

CHAPTER  
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## CHAPTERS IN BRIEF

# The Age of Imperialism, 1850–1914

## Summary

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** Several factors led Europeans to claim control of almost all of Africa. Some Africans resisted, but most efforts failed. The Ottoman Empire broke apart, and European powers took some of its lands. The British took control of India, where they modernized the economy to benefit themselves. Europeans gained lands in Southeast Asia, and the United States sought colonies.

## 1 The Scramble for Africa

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

In the early 1800s, European nations had just a toehold in Africa, holding only areas along the coast. In the mid-1800s, though, Europeans had renewed interest in Africa. This rose, in part, from a desire to create overseas empires, a movement called imperialism. European nations wanted to control lands that had raw materials they needed for their industrial economies. They also wanted to open up markets for the goods they made. Nationalism fed the drive for empires as well. A nation often felt that gaining colonies was a measure of its greatness. Racism was another reason. Europeans thought that they were better than Africans. Finally, Christian missionaries supported imperialism. They thought that European rule would end the slave trade and help them convert native peoples.

As a result of these factors, the nations of Europe began to seize lands in Africa. Technology helped them succeed. Steamships, railroads, and telegraphs made them able to penetrate deep into Africa and still have contact with the home country. Machine guns gave them a weapon of far greater power than any African peoples possessed. Finally, the drug quinine gave doctors a weapon against malaria, which struck Europeans. They were also helped by the lack of unity among African peoples.

The competition for African land, called the “scramble for Africa” began in the 1880s. The discovery of gold and diamonds in Africa increased European interest in the continent. So that they would not fight over the land, European powers met in Berlin in 1884–85. They agreed that any nation could claim any part of Africa simply by telling the others and by showing that it had control of the area. They then moved quickly to grab land.

By 1914, only Liberia and Ethiopia were independent of European control.

The Europeans began to build plantations where they grew peanuts, palm oil, cocoa, and rubber. They also mined Africa’s important minerals. The Congo produced copper and tin. South Africa had gold and diamonds.

In South Africa, three groups struggled over the land. In the early 1800s, the Zulu chief Shaka created a large kingdom. The British seized control of this land in 1887. Meanwhile, the British won control of the Dutch colony on the southern coast. Many thousands of Dutch settlers, called Boers, moved north to escape the British. At the end of the century, the Boers fought a vicious war with the British. The Boers lost, and they joined the British-run Union of South Africa.

## 2 Imperialism Case Study: Nigeria

**KEY IDEA** Europeans embarked on a new phase of empire-building that affected both Africa and the rest of the world.

European nations wanted to control more of the life of their conquered peoples. As a result, each colonized region operated under one of these forms:

- colony—governed by a foreign power
- protectorate—allowed its own government but was under the control of a foreign power
- sphere of influence—claimed as the exclusive investment or trading realm of a foreign power
- economic imperialism—controlled by private businesses rather than by a foreign government

The imperialist powers had two main methods of running their colonies. Britain and the United States used indirect control. In this system, local rulers had power over day-to-day matters. There were also councils of native peoples and govern-

ment officials. These councils were a first step for native peoples to someday govern themselves.

Britain tried to rule Nigeria through indirect control. Because the area was huge and peopled by many different groups, it was difficult for the British to rule directly. They let local chiefs maintain order over their areas and collect taxes. The system did not always work. Chiefs had ruled before in the southeast and southwest of Nigeria. The chiefs resented having their power limited.

France and other European nations used the other method—direct control. Feeling that native peoples could not handle the complex business of running a country, the European power governed. The French also had a policy of assimilation. All institutions were patterned after their counterparts in France. They hoped that the native peoples would learn and adopt French ways.

Some Africans tried to resist imperialism. People in Algeria fought against the French for almost 50 years. In German East Africa, thousands died when they tried to use spiritual power to fight German machine guns. Only in Ethiopia did resistance succeed. There, Emperor Menelik II cleverly played one European country against another. In 1896, he used European weapons to defeat an invading Italian army. With this victory, Ethiopia stayed independent.

Africans did enjoy some benefits from colonial rule. European governments put an end to ethnic conflict. Colonial powers brought African economies fully into the world market and built railroads, dams, and telephone and telegraph lines.

For the most part, though, imperialism caused damage. Traditional African society was destroyed. People were forced out of their homes and made to work under horrible conditions. Finally, the political boundaries that Europeans drew had no relation to ethnic divisions in Africa. These boundaries created problems many decades later when the colonies became independent nations.

### ③ Europeans Claim Muslim Lands

**KEY IDEA** *European nations expand their empires by seizing territories from Muslim states.*

The Ottoman Empire, based in modern Turkey, had lasted for hundreds of years. By the 1800s, it was weak. In 1830, Greece won its independence and Serbia won the right to govern itself. European

nations eyed what remained of the empire hungrily.

Russia hoped to win control of the Black Sea so it could ship grain across the Mediterranean Sea. It fought a war with the Ottomans in the 1850s but lost when Britain and France joined against it. Still, the Ottomans later lost almost all of their land in Europe and parts of Africa. By 1914, the empire was much smaller than it had ever been. Muslim leaders, seeing this decline, decided to modernize their countries.

In Egypt, Muhammad Ali broke away from Ottoman control. He put in place reforms to change the army and the economy. He pushed Egypt's farmers to grow cotton, a cash crop in demand in Europe. However, peasants suffered when they were turned away from growing food. His grandson continued to modernize. He joined with the French in building the Suez Canal, which connected the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. When Egypt had money troubles, Britain took control of the canal—and the country.

In Persia, the Russians and the British competed for control with local powers. Russia wanted to win Persia to have access to the Indian Ocean. Britain wanted some land there as a barrier between Russia and its colony in India. In the early 1900s, oil was discovered in Persia. A British company signed an agreement with Persia's ruler to develop these oil fields. Persians rebelled against their ruler—who was corrupt—and the growing influence of Europeans. Then Russia and Britain stepped in and took control of the land.

### ④ British Imperialism in India

**KEY IDEA** *As the Mughal Empire declined, Britain seized almost the whole subcontinent of India.*

In the early 1700s, the Mughal Empire of India fell into decline. By the middle of the century, the British East India Company was becoming the most important power in India. It held huge amounts of land—almost the entire subcontinent.

British law forced India to supply raw materials such as tea, indigo (a dye), coffee, and cotton. The law also forced Indian manufacturing out of business. India became even more important when the East India Company built rail lines that linked growing regions in the interior with ports on the coast.

India enjoyed some gains from British rule. Its rail system was the third largest in the world and helped make the economy more modern. The

British made other improvements, too. They built telephone and telegraph lines, dams, bridges, and canals. They also improved sanitation and public health and built schools. More and more Indians learned to read.

British rule caused problems as well. Many economic benefits flowed out of India to Britain. Indian industry died out because of British trade laws. Many farmers and villages lost their ability to feed themselves because they were made to grow cash crops. Many peoples died when famines struck. British racist attitudes damaged Indian culture.

By the mid-1800s, many Indians felt growing resentment. When Indian soldiers heard rumors that offended their religious feelings, many rebelled. The East India Company needed a year—and British troops—to put it down. The Indians lost because of their own divisions. Muslims and Hindus did not trust each other. After the revolt, the British government took direct control of British India.

Indians tried other ways of resisting British control. Leaders such as Ram Mohun Roy urged changes in traditional Indian practices to make Indian society more modern. He hoped to free India of foreign control with these changes. Indians resented the fact that they were treated unfairly. They formed two groups—the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Both began to push the British to make changes. In the early 1900s, they called for self-government.

## 📍 Imperialism in Southeast Asia

**KEY IDEA** Demand for Asian products drove Western imperialists to seek possession of Southeast Asian lands.

European nations also grabbed land in Southeast Asia and the islands on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. They wanted the area for its resources and because it was close to China. The United States joined this quest for colonies.

European powers found that these lands were good for growing such cash crops as sugar, coffee, cocoa, rubber, and fruit. As trade in these items grew, Europeans moved to take more land. The Dutch ran Indonesia, where their settlers remained at the top of society. The British took the port of Singapore plus Malaysia and Burma (modern Myanmar). Needing workers, the British brought many Chinese to Malaysia. France grabbed

Indochina (modern Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam). They made farmers grow rice for export. Because most of the rice was shipped away, the farmers had less to eat even though they were growing more rice than before. One land—Siam (modern Thailand)—stayed independent. King Mongkut and his son modernized Siam without giving up power.

Colonialism brought some features of modern life to these regions. However, economic changes benefited European-run businesses, not local people. The native peoples did benefit from better schooling, health, and cleanliness. Plantation farming brought millions of people from other areas to Southeast Asia. The mix of cultures and religions did not always go smoothly. Even today, some conflict between groups results from this period.

In the late 1800s, the United States also began to seek colonies. In 1898, as a result of the Spanish-American War, the United States won possession of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands. Filipino nationalists fought Americans for their freedom, just as they had fought the Spaniards before. The United States defeated the rebels and promised to give the Philippines self-rule later. In the meantime, American businesses took advantage of Filipino workers.

Some American businessmen grew wealthy from sugar plantations in Hawaii. In the 1890s, when Queen Liliuokalani tried to regain control of her country, they overthrew her. They declared a republic and asked the United States to annex—take possession of—Hawaii. In 1898, it became a territory of the United States.

## Review

1. **Summarizing** What led to European imperialism, and why did it succeed?
2. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** What happened when Africans tried to resist imperialism?
3. **Comparing and Contrasting** Contrast how the British and French ruled their colonies.
4. **Drawing Conclusions** How were the effects of imperialism in Southeast Asia typical of those for other regions?