

CHAPTER 27

The Age of Imperialism

TIME LINE

1830	France begins its takeover of Algeria
1842	Great Britain acquires Hong Kong
1854	Commodore Matthew C. Perry “opens” Japan
1857	The Indian Mutiny results in the establishment of direct British rule over India
1860s	France begins its takeover of Indochina
1867	The British North America Act establishes the Dominion of Canada
1869	The Suez Canal is opened
1881	France acquires Tunisia
1882	Great Britain establishes a protectorate over Egypt
1885	The Congo Free State is established
1894-1895	Japan defeats China in the Sino-Japanese War
1896	The Ethiopians defeat the Italians at Adowa
1898	The British gain control of the Sudan
	The United States acquires the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii
1899-1900	The Boxer Rebellion takes place in China
1902	The Boer War ends with the British takeover of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal
1904-1905	Japan defeats Russia in the Russo-Japanese War
1910	Japan annexes Korea

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there was a great surge of imperialist activity. The major European states, particularly Great Britain, France, and Germany, divided virtually all of Africa and much of Asia among themselves. This imperial expansion provided a dramatic manifestation of Europe’s power and dynamism. By the end of the century, the United States and Japan had joined the ranks of the imperialist powers. As the imperialist powers increased their activity, rivalries intensified, increasing tensions among the powers.

Imperialism in the Early Nineteenth Century

During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, the European states showed relatively little interest in overseas expansion. When the Napoleonic wars ended in 1815, the only major overseas empires were those of Great Britain and the Netherlands.

Great Britain

Although the British had created a vast empire in the eighteenth century,

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they demonstrated little enthusiasm for further expansion. Only a few years earlier, the thirteen British colonies along the Atlantic seaboard of North America had rebelled against British rule and had gained their independence. The American Revolution suggested that the acquisition of colonies was ultimately an unproductive activity. Events after 1815 provided what seemed to be further evidence of this view, as Canada appeared for a time likely to follow the lead of the United States. British opponents of colonial expansion (the “Little Englanders”) insisted that their government should focus its attention on domestic affairs.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands remained content with its profitable island empire in the East Indies, which had been acquired from Portugal in the early seventeenth century.

France, Prussia, and Austria

France, which had lost most of its overseas empire to the British in the eighteenth century, was too preoccupied with its domestic problems to devote much attention to overseas expansion in the early nineteenth century, while Prussia and Austria focused their attention on European issues.

Russia

Russia was the only European power to continue its expansionist policy throughout the nineteenth century, although Russian expansion was overland, rather than overseas. The Russians continued to press against the declining power of the Ottoman Empire and also moved into Central Asia and the Maritime Provinces on the Sea of Japan.

Renewed Interest in Expansion

During the 1870s, the European powers suddenly developed a new interest in overseas expansion. In Great Britain, the acquisition of additional colonies became an object of government policy and won wide support among the public. France achieved a measure of domestic political stability under the Third Republic and also began to look outward. In Germany and Italy, which had recently achieved their national unification, many regarded imperial expansion as evidence of national greatness.

Motives for Imperialism

A number of factors contributed to the drive for empire in the final decades of the nineteenth centuries.

Political and Psychological Factors

Political and psychological factors were particularly significant. During the late nineteenth century, competition among states for power and prestige intensified. While the possession of colonies offered a means to increase a country's military and economic power in relation to that of its rivals, the idea also came to be accepted widely that the possession of colonies was a sign of national greatness and vitality. Conversely, the failure to acquire colonies came to be regarded as a sign of national decadence.

Social Darwinism

Social Darwinists emphasized the idea of life as a struggle, with the stronger surviving at the expense of the weaker. Countries that failed to expand were seen as losing the struggle for survival. In addition, Social Darwinists believed that the advanced white race had an obligation to civilize the less developed peoples of the world.

Religious and Humanitarian Motives

Religious and humanitarian motives also contributed to imperialist policies. During the late nineteenth century, there was a great upsurge in Christian missionary activity by both Catholics and Protestants. These Christian missionaries sought not only to follow the command of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, they also believed in their mission to bring the advantages of European civilization to less advanced people. People motivated by religious and humanitarian impulses expected their governments to protect them.

The story of Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873), a Scottish missionary, provides a good example of the joining of religious and humanitarian motives. Livingstone spent close to thirty years exploring Central Africa and gathering evidence on the activities of African and Arab slave traders. He and his supporters in the British antislavery movement believed that the British government should act to eliminate this slave trade.

Economic Motives

The growth of European industry led to demands for new sources of raw materials, as well as to a need for new markets for the products of industry. Furthermore, those who had accumulated fortunes from the profits of industry were often looking for new opportunities for the investment of their surplus capital. Others also had economic motives for supporting imperialist policies; among them, shipping companies and the manufacturers of

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munitions and other goods required by imperialist ventures.

Hobson and Lenin

Two early analysts of imperialism, J. A. Hobson (1858-1940) and V. I. Lenin (1870-1924), emphasized the importance of economic factors. In *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), Hobson argued that great financiers, who desired to increase their wealth through overseas investments, were the power behind imperialist policies. These financiers manipulated public opinion to win broad popular support for expansion and used their political influence to induce governments to acquire additional colonies.

Hobson's conclusions have been criticized by serious students of imperialism, as has the view advanced by Lenin in *Imperialism: The Last Stage of Capitalism* (1916): that capitalism must expand in order to survive. Once capitalist investment has saturated the domestic market, the capitalists are forced to seek overseas outlets for investment.

When capitalism can expand no further, Lenin insisted, it will collapse as a consequence of its internal contradictions.

Criticism of Economic Motives

While economic factors undeniably played a role in the development of imperialism, it is important to stress that they were by no means the only factors nor were they the most important. While some colonies possessed rich resources of raw materials, others had few or even none. Colonies inhabited by the impoverished peoples of Africa and Asia did not provide a sizable market for the products of European industry. And while some colonies offered substantial opportunities for investment, others did not. In the race for colonies, the imperial powers appeared more interested simply in the acquisition of territory than in the specific economic advantages that might be gained.

The British Empire in the Early Nineteenth Century

In the early nineteenth century, the British controlled the most extensive empire in human history. Although they did not actively seek to expand their holdings during these years, the British consolidated their existing possessions.

The Western Hemisphere

In the Western Hemisphere, the British ruled Canada, a number of islands in the West Indies, British Honduras in Central America, and British Guiana in South America. In Canada, growing discontent with British rule led to greater self-government. The British North America Act of 1867

established the Dominion of Canada with extensive autonomy in domestic policy.

Africa

The British had acquired the Cape of Good Hope during the Napoleonic wars, and they also controlled a number of trading stations along Africa's coasts. During the 1820s, British settlers moved into the Cape Colony, where friction soon developed between them and the Boers, the descendants of Dutch colonists who had settled at the Cape during the seventeenth century. In the Great Trek of 1835-1837, the Boers moved northward into the interior, where they established two independent republics, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In 1843, the British took control of Natal, to the east of Cape Colony.

Asia

India

The British had defeated France in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), gaining control over India, which was administered by the British East India Company. In 1857, the Great Mutiny (also known as the Sepoy Rebellion) occurred, as Indian troops carried out a dramatic uprising against the British. The following year, the British government established its direct control over India.

China

When the Chinese government sought to prevent the British importation into China of opium from India, the British went to war against China in 1841. At the conclusion of the Opium War in 1842, the British annexed Hong Kong and compelled the Chinese to open five ports to foreign trade. In 1858, the Chinese were forced to open eleven additional ports.

Worldwide Outposts

The British also controlled a number of key strategic points around the world: Gibraltar at the western entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, the island of Malta in the central Mediterranean, Aden at the southern end of the Red Sea, Ceylon off the southeastern coast of India, and the great port of Singapore at the southern tip of the Malay peninsula. In the South Pacific, British possessions included Australia and New Zealand, which attracted many settlers from Great Britain and Ireland. Australia acquired rights of self-government as a dominion in 1901, while New Zealand gained dominion status in 1907.

Expansion of British Imperialism in Africa

Egypt

In 1875, Prime Minister Disraeli bought 44 percent of the shares in the Suez Canal Company from Egypt's ruler, the khedive. The purchase pleased British imperialists, who regarded the Suez Canal, which had been built by a French company and opened in 1869, as an essential link between Great Britain and India.

Although technically a possession of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt was in effect an independent state. The khedive had accumulated an enormous debt, borrowing heavily from European bankers, who demanded repayment. The sale of his Suez Canal shares provided him with only temporary financial relief, however, and at the end of the decade, the British and French established their joint control over Egypt's finances. Egyptian resentment of foreign intervention grew. In response, the British established a protectorate over Egypt in 1882, eliminating the French from Egyptian affairs.

South Africa

Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902)

In South Africa, Rhodes was the central figure in British imperialist activity. He had made a fortune in diamonds, which had been discovered at Kimberley in the Cape Colony in 1869. His great dream was the creation of a belt of British African possessions reaching from the Cape of Good Hope in the south to Egypt in the north. Pressing forward with this ambition, the British pushed their control northward into Bechuanaland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland.

The Jameson Raid

In 1886, gold was discovered in the Boer republic of the Transvaal. As prospectors moved in, tension mounted between the Boers and the British. In 1895, Dr. Leander S. Jameson (1853-1917) led an unsuccessful raid into the Transvaal. The Jameson Raid convinced President Paul Kruger (1825-1904) of the Transvaal that Rhodes, who was now prime minister of Cape Colony, was plotting to take over the Transvaal and its sister Boer republic, the Orange Free State.

Emperor William II of Germany sent a telegram to Kruger, congratulating him on his success in turning back the Jameson Raid. The British greatly resented this interference.

The Boer War

The Boer War broke out in 1899. Although the Transvaal and the Orange Free State put up a determined resistance, the war ended with a British victory in 1902. In 1910, the British united Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State to form the Union of South Africa, a self-governing dominion.

West and East African Possessions

In West Africa, the British expanded their old trading stations into full-scale colonies, including Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria. In East Africa, British possessions included Kenya, Uganda, and British Somaliland, as well as the island of Zanzibar.

The French Empire in the Early Nineteenth Century

In 1815, the French retained only a small part of their once substantial empire. In the West Indies, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and several other small islands remained under French control, as did French Guiana in South America. In Africa, the French operated several coastal trading stations. In Egypt and the Middle East, France exerted some influence.

In 1830, the French began the process of acquiring Algeria in North Africa. In 1843, they established a protectorate over Tahiti and soon moved to extend their control over other islands in the South Pacific. On the Asian mainland, the French began to move into Indochina during the 1860s.

French Imperialism in Africa

In the late nineteenth century, France succeeded in creating a huge empire in Africa. In North Africa, the French extended their control over Tunisia in 1881 and soon began the process of establishing a protectorate over Morocco. In addition, the French developed a number of colonies in French Equatorial Africa and in French West Africa. Major French West African colonies included Senegal, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast. France also acquired the large island of Madagascar off Africa's east coast, as well as French Somaliland on the Red Sea.

The Anglo-French Conflict Over the Sudan

The Sudan, located to the south of Egypt, became the object of a serious Anglo-French dispute in 1898.

In 1884, a British and Egyptian force commanded by General Charles Gordon (1833-1885) marched up the Nile River into the Sudan from its base in Egypt. Gordon's force was besieged at Khartoum by troops of the Mahdi, a

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Moslem religious leader. The ten-month siege ended in 1885 with the massacre of Gordon's army.

A decade later, in 1896, an Anglo-Egyptian force commanded by Lord Kitchener (1850-1916) advanced into the Sudan and defeated the Mahdi's followers at Omdurman in early September 1898. A few days later, at Fashoda on the Nile, Kitchener encountered a French force under the command of Major Jean Baptiste Marchand (1863-1934), who had moved into the Sudan from French Equatorial Africa.

During the ensuing Fashoda Crisis, tensions ran high between London and Paris, and for a time, war threatened. The crisis eased when the French decided to yield to the British. This French decision represented an important step toward the improvement of France's relations with Great Britain.

King Leopold II and the Congo

During the 1870s, King Leopold II (r. 1865-1909) of Belgium began the process of establishing an imperial domain in Africa. Acting as a private individual, rather than in his role as king, Leopold employed Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904), an Anglo-American journalist and adventurer, to represent him in signing treaties with African chieftains in the Congo region of Central Africa.

In 1884-1885, an international conference held in Berlin authorized the establishment of the Congo Free State under the personal rule of Leopold II. The Congo became notorious for Leopold's use of forced labor in the production of rubber, ivory, and minerals. As international protests intensified, the Belgian government finally assumed control of the Congo in 1908.

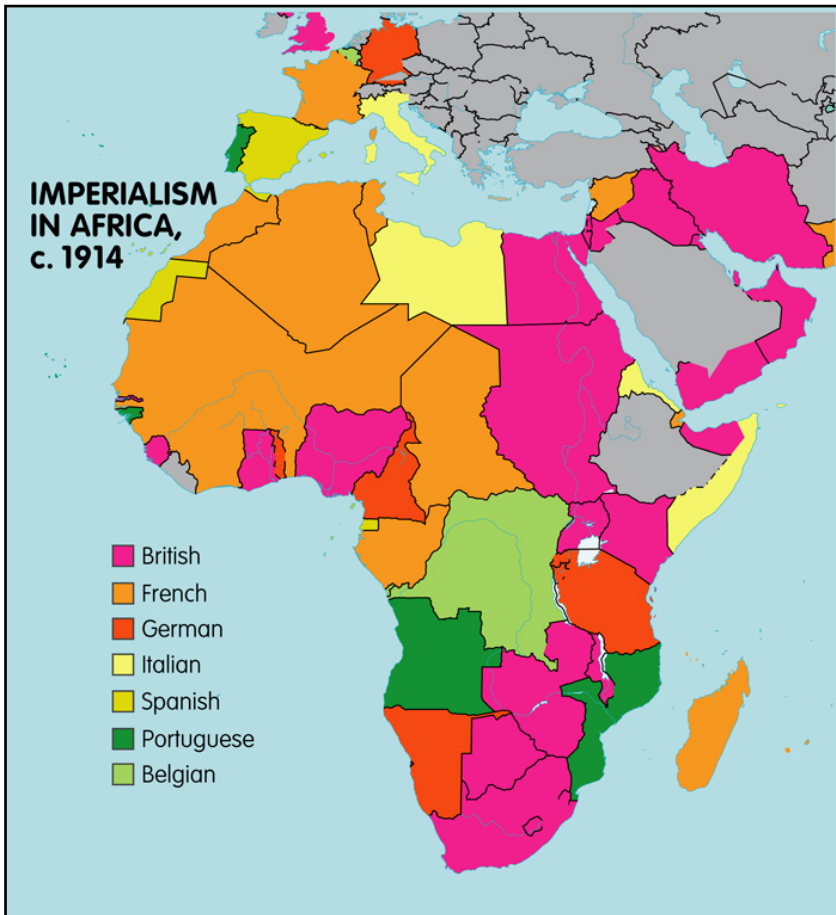
Other Imperial Powers in Africa

Germany

Otto von Bismarck, Germany's chancellor from 1871 to 1890, had little interest in imperial expansion, believing that the newly united Germany should devote its attention to domestic and European matters. Nevertheless, Bismarck gradually gave way in the face of demands made by powerful interest groups that believed that colonies could provide economic benefits, as well as serving as a sign of Germany's status as a major power. In 1884, Germany acquired Togoland and the Cameroons in West Africa, as well as German Southwest Africa. In 1885, Germany established its control over German East Africa.

Italy

In contrast to Germany, Italy was relatively unsuccessful in its colonial endeavors in Africa. Seeking to create an East African empire, the Italians acquired Italian Somaliland in 1889 and Eritrea in 1890. In the mid-1890s, Italy began an abortive attempt to seize Ethiopia (Abyssinia), suffering a humiliating defeat in the Battle of Adowa in 1896. Ethiopia thus succeeded in maintaining its independence, as did the republic of Liberia in West Africa. Liberia was virtually an American protectorate, having been settled by freed American slaves earlier in the nineteenth century. After suffering a setback in East Africa, the Italians acquired Tripoli in North Africa from the Turks in 1912 (see Chapter 28).



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Portugal and Spain

In the late nineteenth century, the Portuguese expanded their old coastal trading stations into the full-scale colonies of Portuguese Guinea and Angola in West Africa and Mozambique in East Africa. Spanish holdings included Rio de Oro and Rio Muni (Spanish Guinea) in West Africa. In the early years of the twentieth century, Spain established a protectorate over Spanish Morocco.

British Imperialism in Asia

In the late nineteenth century, India remained firmly under the control of Great Britain, although the British were concerned about Russian advances into Central Asia, north of India. The interests of Great Britain and Russia collided in Afghanistan, where tensions ran high for a number of years. Finally, in 1907, the issue was resolved with a Russian agreement to withdraw from Afghanistan (see Chapter 28). To the east of India, the British responded to France's moves into Indochina by annexing Burma in 1886.

Elsewhere in Asia, the British increased their control over the Malay peninsula, where they had established their presence in the eighteenth century. Great Britain and Germany agreed to partition New Guinea, north of Australia, in 1884, while the British and the Dutch partitioned Borneo in the East Indies in 1891.

French Imperialism in Asia

From the 1860s to the 1890s, the French extended their control over Indochina.

As the French expanded their Indochinese empire and the British moved from India into Burma, the possibility of conflict developed between the two major imperial powers. In 1896, however, Great Britain and France agreed to maintain Siam (modern Thailand) as an independent buffer state.

Imperialism in China

In the 1890s, China became a major theater of imperialist activity, as the decadent Manchu dynasty, which had ruled China since the seventeenth century, proved increasingly incapable of controlling the country.

Great Britain, which already held Hong Kong and possessed major commercial interests in China, developed a sphere of influence in the Yangtze River valley, while the French focused their attention on Kwangsi and Kweichow provinces in southern China, adjacent to Indochina.

Japanese Intervention

In 1894, Japan went to war against China, opening a new phase in the history of imperialism in that country.

The emergence of Japan as a major power was an unexpected event. In the seventeenth century, the Japanese had effectively isolated themselves from the outside world. That isolation continued until 1854, when an American naval expedition, commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858), compelled Japan to establish commercial relations with other countries.

Following this so-called “opening of Japan,” the Japanese embarked on a remarkable program of westernization, modernizing their government, their economy, and their military and naval forces.

In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Japan easily defeated China. Under the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki of 1895, the Chinese ceded the island of Formosa (Taiwan) to Japan. In addition, the Chinese recognized the independence of Korea, which would now be open to Japanese penetration. China also granted the Japanese a lease to the strategic Liaotung peninsula in southern Manchuria, including Port Arthur. Manchuria, too, would be open to Japanese penetration.

Russia, Germany, and France, fearing an advance of Japanese power in China, intervened. They forced Japan to agree to a nullification of Korean independence and the lease to the Liaotung peninsula.

Gains by European Powers

The Germans and Russians soon moved to take advantage of Japan’s setback. In the late 1890s, the Germans occupied the Shantung peninsula, while the Russians acquired a lease to the Liaotung peninsula, as well as the right to build two railroads in Manchuria. The Chinese Eastern Railway in northern Manchuria would shorten the route of the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Moscow to Vladivostok in the Maritime Provinces, while the Manchurian Southern Railway would provide a link with Port Arthur in the Liaotung peninsula. France and Great Britain also expanded their interests in China.

The Boxer Rebellion

Intensifying anti-foreign feeling in China resulted in the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. Some two hundred foreign missionaries and other civilians were killed, and in the summer of 1900, foreign legations in the capital city of Peking were besieged. An international expeditionary force was

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dispatched to China to break the siege and suppress the revolt.



The Russo-Japanese War

Russian advances in northern China angered the Japanese. In addition to moving to create a sphere of influence in Manchuria, the Russians began to show some interest in expanding into Korea.

In February 1904, Japan went to war, executing a surprise attack on the Russian Far Eastern fleet anchored in Port Arthur. The Japanese defeated the Russians in the Battle of Mukden in February 1905 and three months later destroyed units of the Russian Baltic Sea fleet, which had been sent to the Far East, in the Battle of Tsushima Straits.

The Treaty of Portsmouth

President Theodore Roosevelt of the United States offered to mediate the Russo-Japanese conflict. Under the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth of September 1905, Japan acquired the lease to the Liaotung peninsula. While

northern Manchuria remained a Russian sphere of influence, the Japanese established their dominance in southern Manchuria. Russia ceded to Japan the southern half of Sakhalin island. In addition, Korea was now open to Japanese penetration, and Japan annexed Korea in 1910.

The New American Empire

In the late nineteenth century, the United States joined the ranks of imperialist powers. Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1867. In 1878, the United States acquired rights to a naval base at Pago Pago in the Samoan Islands in the South Pacific. In 1899, Samoa was partitioned between the United States and Germany.

Growing American interest in Hawaii led to its annexation by the United States in 1898, while the Spanish-American War of the same year resulted in the American acquisition of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands. Cuba became, in effect, an American protectorate.

The growing role of the United States in world affairs was symbolized by its building of a two-ocean navy and the construction of the Panama Canal, which opened to shipping in 1914.

Americans focused their attention on the Pacific Ocean and East Asia, as well as the Caribbean and Central America, maintaining their traditional reluctance to become involved in European affairs.

During the late nineteenth century, the major European powers divided virtually all of Africa and much of Asia among themselves. One Asian power, Japan, joined the ranks of the imperialist states, waging a successful war against China and ten years later winning a surprising victory over Russia. Although imperial rivalries led to international tension, the Russo-Japanese War was the only military conflict among major powers to result from these rivalries. The United States also became a world power, with extensive interests in the Caribbean and Central America, as well as the Pacific.