

1 Imperialists Divide Africa

TERMS & NAMES

- imperialism
- racism
- Social Darwinism
- Berlin Conference 1884–85
- Shaka
- Boer
- Great Trek
- Boer War

MAIN IDEA

Ignoring the claims of African ethnic groups, kingdoms, and city-states, Europeans established colonial claims.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

African nations continue to feel the effects of the colonial presence of 100 years ago.

SETTING THE STAGE Industrialization stirred ambitions in many European nations. They wanted more resources to fuel their industrial production. They competed for new markets for their goods. They looked to Africa and Asia as sources of the raw materials and as markets for cloth, plows, guns, and other industrial products.

Africa Before Imperialism

In the mid-1800s, on the eve of the European domination of Africa, African peoples were divided into hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups. Most continued to follow traditional beliefs, while others converted to Islam or Christianity. These groups spoke more than 1,000 different languages. Politically, they ranged from large empires that united many ethnic groups to independent villages. The largest empire in West Africa at its peak had a population of about 10 million people.

Although Europeans had established contacts with Africans as early as the 1450s, they actually controlled very little land. Powerful African armies were able to keep the Europeans out of most of Africa for 400 years. As late as 1880, Europeans controlled only 10 percent of the continent's land, mainly on the coast.

Furthermore, European travel into the interior on a large-scale basis was virtually impossible. Europeans could not navigate African rivers that had so many rapids and cataracts and drastically changing flows. Until the introduction of steam-powered riverboats, Europeans would not be able to conduct major expeditions into the interior of Africa.

Finally, large networks of Africans conducted trade. These trade networks kept Europeans from controlling the sources of trade items such as gold and ivory. These trade networks were specialized. The Chokwe, for example, devoted themselves to collecting ivory and beeswax in the Angola highlands. Others such as the Yao carried their goods to merchants on the coast.



This highly valued ivory mask is one of four taken from the King of Benin in 1897. It was worn with several others on the belt of a ceremonial costume of the king.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

A. Analyzing

Causes Why did the Europeans control such a small portion of Africa in the 1800s?

Nations Compete for Overseas Empires

Those Europeans who did penetrate the interior of Africa tended to be explorers, missionaries, or humanitarians who opposed the slave trade. Europeans and Americans learned about Africa through travel books and newspapers. These publications competed for readers by hiring reporters to search the globe for stories of adventure, mystery, or excitement.

The Congo Sparks Interest In the late 1860s, David Livingstone, a minister from Scotland, traveled with a group of Africans deep into central Africa. They were searching for the source of the Nile. When several years passed with no word from him or his party, many people feared he was dead. An American newspaper hired reporter Henry Stanley to find Livingstone. In 1871, he found Dr. Livingstone on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Stanley's account of the meeting made headlines around the world.



“Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” was the greeting of American reporter Henry Stanley in their famous meeting in 1871 at Lake Tanganyika. This picture is from a drawing based on Dr. Livingstone’s own material.

In 1879, Stanley returned to Africa, and in 1882 he signed treaties with local chiefs of the Congo River valley. The treaties gave King Leopold II of Belgium personal control of these lands.

Leopold claimed that his primary motive in establishing the colony was to abolish the slave trade. However, he licensed companies that brutally exploited Africans, by forcing them to collect sap from rubber plants. The time required to do this interfered with the care of their own food crops. So severe were the

forced labor, excessive taxation, and abuses of the native Congolese that humanitarians from around the world demanded changes. In 1908, the Belgian government took over the colony. The Belgian Congo, as the colony later became known, was 80 times larger than Belgium. Leopold’s seizure of the Congo alarmed France. Earlier, in 1882, the French had approved a treaty that gave France the north bank of the Congo River. Soon Britain, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain were also claiming parts of Africa.

Motives Driving Imperialism Economic, political, and social forces accelerated the drive to take over land in all parts of the globe. The takeover of a country or territory by a stronger nation with the intent of dominating the political, economic, and social life of the people of that nation is called **imperialism**. The Industrial Revolution provided European countries with a need to add lands to their control. As European nations industrialized, they searched for new markets and raw materials to improve their economies.

The race for colonies grew out of a strong sense of national pride as well as from economic competition. Europeans viewed an empire as a measure of national greatness. “All great nations in the fullness of their strength have desired to set their mark upon barbarian lands,” wrote the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke, “and those who fail to participate in this great rivalry will play a pitiable role in time to come.” As the competition for colonies intensified, each country was determined to plant its flag on as much of the world as possible.

Because of their advanced technology, many Europeans basically believed that they were better than other peoples. This belief was **racism**, the idea that one race is superior to others. The attitude was a reflection of a social theory of the time, called **Social Darwinism**. In this theory, Charles Darwin’s ideas about evolution and “survival of the fittest” were applied to social change. Those who were fittest for survival enjoyed wealth and success and were considered superior to others. According to the theory, non-Europeans were considered to be on a lower scale of cultural and physical development because they did not have the technology that Europeans had. Europeans believed that they had the right and the duty to bring the results of their progress to other countries. Cecil Rhodes, a successful businessman and one of the major supporters of British expansion, clearly stated this position:

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

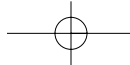
I contend that we [Britons] are the finest race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. . . . It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.

CECIL RHODES, *Confession of Faith* 1877

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

B. Making

Inferences What attitude about the British does Rhodes’s statement display?



The push for expansion also came from missionaries who worked to Christianize the peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. Many missionaries believed that European rule was the best way to end evil practices such as the slave trade. They also wanted to “civilize,” that is, to “westernize,” the peoples of the foreign land.

Forces Enabling Imperialism External and internal forces contributed to the Europeans’ conquest of Africa. The overwhelming advantage was the Europeans’ technological superiority. The Maxim gun, invented in 1889, was the world’s first automatic machine gun. European countries quickly acquired the Maxim, while the resisting Africans were forced to rely on outdated weapons.

European countries also had the means to control their empire. The invention of the steam engine allowed Europeans to easily travel upstream to establish bases of control deep in the African continent. Railroads, cables, and steamers allowed close communications within a colony and between the colony and its controlling nation. All these made control easier.

Even with superior arms and steam engines to transport them, Europeans might still have stayed confined to the coast. Europeans were highly susceptible to malaria. One discovery changed that—the drug quinine. Regular doses of quinine protected Europeans from attacks of this disease caused by mosquitoes.

Internal factors also made the European sweep through Africa easier. Africans’ huge variety of languages and cultures discouraged unity among them. Wars fought between ethnic groups over land, water, and trade rights also prevented a unified stand. Europeans soon learned to play rival groups against each other. Finally, Africans fought at a tremendous disadvantage because they did not have the weapons and technology the Europeans had.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

C. Analyzing Issues

Which external factor was most likely to have caused the downfall of African cultures?

Europeans Enter Africa

European Motives

- Nationalism
- Economic competition
- European racism
- Missionary impulse

External Forces

- Maxim gun
- Railroads and steamships
- Cure for malaria

Internal Forces

- Variety of cultures and languages
- Low level of technology
- Ethnic strife

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

1. Which two of the internal forces were connected with each other? Explain.
2. Which of the European motives do you believe was the most powerful? Explain.

African Lands Become European Colonies

The scramble for African territory began in earnest about 1880. At that time, the French began to expand from the West African coast toward western Sudan. The discoveries of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 in South Africa increased European interest in colonizing the land. No European power wanted to be left out of the race.

Berlin Conference Divides Africa The competition was so fierce that European countries feared war among themselves. To prevent fighting, 14 European nations met at the **Berlin Conference** in 1884–85 to lay down rules for the division of Africa. They agreed that any European country could claim land in Africa by notifying other nations of their claims and showing they could control the area. The European nations



Imperialism in Africa, 1913



Imperialism in Africa, 1878



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps and Charts

- Region** About what percentage of Africa was colonized by Europeans in 1878? How much by 1913?
- Region** According to the map of 1913, which two imperial powers held the most land? According to the chart, what percentage of land in Africa was held by the two powers?

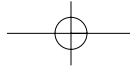
divided the rest of the continent with little thought to how African ethnic or linguistic groups were distributed. No African ruler attended these meetings, yet the conference sealed Africa's fate. By 1914, only Liberia and Ethiopia remained free from European control.

Demand for Product Shapes Colonies When European countries began colonizing, many believed that Africans would soon be buying European goods in great quantities. They were wrong; European goods were not bought. However, European businesses still needed raw materials from Africa. Businesses eventually developed cash-crop plantations to grow peanuts, palm oil, cocoa, and rubber. These products displaced the food crops grown by farmers to feed their families.

The major source of great wealth in Africa proved to be the continent's rich mineral resources. The Belgian Congo contained untold wealth in copper and tin. Even these riches seemed small compared to the gold and diamonds in South Africa.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

D. Recognizing Effects What sort of problems might result from combining or splitting groups of people?



Three Groups Clash over South Africa

The history of South Africa is a history of Africans, Dutch, and British clashing over land and resources. Although the African lands seemed empty to the Europeans, there were huge areas claimed by various ethnic groups. The local control of these lands, especially in the east, had been in dispute for about 100 years.

Zulu Expansion From the late 1700s to the late 1800s, a series of local wars shook southern Africa. Around 1816, a Zulu chief, **Shaka**, used highly disciplined warriors and good military organization to create a large centralized state. Shaka's successors, however, were unable to keep the kingdom intact against the superior arms of the British invaders. The Zulu land became a part of British-controlled land in 1887.

Boers and British Settle in the Cape The Dutch first came to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 to establish a way station for their ships sailing between the Dutch East Indies and home. Dutch settlers known as **Boers** (Dutch for “farmers”) gradually took over native Africans' land and established large farms. When the British took over the Cape Colony in the 1800s, the two groups of settlers clashed over British policy regarding land and slaves.

In the 1830s, to escape the British, several thousand Boers began to move north. This movement has become known as the **Great Trek**. The Boers soon found themselves fighting fiercely with Zulu and other African groups whose land they were taking.

The Boer War Diamonds and gold were discovered in southern Africa in the 1860s and 1880s. Suddenly, “outsiders” from all parts of the world rushed in to make their fortunes. The Boers tried to keep the outsiders from gaining political rights. An attempt to start a rebellion against the Boers failed. The Boers blamed the British. In 1899, the Boers took up arms against the British.

In many ways the **Boer War** between the British and the Boers was the first modern “total” war. The Boers launched commando raids and used guerrilla tactics against the British. The British countered by burning Boer farms and imprisoning women and children in disease-ridden concentration camps. Britain won the war. In 1902, the Boer republics were joined into a self-governing Union of South Africa, controlled by the British.

The establishing of colonies signaled a change in the way of life of the Africans. The Europeans made efforts to change the political, social, and economic lives of the peoples they conquered. You will learn about these changes in Section 2.

GlobalImpact

Americans in the Boer War

Americans as well as nationals from other countries volunteered to fight in the Boer War (1899–1902). Although they joined both sides, most fought for the Boers. They believed the Boers were fighting for freedom against British tyrants.

One group of 46 Irish Americans from Chicago and Massachusetts caused an international scandal when they deserted their Red Cross unit and took up arms for the Boers.

Some Irish who fought for the Boers became leaders in the Irish rebellion when they returned home. John MacBride, a leader of a Boer unit that included many Irish Americans, later took part in the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. He was executed by the British.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
E. Contrasting How was the struggle for land in the Boer War different from other takeovers in Africa?

Section 1 Assessment

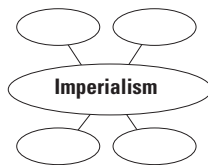
1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- imperialism
- racism
- Social Darwinism
- Berlin Conference 1884–85
- Shaka
- Boer
- Great Trek
- Boer War

2. TAKING NOTES

Copy the spider map below and fill in the four motives that caused the growth of imperialism during the late 1800s.



How did Europeans use Social Darwinism to justify empire-building?

3. MAKING INFERENCES

What can you infer about the Europeans' attitude toward Africans from the Berlin Conference?

THINK ABOUT

- who attended the conference
- the outcome of the conference

4. THEME ACTIVITY

Empire Building Create a time line that includes events that occurred in South Africa between 1800 and 1914. What motives caused most of these events?