoners, and exiles; the City of London, Westminster, Whitehall, and London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham; also members or supporters of the English, Scots, Irish, Welsh and British Hanoverian royal families. In short, "all strata of British society are inextricably linked to its various overseas groups."

The political system of representative democracy not only created the most favorable conditions for the advancement of science and technology and social and economic prosperity in the UK, thereby helping the UK establish an unprecedented global colonial system, but also provided advanced conditions for its overseas colonial rule. institutional guarantee. As a domestic scholar who studies the history of the British Empire lamented, Britain expanded continuously outward from a Western European island country, and finally built a huge empire with territory and influence all over the world. This effectively illustrates: "Once we master the advanced productive forces, and production relations, once advanced political concepts and institutional civilization are formed, what a great impact and promotion it will have on the historical development of a nation and country." The establishment of representative democracy provided many opportunities for the unparalleled

prosperity of the British Empire. important political guarantee in all aspects. First, it fundamentally avoids the fate of the empire being tied to the personal qualities of the supreme ruler. As the supreme power of the country was transferred from the king to the parliament, it was no longer possible to fundamentally determine the fate of the empire, although the king himself still affected the fate of the empire to a large extent. This can effectively ensure the continuity of the empire's major policies and prevent them from undergoing disruptive changes with the supreme ruler. Second, the highest standard of imperial governance is no longer the king's personal orders and will, but the country's laws, especially the decisions of the Congress. The individual role of the ruler no longer becomes the most important factor in imperial rule. As the power of the supreme ruler at home was effectively constrained by law, the power of the supreme ruler sent to overseas colonies was also constrained by the local parliament, leading to the unprecedented phenomenon of "the British governor is just a king, just like the local king" Puppet" argument. Third, the United Kingdom was the first to extend domestic principles of the rule of law to the colonial system, including judicial independence, rule of law government, and "respect for the legislative power of parliament, the judicial power of the courts, individual freedoms from personal and property infringement, and freedom of the press." Ideas and practices gradually "spread into the colonial empire." Fourth, the free trade system was extended to the global colonial system, taking the lead in abolishing food tariffs. The British imperial system became a "free trade imperialism" system, which was objectively beneficial to the economic development of the colonies. The fifth and most important role is that domestic representative democracy directly gave birth to the Dominion system of the British Empire.

Transplant the representative democratic political system of the British mainland to the white-inhabited areas of overseas colonies, establish responsible governments and representative institutions, and form local parliaments composed of public representatives elected by universal suffrage, and give them the highest legislative power, while promoting judicial independence and The principle of checks and balances of power. For the vast number of colonies, this was a brand new political system. It had a revolutionary impact on the social, economic and political life of the colonies. It not only profoundly changed the historical development process of these colonies, but also made These colonies eventually escaped the development track of the British Empire in the form of "Dominions", broke through the British Empire system and became independent sovereign countries. Especially in overseas colonies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where white people are concentrated, the introduction of representative democracy greatly stimulated the free creativity of the colonial people, and the colonial economy developed rapidly, and successively embarked on the road to industrialization. The democratic system pursues and protects the political

values of freedom, equality, and autonomy, and requires the elimination of any form of political oppression and political inequality, including inequality between ethnic groups. The political logic of this democratic system is essentially the same as the political logic of the imperial system. are opposite to each other. Therefore, the inevitable result of implementing representative democracy in the colonies is to gradually break away from the political shackles of the mother country and eventually become a completely independent sovereign state that is equal to the mother country. The historical process of the British Empire evolved in accordance with this political logic: all the autonomous territories that transplanted the representative democratic system of the metropolitan state, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and South Africa, successively declared independence and became subjects with equal political status to the United Kingdom. nation.

The conflict between democratic political logic and imperial political logic is not only reflected in the fact that the political development of colonies and dependent countries will eventually deviate from the imperial governance system of the metropolitan country, but also more profoundly reflected in the fact that the political development of the metropolitan country itself will eventually lead to the disintegration and collapse of the imperial system. .

The decline and disintegration of the British Empire has always been an important part of imperial research. A large number of studies have focused on the analysis of the political and economic causes within the United Kingdom and the rise of emerging countries such as the United States externally. Some scholars have seen that British democracy contributed to the disintegration of the empire, but believe that it was the struggle between interest groups that restricted excessive external expansion, and that "in the process of the disintegration of the British empire, British domestic politics played an important but not decisive role." role". Some other scholars pointed out that "the key factors that led to the disintegration of the British Empire should still be found in the UK." "First of all, we can explore the reasons why Britain decided to abandon the colonial empire after World War II from the perspective of British domestic politics. Although the British Empire Among the various reasons for the end of the rule, factors such as the pressure of the international environment and the rise of colonial nationalist sentiments are obvious." However, scholars who hold this view further believe that the domestic political factors that led to the disintegration of the British Empire were mainly the pressure of public opinion and party competition against the expansion of the empire. Some scholars attribute the disintegration of the British Empire to the fact that the two hegemons, the United States and the Soviet Union, began to dominate the world after World War II. They believe that the British Empire did not have enough strength to maintain the imperial system. "The withdrawal of the old colonial power Britain is inevitable." "; or

attributed to the rapid rise of the United States after World War II, "Under the powerful offensive of U.S. economic diplomacy, the British Empire eventually collapsed."

Of course, these analyses have their own reasons, but in my opinion, they are not substantive reasons. The most fundamental factor in the disintegration of the British Empire lies in the internal logic of human political development. This unstoppable political logic is the democratization of human political life. Britain is fortunate to be the first representative democracy in world history. The constitutional monarchy system after the "Glorious Revolution" marked Britain's embarkation on the path of Western constitutional democracy. This not only led to the incomparable glory of the British Empire, but also led to the decline of the British Empire. eventually disintegrated. The history of human political development since modern times has fully proved that democratic politics is an irresistible trend of human political progress and a concentrated expression of modern human political civilization. The logic of democratic politics fundamentally destroys the logic of imperial politics: empires are built on foreign wars and plunder, personal dictatorship and inequality among nations, and every progress in democratic politics is exactly the opposite. Democratic politics requires the abandonment of war and violence, and advocates peaceful cooperation among mankind; democratic politics requires equality between people and between nations, and opposes any form of discrimination; democratic politics requires limiting the power of rulers and realizing legislative, administrative and Checks and balances of judicial power. Every inch that democratic political space expands means that every inch of imperial rule space shrinks. The incomparable glory of the British Empire has become the last in the history of world empires, which is the best proof of the above-mentioned human political logic: the development of democratic politics within the empire, even without strong resistance from the dependent countries or colonial people, will inevitably lead to disintegration within the imperial system. collapse. If the democratic forces within the metropolitan state are strong enough to decisively influence the basic policies of the empire, then the political equality and democratic autonomy among various ethnic groups and regions within the imperial system will sooner or later destroy the very basis on which the imperial system depends. political basis.

It was precisely this logic of democratic politics that enabled the original colonies to gradually accept the political values of autonomy, freedom, equality, and independence, becoming increasingly consistent with the political values of the mother country. As a result, the British Empire system did not fall apart even after its disintegration. It did not lead to military conflict between the original colonies or dependent countries and the mother country, but peacefully transformed the imperial system into a British Commonwealth system. The First and Second World Wars were the turning points from the

rise to the decline of the British Empire. Although Britain was the victor in both the First and Second World Wars, the huge war casualties and loss of national power devastated the British Empire and made it increasingly weak. After the First World War, Britain gradually lost its status as the world's economic and trade center. After World War II, with the surging national independence movement and the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as emerging hegemony, the decline of the British Empire was irreversible. In 1947, India, the largest colony of the British Empire, declared independence. Subsequently, King George VI officially announced in 1948 that he would relinquish the title of "Mughal Emperor". This was a major symbol of the complete collapse of the British Empire. In 1948, Myanmar and Sri Lanka declared independence, and Britain ended its mandate over Pakistan; in the late 1950s, a large number of African countries announced their separation from the British Empire, and Britain also lost actual control of the Suez Canal; by the 1960s, The vast majority of colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America declared independence from the British Empire, with only a few islands remaining. The British Empire, where "the sun never sets", was basically disintegrated.

Unlike other empires in history, after the disintegration of the British Empire, most of the original colonies of the empire neither turned against the mother country nor even severed all contacts with the mother country. Although the colonies of the British Empire became sovereign states and nation-states in the full sense after independence, they maintained good ties with their mother countries, and most became members of the Commonwealth of Nations (Commonwealth of Nations) led by the United Kingdom. The Commonwealth has the Queen of England as its co-head, and most of its members are dependent countries, autonomous dominions, colonies or trusteeships of the former British Empire. Currently, there are 55 member units, including 16 Commonwealth Kingdoms (Commonwealth Realm). This is a new form of national alliance after the empire, and it is also one of the most influential inter-state organizations in the world today. Some Western historians believe that "one of the most important developments in the history of democracy in the modern world is the evolution of the Commonwealth." The Commonwealth is undoubtedly an important political legacy of the British Empire. Although the United Kingdom today is no longer the core of the Commonwealth, most of the members of the original British Empire gathered under the flag of the British monarch, cooperated with each other, and continued to play an important role in international affairs. Even today, "the Commonwealth remains vibrant. Zimbabwe left the organization in 2004, The Gambia in 2013, and South Africa, Fiji and Pakistan rejoined in the 1990s. The Commonwealth also welcomes former British Dominion territories, such as Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Namibia, and even some countries that have never been part of the British Empire. The Commonwealth has a total of 55 member states, a

total area of 29.9 million square kilometers, and a total population of 2.3 billion, of which 1 billion people will Speaking in English, the organization's overall GDP exceeds \$10 trillion (15% of the world's GDP)."

Just as the Roman Empire had a profound impact on Western civilization, although the British Empire eventually disintegrated, its profound impact on Western civilization and even human civilization is still everywhere. As John Darwin said, "At least 1/4 of the sovereign countries in the world today were separated from the territory of the British Empire. For this reason alone, its influence is second to none among the many empires in history." Further, the Commonwealth still exists today, "its size being a reflection of the prosperity of the empire at the time and a reminder of Britain's great influence on the world. The history of North America, as well as much of the history of Africa, India, the Middle East and the Far East, is was shaped by Britain, and in many of these areas English remains the language of law, business, government and education." It can be said that to a considerable extent, the formation of the political, economic and cultural pattern of the contemporary world is closely related to the rise and fall of the British Empire. Even the reason why Western developed countries represented by the United States can have such a huge impact on the contemporary world is, in a sense, intrinsically linked to the rise and fall of the British Empire. At least as Marshall said, "English is called a global language in contemporary society, which is undoubtedly a reflection of the strength of the United States to a certain extent. However, as an English-speaking country, the United States, like other countries, is a member of the British Empire. formed under the influence of

All in all, the British Empire is the most powerful empire in human history. No matter from the perspective of territorial area, population, military strength, comprehensive national strength, scientific and technological level, and international influence, the British Empire has reached the level of any empire in history. peak state. The factors that led to the rise of the British Empire include not only hard power such as science and technology, productivity level, and military strength, but also soft power such as national quality, governance level, and political and economic system. Among them, the political system was the decisive factor that brought the British Empire to its peak. After the "Glorious Revolution", Britain took the lead in establishing a modern constitutional monarchy. The power of the monarch was substantially restricted, and the parliament became the sovereign organ of the country, thus ending the personal autocratic dictatorship system. This representative democratic system greatly stimulated the creativity and ownership spirit of the British emerging social elite, triggered the scientific and technological revolution and the industrial revolution, greatly liberated the productive forces of society, and made Britain the earliest industrialized power in the history of the world, thus helping It became an arrogant "empire on which the

sun never sets." However, the logic of democratic politics is essentially opposite to the logic of imperial politics. The freedom, equality, and independence advocated by democratic politics are also incompatible with the autocracy, hierarchy, and dependence pursued by imperial politics. Therefore, within the imperial system, the progress of democratic politics is the retreat of imperial politics, and the development of democratic politics will inevitably lead to the demise of imperial politics. The prosperity of the British Empire stemmed from the emergence of representative democracy, and the disintegration of the British Empire stemmed from the progress of democracy. In today's world, democracy and the rule of law have become universal political values for mankind, and independence and equality have become the basic norms of the international community. In this sense, it can be said that the British Empire is the last in the history of world empires. Any dream of pursuing imperial hegemony is incompatible with the progress of human democracy. It goes against the trend of the times and will definitely be abandoned by the mainstream human civilization. (For convenience, references are not shown)