

## IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA

- A. Between 1875 and 1900, European powers seized almost the entire continent
  1. Early explorers charted the waters, gathered information on resources
  2. Missionaries like David Livingstone set up mission posts
  3. Henry Stanley sent by Leopold II of Belgium to create colony in Congo, 1870s
  4. To protect their investments and Suez Canal, Britain occupied Egypt, 1882
- B. South Africa settled first by Dutch farmers (Afrikaners) in seventeenth century
  1. By 1800 was a European settler colony with enslaved black African population
  2. British seized Cape Colony in early nineteenth century, abolished slavery in 1833
  3. British-Dutch tensions led to Great Trek of Afrikaners inland to claim new lands
  4. Mid-nineteenth century, they established Orange Free State in 1854, Transvaal in 1860
  5. Discovery of gold and diamonds in Afrikaner lands; influx of British settlers
  6. Boer War, 1899-1902: British defeated Afrikaners, Union of South Africa
- C. The Berlin Conference, 1884-1885
  1. European powers set rules for carving Africa into colonies
  2. Occupation, supported by European armies, established colonial rule in Africa
  3. By 1900 all of Africa, except Ethiopia and Liberia, was controlled by European powers
- D. Colonial rule challenging and expensive
  1. "Concessionary companies": granted considerable authority to private companies
    - a. empowered to build plantations, mines, railroads
    - b. made use of forced labor and taxation, as in Belgian Congo
    - c. unprofitable, often replaced by more direct rule
  2. Direct rule: replacing local rulers with Europeans--French model
    - a. justified by "civilizing mission"
    - b. hard to find enough European personnel
  3. Indirect rule: control over subjects through local institutions--British model
    - a. worked best in African societies that were highly organized
    - b. assumed firm tribal boundaries where often none existed

## TRENDS / VALUES / LOGISTICS

- accomplished in an era (1870-1914) when the realism, ruthlessness, and rivalries of European national governments were exceptionally great
- no international organization fitted to exercise any kind of control or regulation over the scramble for territories in which the great powers now indulged
- Among the economic forces behind it, the urge to find new outlets for the "glut of capital" and fresh markets for industrial output were in general more important than either the quest for raw materials or the factor of overpopulation. The special attraction of Africa and Asia were, indeed, that they offered many of the raw materials needed by the multiplying factories of Europe: including cotton, silk, rubber, vegetable oils, and the rarer minerals. The products of the tropics were especially welcome to Europe. But many of these raw materials could be, and were, got by trading without political control.
- The pressure of population in Europe was becoming great by the early twentieth century, but it still found free outlet in migration to the traditional areas of reception in the United States and Australasia. Neither Africa nor eastern Asia offered climatic or economic conditions inviting enough to attract large-scale white settlements, and the pressure of population within Japan, China, and India was now itself so great as to exert a steady demand for fresh outlets.
- Once the scramble for partitioning Africa had begun, the powers were confronted with the choice of grabbing such advantages for themselves or seeing them snatched by potential enemies. The "international anarchy," contributed an impetus of its own to the general race for colonies. To say, as it was often said after 1918, that imperialism had led to war, was only half the story; it was also true that the menace of war had led to imperialism.

- What determined whether or not a country became imperialistic was more the activity of small groups of people, often intellectuals, economists, or patriotic publicists and politicians anxious to ensure national security and self-sufficiency, than the economic conditions of the country itself. And, as the examples of the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese show, nations that had traditions of colonialism were more prompt to seek colonies than were nations, such as Germany and Italy, that had no such traditions.
- In 1875 less than one tenth of Africa had been turned into European colonies; by 1895, only one tenth remained unappropriated. In the generation between 1871 and 1900:
  - Britain added 4.25 million square miles and 66 million people to her empire;
  - France added 3.5 million square miles and 26 million people;
  - Germany, 1 million square miles and 13 million people;
  - Belgium (or, until 1908, Leopold II, King of the Belgians), of 900,000 square miles and 8.5 million inhabitants;
  - Italy, a relatively meager acquisition of 185,000 square miles and 750,000 people.

### **The Scramble for Colonies**

- After 1880 control of African lands became part of the European power struggle. Landownership and control of resources added to a nation's wealth, position, and international power. In Europe, where political lines were firm, expansion could occur only through war. However, a European country could extend its national borders through its colonies. The logical choice for takeover was Africa. European powers had already gained footholds along the coast. And their missionaries, explorers, and traders had given them claims to more land. The next step was to extend these claims. This led to one of the largest land rushes in history.
- **The Berlin Conference, 1884-1885** - Soon the different European powers were arguing over their claims. Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck of Germany, the rising new state in Europe, called a meeting to discuss conflicting claims to the Congo. The momentous Berlin Conference began November 15, 1884, and ended February 25, 1885. Fourteen European nations attended the meeting. The United States, which had trade interests in southern and eastern Africa, was also present although it did not claim any territory. Nations indicated "land wants" based on trade agreements mission settlements and exploration. The treaty was, in short, a compact among the powers to pursue the further partition of Africa as amicably as possible; and an attempt to separate colonial competition from European rivalries. Nobody bothered to consult the Africans.
- **Colonization and Enforcing Claims** - Putting claims into effect was only a matter of time. The European nations agreed to respect each other's claims and to help each other if African peoples resisted. The Europeans also had the benefit of sophisticated firearms, which easily defeated Africans armed only with spears. In 1890 the Brussels Conference gave the Europeans an even greater edge. It forbade the sale of the most modern weapons to Africans. In 1880, 90 percent of Africa was still ruled by Africans.
- By 1914 only two independent nations remained: Ethiopia and Liberia. Africa had become an economic and political extension of Europe.

*Human pride is the usual cause of racial prejudice and every ethnic group has been guilty of believing themselves to be somehow superior to all others.*

**biological theories of race and the practice of imperialism**  
[an inherent biological or intellectual superiority]

1. Joseph de Gobineau -- four-volume *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* -- divided humanity into racial groups, each had peculiar traits -- believed that there was a hierarchy of races with white people as the most important followed by "yellows" and "blacks". He popularized the idea of the so-called "Aryan race". His fear of racial degeneration and belief in racial purity of the "Aryan race" were later taken up by Hitler and the Nazis
  
2. All racist thinkers agreed that Europeans were superior to other peoples
  
3. Herbert Spencer used Darwin's theory of evolution (*survival of the fittest*) to justify European domination
  
4. Racism was taught and reinforced by routine practices of colonialism
  - a. slavery outlawed but . . .
  - b. motivated by economic considerations but the racist belief that black people were subhuman or an inferior race was used as a justification for the appalling and brutal exploitation of the native populations
  
5. Racist views also prevailed in U.S. and Japan