

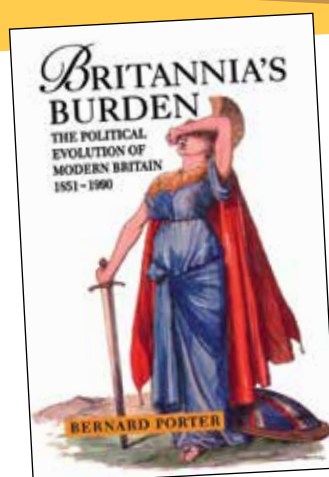
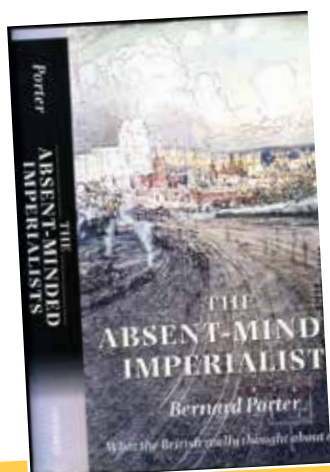
The ones we're all aware of, and that the significant pro-Arab lobby in the Foreign Office pointed out at the time: betrayal of the Palestinians, and hence Arab hostility towards Britain in the years ahead. But Britain needed America to come into the War, and believed that American Jews could be influential there.

■ ■ You refer to the general idea that many in Britain, perhaps mostly the elderly, have "not yet reconciled themselves to the loss of their empire," and observe that they feel "genuinely and even painfully nostalgic for the world they believed they have lost." That doesn't sound very enlightened to me, especially given many robust clarifications in recent years about the enduring pain which British imperial ambitions inflicted upon people across the globe. Why do they still harbor such sentiments?

I'm no longer sure that that's true of many Oldies; only a minority! Insofar as there is 'imperial nostalgia' in the country, it's mainly based on ignorance – in particular of the more deplorable aspects of Britain's imperial rule. Until fairly recently her empire was presented, in schools, for example, as a mainly beneficent enterprise – 'raising up the natives'; and – it should be remembered – was very occasionally that. (Abolition of the Arab-African slave trade, for example, was one motive, and indeed a real achievement.) Of course that doesn't compensate for the atrocities, and the fundamentally flawed thinking behind the 'raising up' agenda; but Oldies weren't to know.

■ ■ Somehow following the above question, in your opinion, how do the younger British relate to the imperial past of their nation?

I have no idea, overall. Her 'imperial past' is almost never mentioned, apart from the very occasional cries of 'We used to rule half the world!' by ignorant Brexit mobs. (Actually 'we' didn't.) I've not seen any public opinion surveys on this.



■ ■ Your book, almost 205,000 words long, contains many references to Iran and Persia, but it doesn't mention (or I failed to find therein any mention of) Operation Ajax which would warrant a chapter or two should an Iranian historian write about British imperialism. What's your opinion about that event and its legacy?



Iranian monarchists on August 27, 1953, after a US-British coup removed Mosaddeq from power.

Don't I mention it? That surprises me. (I don't have a copy of the book beside me just now.) It won't be indexed under 'Ajax' because I've never seen it called that before. But the plot against Mosaddeq must be in there somewhere. Obviously, in a book about British imperialism broadly, a 'chapter or two' on this single event would not be warranted. In my view it was one of the most deplorable US/UK colonialist operations of the last century; undertaken, of course, for material motives. The 1950s really were a shocking time for declining imperial powers desperate to hold on to their world dominance. And of course for their subjects.

