

Western Colonialism and Africa

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[This (Western colonialism) was] a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world.

The age of modern colonialism began about 1500, following the European discoveries of a sea route around Africa's southern coast (1488) and of America (1492). With these events sea power shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and to the emerging nation-states of Portugal, Spain, the Dutch Republic, France, and England. By discovery, conquest, and settlement, these nations expanded and colonized throughout the world, spreading European institutions and culture.

European expansion before 1763

Antecedents of European expansion

Medieval Europe was largely self-contained until the First Crusade (1096–99), which opened new political and commercial communications with the Muslim Near East. Although Christian crusading states founded in Palestine and Syria proved ephemeral, commercial relations continued, and the European end of this trade fell largely into the hands of Italian cities.

Early European trade with Asia

The Oriental land and sea routes terminated at ports in the Crimea, until 1461 at Trebizond (now Trabzon, Turkey), Constantinople (now Istanbul), Asiatic Tripoli (in modern Lebanon), Antioch (in modern Turkey), Beirut (in modern Lebanon), and Alexandria (Egypt), where Italian galleys exchanged European for Eastern products.

Competition between Mediterranean nations for control of Asiatic commerce gradually narrowed to a contest between Venice and Genoa, with the former winning when it severely defeated its rival city in 1380; thereafter, in partnership with Egypt, Venice principally dominated the Oriental trade coming via the Indian Ocean and Red Sea to Alexandria.

Overland routes were not wholly closed, but the conquests of the central Asian warrior Timur (Tamerlane)—whose empire broke into warring fragments after his death in 1405—and the advantages of a nearly continuous sea voyage from the Middle and Far East to the Mediterranean gave Venice a virtual monopoly of some Oriental products, principally spices. The word spices then had a loose application and extended to many Oriental luxuries, but the most valuable European imports were pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon.

The Venetians distributed these expensive condiments throughout the Mediterranean region and northern Europe; they were shipped to the latter first by pack trains up the Rhône Valley and, after 1314, by Flanders' galleys to the Low Countries, western Germany, France, and England. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 did not seriously affect Venetian control. Although other Europeans resented this dominance of the trade, even the Portuguese discovery and exploitation of the Cape of Good Hope route could not altogether break it.

Early Renaissance Europe was short of cash money, though it had substantial banks in northern Italy and southern Germany. Florence possessed aggregations of capital, and its Bardi bank in the 14th century and the Medici successor in the 15th financed much of the eastern Mediterranean trade.

Later, during the great discoveries, the Augsburg houses of Fugger and Welser furnished capital for voyages and New World enterprises.

Gold came from Central Africa by Saharan caravan from Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) near the Niger, and interested persons in Portugal knew something of this. When Prince Henry the Navigator undertook sponsorship of Portuguese discovery

voyages down the west coast of Africa, a principal motive was to find the mouth of a river to be ascended to these mines.

Technological improvements

Europe had made some progress in discovery before the main age of exploration. The discoveries of the Madeira Islands and the Azores in the 14th century by Genoese seamen could not be followed up immediately, however, because they had been made in galleys built for the Mediterranean and ill suited to ocean travel; the numerous rowers that they required and their lack of substantial holds left only limited room for provisions and cargo. In the early 15th century all-sails vessels, the caravels, largely superseded galleys for Atlantic travel; these were light ships, having usually two but sometimes three masts, ordinarily equipped with lateen sails but occasionally square-rigged. When longer voyages began, the *nao*, or carrack, proved better than the caravel; it had three masts and square rigging and was a rounder, heavier ship, more fitted to cope with ocean winds.

Navigational instruments were improved. The compass, probably imported in primitive form from the Orient, was gradually developed until, by the 15th century, European pilots were using an iron pin that pivoted in a round box. They realized that it did not point to the true north, and no one at that time knew of the magnetic pole, but they learned approximately how to correct the readings. The astrolabe, used for determining latitude by the altitude of stars, had been known since Roman times, but its employment by seafarers was rare, even as late as 1300; it became more common during the next 50 years, though most pilots probably did not possess it and often did not need it because most voyages took place in the narrow waters of the Mediterranean or Baltic or along western European coasts. For longitude, then and many years thereafter, dead reckoning had to be employed, but this could be reasonably accurate when done by experts.

The typical medieval map had been the planisphere, or *mappemonde*, which arranged the three known continents in circular form on a disk surface and illustrated a concept more theological than geographical. The earliest surviving specimens of the portolanic, or harbour-finding, charts date from shortly before 1300 and are of Pisan and Genoese origin. Portolanic maps aided voyagers by showing Mediterranean coastlines with remarkable accuracy, but they gave no attention to hinterlands. As Atlantic sailings increased, the coasts of western Europe and Africa south of the Strait of Gibraltar were shown somewhat correctly, though less so than for the Mediterranean.

The first European empires (16th century)

Portugal's seaborne empire

Following Christopher Columbus' first voyage, the rulers of Portugal and Spain, by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), partitioned the non-Christian world between them by an imaginary line in the Atlantic, 370 leagues (about 1,300 miles) west of the Cape Verde Islands. Portugal could claim and occupy everything to the east of the line and Spain everything to the west (though no one then knew where the demarcation would bisect the other side of the globe). Portuguese rule in India, the East Indies, and Brazil rested on this treaty, as well as on Portuguese discoveries and on papal sanction (Pope Leo X, by a bull of 1514, forbade others to interfere with Portugal's possessions). Except for such minor incursions as those of Ferdinand Magellan's surviving ship in 1522 and the Englishman Sir Francis Drake's voyage around the world in 1577–80, the Portuguese operated in the East for nearly a century without European competition. They faced occasional Oriental enemies but weathered these dangers with their superior ships, gunnery, and seamanship.

Territorially, theirs was scarcely an empire; it was a commercial operation based on possession of fortifications and posts strategically situated for trade. This policy was carried out principally by two viceroys, Francisco de Almeida in 1505–09 and Afonso de Albuquerque in 1509–15. Almeida seized several eastern African and Indian points and defeated a Muslim naval coalition off Diu (now in Goa, Daman, and Diu union territory, India). Albuquerque endeavoured to gain a monopoly of European spice trade for his country by sealing off all entrances and exits of the Indian Ocean competing with the Portuguese route around the Cape of Good Hope. In 1510 he took Goa, in western India, which became the capital and stronghold of the Portuguese East, and in 1511 he captured Malacca at the farther end of the ocean. Later he subdued Hormuz (now in Iran), commanding the Persian Gulf. They brought soldiers from the home country in limited numbers; but the Portuguese also relied on alliances with native states and enlisted sepoy troops, a policy later followed by the French and English.

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Partial domination of the Indian Ocean and much of its valuable trade did not bring Portugal's crown as much profit as had been anticipated. The intention had been to make Oriental trade a royal monopoly; but Portuguese, from viceroys to humble soldiers and seamen, became private merchants and lined their own pockets to the deprivation of the royal treasury. The Eastern footholds were expensive to maintain, and frequent mishaps to vessels of the Indian fleets, from shipwreck or enemies, reduced gains. The lack of a true monopoly prevented the Portuguese from charging the prices that they wished in European markets. Moreover, Lisbon, while an ideal starting point for voyages around the Cape, proved poorly situated as a distribution centre for spice to northern and central Europe. Antwerp, on the Scheldt, was far superior, and for a time

Portugal maintained a trading house there; but Portuguese agents found spice sales taken out of their hands by more experienced Italian, German, and Flemish merchants, and the Antwerp establishment was closed in 1549.

It has been asserted that the Portuguese had no racial prejudice, but their record proves the opposite. In the 16th and 17th centuries, they could not be expected to be tolerant of Oriental religions, although they soon recognized that wholesale conversion to Catholicism was impossible. Some Africans and Asiatics became Christians and even entered the clergy; but seldom if ever did they rise above the status of parish priests. In other affairs the Portuguese generally treated the dark-skinned peoples as inferiors.

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Effects of the discoveries and empires

Before the discovery of America and the sea route to Asia, the Mediterranean had been the trading and naval centre of Europe and the Near East. Italian seamen were rightly considered to be the best, and they commanded the first royally sponsored transatlantic expeditions—Columbus for Spain, John Cabot for England, and Giovanni da Verrazano for France.

Europe's shift to the Atlantic

Until then the Western countries had lain on the fringe of civilization, with nothing apparently beyond them but Iceland and small islands. With the discovery of the Cape route and America, nations formerly peripheral found themselves central, with geographical forces impelling them to leadership.

The Mediterranean did not become a backwater, and the Venetian republic remained a major commercial power in the 16th century. Venice's decline came in the 17th, though the Venetians were still formidable against the Turks. As the more powerful Dutch, French, and English replaced the Eastern pioneers of Portugal, however, the burden of competition became more than the venerable republic could bear. The last decisive naval battle fought wholly by Mediterranean seamen was Lepanto (Náupaktos, Greece), where Don John of Austria, in 1571, commanding Spanish and Italian galleys, defeated an Ottoman fleet. Although Atlantic powers thereafter often fought in the Mediterranean, they mainly fought each other, while the Italian cities became pawns in international politics. The nation-state was superseding the small principality and city-state, a trend that had begun before the discoveries. The new nations lay on the Atlantic; and, though Spain and France had Mediterranean frontages, the advantage went to those seaports belonging to substantial countries with ready access to the outer world.

Changes in Europe

The opening of old lands in Asia and new ones in America changed Europe forever, and the Iberian countries understandably felt the changes first. The Portuguese government, for a time, made large profits from its Eastern trade, and individuals prospered; but Oriental luxuries were costly compared with the European goods that Portugal offered, and the balance had to be made up in specie. This eastward drain of gold and silver had gone on long before Portuguese imperial times, but it was now intensified. Much of the bullion reaching the Orient did not circulate but was hoarded or made into ornaments; consequently, there was no inflation in Asia, and prices there did not rise enough to create a demand for Western goods, which would have reversed the flow of bullion from the West. The Portuguese obtained most of the precious metal for this trade from spice sales through Antwerp and from Africa. The drain proved critical, and, by the reign of John III, the government found itself hard pressed economically and forced to abandon overseas posts that were a financial burden. Later, beginning in the 17th century, Portugal drew its own supply of jewels and gold from Brazil.

Spain's case was the reverse; although the first American lands discovered yielded little mineral wealth, the mines of Mexico by the 1520s and those of Potosí (in modern Bolivia) by the 1540s were shipping to Spain large quantities of bullion, much of it crown revenue. This did not furnish Charles V and Philip II their largest income; Spanish taxation still exceeded wealth from the New World, yet American silver and gold proved sufficient to cause a price revolution in Spain, where costs, depending on the region, were multiplied by three and five during the 16th century. The Spanish government wished to keep bullion from leaving the kingdom, but high prices in Spain made it a good market for outside products. Spanish industry declined in the 16th century, in part because of the sales taxes imposed by the crown, which necessitated more buying of foreign merchandise. Great quantities of bullion had to be poured out to finance the expensive Spanish European empire and the costly wars and diplomacy of Charles V and Philip II, both of whom were constantly in debt.

Price rises followed in other countries, largely from the influx of Spanish bullion. In England, where some statistics are available, costs by 1650 had risen by 250 percent over those of 1500.

The European commercial revolution, which brought increased industry, more trade, and larger banks, had begun before the discoveries, but it received stimulus from them. Bullion from America helped create a money economy, replacing the older

and largely barter exchange—a trend accentuated by greater European mineral production in the early 16th century. The trade emporiums of Italy and the Baltic Hanseatic League declined and were largely replaced by those of the Dutch Republic, England, and France. Joint-stock companies made an impressive appearance, notably the East India Companies of the Dutch Republic, England, and France in the 17th century. The mercantile theory that precious metals constitute the true wealth, though it had attracted advocates for a long time, now came into full vogue and continued to dominate economic thinking.

Discovery introduced Europe to new foods and beverages. Coffee, from Ethiopia, had been consumed in Arabia and Egypt before its wide European use began in the 17th century. Tobacco, an American plant smoked by Indians, won an Old World market despite many individual objectors; the same proved true of chocolate from Mexico and tea from Asia. The South American potato became a staple food in such places as Ireland and central Europe. Cotton, from the Old World, took firm root in the New, from which Europe received an enormously increased supply. Sugar, introduced to the American tropics, along with its molasses and rum derivatives, in time became the principal exports of those regions. Spice was certainly more plentiful than before the discoveries, though the Dutch, when they controlled the East Indies, were able to limit production and thus to keep the price of cloves and nutmegs high.

The influence of the discoveries permeated literature. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, printed in 1516 and dealing with an imaginary island, was suggested by South America. The Portuguese poet Luís de Camões recounted the voyage of Vasco da Gama, though fancifully, in epic verse. Michel de Montaigne discoursed upon American savages, some of whom he had seen in France. Christopher Marlowe's drama *Tamburlaine* (1587), though based on the life of the Asiatic conqueror, was an exhortation to his fellow Englishmen to penetrate the New World.

Historiography acquired a broader base by taking the newly discovered lands into account. Astronomy was revolutionized by European penetration of the Southern Hemisphere and discovery of constellations unknown before. Map makers, typified by the Fleming Gerardus Mercator and the Dutchman Abraham Ortelius, portrayed the world in terms that are still recognizable.

Colonies from northern Europe and mercantilism (17th century)

The northern Atlantic powers, for understandable reasons, acquired no permanent overseas possessions before 1600. The United Provinces of the Netherlands spent the final decades of the 16th century winning independence from Spain; France had constant European involvements and wars of religion; England, matrimonially allied with Spain as late as 1558, was undergoing its Protestant Reformation and long was unwilling to challenge predominant Spain openly in any manner.

The Dutch

Although England's defeat of Philip II's Armada in 1588 helped to lessen Spanish sea power, it was the Dutch who early in the next century really broke that power and became the world's foremost naval and commercial nation, with science and skills commensurate with their prowess. Only late in the 17th century did they decline, because of Holland's limited size and the inferiority of its geographical position to England's. The Dutch, meanwhile, penetrated all the known oceans, including the Arctic, and waged unrelenting war against the Iberian kingdoms.

The Dutch coveted the Portuguese commercial empire more than the Spanish continental one. They took much of the Portuguese East and invaded Brazil (1624–54), the richer half of which they controlled for a time. They also penetrated Portuguese Angola, which they desired because the slaves it exported were beginning to work the Brazilian plantations. They ultimately failed in the South Atlantic, though they gained Dutch Guiana (now Suriname), Curaçao, and what later became British Guiana (Guyana). Meanwhile, Willem Schouten, one of their free-lance voyagers, had made the discovery of Cape Horn in 1616.

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European expansion since 1763

The global expansion of western Europe between the 1760s and the 1870s differed in several important ways from the expansionism and colonialism of previous centuries. Along with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, which economic historians generally trace to the 1760s, and the continuing spread of industrialization in the empire-building countries came a shift in the strategy of trade with the colonial world. Instead of being primarily buyers of colonial products (and frequently under strain to offer sufficient salable goods to balance the exchange), as in the past, the industrializing nations increasingly became sellers in search of markets for the growing volume of their machine-produced goods. Furthermore, over the years there occurred a decided shift in the composition of demand for goods produced in the colonial areas. Spices, sugar, and slaves became relatively less important with the advance of industrialization, concomitant with a rising demand for raw

materials for industry (*e.g.*, cotton, wool, vegetable oils, jute, dyestuffs) and food for the swelling industrial areas (wheat, tea, coffee, cocoa, meat, butter).

This shift in trading patterns entailed in the long run changes in colonial policy and practice as well as in the nature of colonial acquisitions. The urgency to create markets and the incessant pressure for new materials and food were eventually reflected in colonial practices, which sought to adapt the colonial areas to the new priorities of the industrializing nations. Such adaptation involved major disruptions of existing social systems over wide areas of the globe. Before the impact of the Industrial Revolution, European activities in the rest of the world were largely confined to: (1) occupying areas that supplied precious metals, slaves, and tropical products then in large demand; (2) establishing white-settler colonies along the coast of North America; and (3) setting up trading posts and forts and applying superior military strength to achieve the transfer to European merchants of as much existing world trade as was feasible. However disruptive these changes may have been to the societies of Africa, South America, and the isolated plantation and white-settler colonies, the social systems over most of the Earth outside Europe nevertheless remained much the same as they had been for centuries (in some places for millennia). These societies, with their largely self-sufficient small communities based on subsistence agriculture and home industry, provided poor markets for the mass-produced goods flowing from the factories of the technologically advancing countries; nor were the existing social systems flexible enough to introduce and rapidly expand the commercial agriculture (and, later, mineral extraction) required to supply the food and raw material needs of the empire builders.

The adaptation of the nonindustrialized parts of the world to become more profitable adjuncts of the industrializing nations embraced, among other things: (1) overhaul of existing land and property arrangements, including the introduction of private property in land where it did not previously exist, as well as the expropriation of land for use by white settlers or for plantation agriculture; (2) creation of a labour supply for commercial agriculture and mining by means of direct forced labour and indirect measures aimed at generating a body of wage-seeking labourers; (3) spread of the use of money and exchange of commodities by imposing money payments for taxes and land rent and by inducing a decline of home industry; and (4) where the precolonial society already had a developed industry, curtailment of production and exports by native producers.

The classic illustration of this last policy is found in India. For centuries India had been an exporter of cotton goods, to such an extent that Great Britain for a long period imposed stiff tariff duties to protect its domestic manufacturers from Indian competition. Yet, by the middle of the 19th century, India was receiving one-fourth of all British exports of cotton piece goods and had lost its own export markets.

Clearly, such significant transformations could not get very far in the absence of appropriate political changes, such as the development of a sufficiently cooperative local elite, effective administrative techniques, and peace-keeping instruments that would assure social stability and environments conducive to the radical social changes imposed by a foreign power. Consistent with these purposes was the installation of new, or amendments of old, legal systems that would facilitate the operation of a money, business, and private land economy. Tying it all together was the imposition of the culture and language of the dominant power.

The changing nature of the relations between centres of empire and their colonies, under the impact of the unfolding Industrial Revolution, was also reflected in new trends in colonial acquisitions. While in preceding centuries colonies, trading posts, and settlements were in the main, except for South America, located along the coastline or on smaller islands, the expansions of the late 18th century and especially of the 19th century were distinguished by the spread of the colonizing powers, or of their emigrants, into the interior of continents. Such continental extensions, in general, took one of two forms, or some combination of the two: (1) the removal of the indigenous peoples by killing them off or forcing them into specially reserved areas, thus providing room for settlers from western Europe who then developed the agriculture and industry of these lands under the social system imported from the mother countries, or (2) the conquest of the indigenous peoples and the transformation of their existing societies to suit the changing needs of the more powerful militarily and technically advanced nations.

At the heart of Western expansionism was the growing disparity in technologies between those of the leading European nations and those of the rest of the world. Differences between the level of technology in Europe and some of the regions on other continents were not especially great in the early part of the 18th century. In fact, some of the crucial technical knowledge used in Europe at that time came originally from Asia. During the 18th century, however, and at an accelerating pace in the 19th and 20th centuries, the gap between the technologically advanced countries and technologically backward regions kept on increasing despite the diffusion of modern technology by the colonial powers. The most important aspect of this disparity was the technical superiority of Western armaments, for this superiority enabled the West to impose its will on the much larger colonial populations. Advances in communication and transportation, notably railroads, also became important tools for consolidating foreign rule over extensive territories. And along with the enormous technical superiority and the colonizing experience itself came important psychological instruments of minority rule by foreigners: racism and arrogance on the part of the colonizers and a resulting spirit of inferiority among the colonized.

Naturally, the above description and summary telescope events that transpired over many decades and the incidence of the changes varied from territory to territory and from time to time, influenced by the special conditions in each area, by what took place in the process of conquest, by the circumstances at the time when economic exploitation of the possessions became desirable and feasible, and by the varying political considerations of the several occupying powers. Moreover, it

should be emphasized that expansion policies and practices, while far from haphazard, were rarely the result of long-range and integrated planning. The drive for expansion was persistent, as were the pressures to get the greatest advantage possible out of the resulting opportunities. But the expansions arose in the midst of intense rivalry among major powers that were concerned with the distribution of power on the continent of Europe itself as well as with ownership of overseas territories. Thus, the issues of national power, national wealth, and military strength shifted more and more to the world stage as commerce and territorial acquisitions spread over larger segments of the globe. In fact, colonies were themselves often levers of military power—sources of military supplies and of military manpower and bases for navies and merchant marines. What appears, then, in tracing the concrete course of empire is an intertwining of the struggle for hegemony between competing national powers, the manoeuvring for preponderance of military strength, and the search for greatest advantage practically obtainable from the world's resources.

European colonial activity (1763–c. 1875)

Stages of history rarely, if ever, come in neat packages: the roots of new historical periods begin to form in earlier eras, while many aspects of an older phase linger on and help shape the new. Nonetheless, there was a convergence of developments in the early 1760s, which, despite many qualifications, delineates a new stage in European expansionism and especially in that of the most successful empire builder, Great Britain. It is not only the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain that can be traced to this period but also the consequences of England's decisive victory over France in the Seven Years' War and the beginnings of what turned out to be the second British Empire. As a result of the Treaty of Paris, France lost nearly all of its colonial empire, while Britain became, except for Spain, the largest colonial power in the world.

The second British Empire

The removal of threat from the strongest competing foreign power set the stage for Britain's conquest of India and for operations against the North American Indians to extend British settlement in Canada and westerly areas of the North American continent. In addition, the new commanding position on the seas provided an opportunity for Great Britain to probe for additional markets in Asia and Africa and to try to break the Spanish trade monopoly in South America. During this period, the scope of British world interests broadened dramatically to cover the South Pacific, the Far East, the South Atlantic, and the coast of Africa.

The initial aim of this outburst of maritime activity was not so much the acquisition of extensive fresh territory as the attainment of a far-flung network of trading posts and maritime bases. The latter, it was hoped, would serve the interdependent aims of widening foreign commerce and controlling ocean shipping routes. But in the long run many of these initial bases turned out to be steppingstones to future territorial conquests. Because the indigenous populations did not always take kindly to foreign incursions into their homelands, even when the foreigners limited themselves to small enclaves, penetration of interiors was often necessary to secure base areas against attack.

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Involvement in Africa

Although Britain's energetic activity to suppress the slave trade was far from effective, its diplomatic and military operations for this end led it to much greater involvement in African affairs. Additional colonies were acquired (Sierra Leone, 1808; Gambia, 1816; Gold Coast, 1821) to serve as bases for suppressing the slave trade and for stimulating substitute commerce. British naval squadrons touring the coast of Africa, stopping and inspecting suspected slavers of other nations, and forcing African tribal chiefs to sign antislavery treaties did not halt the expansion of the slave trade, but they did help Britain attain a commanding position along the west coast of Africa, which in turn contributed to the expansion of both its commercial and colonial empire.

The growth of informal empire

The transformation of the old colonial and mercantilist commercial system was completed when, in addition to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, the Corn Laws and the Navigation Acts were repealed in the late 1840s. The repeal of the Navigation Acts acknowledged the new reality: the primacy of Britain's navy and merchant shipping. The repeal of the Corn Laws (which had protected agricultural interests) signalled the maturation of the Industrial Revolution. In the light of Britain's manufacturing supremacy, exclusivity and monopolistic trade restraints were less important than, and often detrimental to, the need for ever-expanding world markets and sources of inexpensive raw materials and food.

With the new trade strategy, under the impetus of freer trade and technical progress, came a broadening of the concept of empire. It was found that the commercial and financial advantages of formal empire could often be derived by informal

means. The development of a worldwide trade network, the growth of overseas banking, the export of capital to less advanced regions, the leading position of London's money markets—all under the shield of a powerful and mobile navy—led to Great Britain's economic preeminence and influence in many parts of the world, even in the absence of political control.

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The emigration of European peoples

European influence around the globe increased with each new wave of emigration from Europe. Tides of settlers brought with them the Old World culture and, often, useful agricultural and industrial skills. An estimated 55,000,000 Europeans left their native lands in the 100 years after 1820, the product chiefly of two forces: (1) the push to emigrate as a result of difficulties arising from economic dislocations at home and (2) the pull of land, jobs, and recruitment activities of passenger shipping lines and agents of labour-hungry entrepreneurs in the New World. Other factors were also clearly at work, such as the search for religious freedom, escape from tyrannical governments, avoidance of military conscription, and the desire for greater upward social and economic mobility. Such motives had existed throughout the centuries, however, and they are insufficient to explain the massive population movements that characterized the 19th century. Unemployment induced by rapid technological changes in agriculture and industry was an important incentive for English emigration in the mid-1800s. The surge of German emigration at roughly the same time is largely attributable to an agricultural revolution in Germany, which nearly ruined many farmers on small holdings in southwestern Germany. Under English rule, the Irish were prevented from industrial development and were directed to an economy based on export of cereals grown on small holdings. A potato blight, followed by famine and eviction of farm tenants by landlords, gave large numbers of Irish no alternative other than emigration or starvation. These three nationalities—English, German, and Irish—composed the largest group of migrants in the 1850s. In later years Italians and Slavs contributed substantially to the population spillover. The emigrants spread throughout the world, but the bulk of the population transfer went to the Americas, Siberia, and Australasia. The population outflow, greatly facilitated by European supremacy outside Europe, helped ease the social pressures and probably abated the dangers of social upheaval in Europe itself.

Advance of the U.S. frontier

The outward movement of European peoples in any substantial numbers naturally was tied in with conquest and, to a greater or lesser degree, with the displacement of indigenous populations. In the United States, where by far the largest number of European emigrants went, acquisition of space for development by white immigrants entailed activity on two fronts: competition with rival European nations and disposition of the Indians. During a large part of the 19th century, the United States remained alert to the danger of encirclement by Europeans, but in addition the search for more fertile land, pursuit of the fur trade, and desire for ports to serve commerce in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans nourished the drive to penetrate the American continent. The most pressing points of tension with European nations were eliminated during the first half of the century: purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 gave the United States control over the heartland of the continent; settlement of the War of 1812 ended British claims south of the 49th parallel up to the Rocky Mountains; Spain's cession of the Floridas in 1819 rounded out the Atlantic coastal frontier; and Russia's (1824) and Great Britain's (1846) relinquishment of claims to the Oregon territory gave the United States its window on the Pacific. The expansion of the United States, however, was not confined to liquidating rival claims of overseas empires; it also involved taking territory from neighbouring Mexico. Settlers from the United States wrested Texas from Mexico (1836), and war against Mexico (1846–48) led to the U.S. annexation of the southwestern region between New Mexico and Utah to the Pacific Ocean.

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The new imperialism (c. 1875–1914)

Reemergence of colonial rivalries

Although there are sharp differences of opinion over the reasons for, and the significance of, the “new imperialism,” there is little dispute that at least two developments in the late 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century signify a new departure: (1) notable speedup in colonial acquisitions; (2) an increase in the number of colonial powers.

New acquisitions

The annexations during this new phase of imperial growth differed significantly from the expansionism earlier in the 19th century. While the latter was substantial in magnitude, it was primarily devoted to the consolidation of claimed territory (by penetration of continental interiors and more effective rule over indigenous populations) and only secondarily to new

acquisitions. On the other hand, the new imperialism was characterized by a burst of activity in carving up as yet independent areas: taking over almost all Africa, a good part of Asia, and many Pacific islands. This new vigour in the pursuit of colonies is reflected in the fact that the rate of new territorial acquisitions of the new imperialism was almost three times that of the earlier period. Thus, the increase in new territories claimed in the first 75 years of the 19th century averaged about 83,000 square miles (215,000 square kilometres) a year. As against this, the colonial powers added an average of about 240,000 square miles (620,000 square kilometres) a year between the late 1870s and World War I (1914–18). By the beginning of that war, the new territory claimed was for the most part fully conquered, and the main military resistance of the indigenous populations had been suppressed. Hence, in 1914, as a consequence of this new expansion and conquest on top of that of preceding centuries, the colonial powers, their colonies, and their former colonies extended over approximately 85 percent of the Earth's surface. Economic and political control by leading powers reached almost the entire globe, for, in addition to colonial rule, other means of domination were exercised in the form of spheres of influence, special commercial treaties, and the subordination that lenders often impose on debtor nations.

New colonial powers

This intensification of the drive for colonies reflected much more than a new wave of overseas activities by traditional colonial powers, including Russia. The new imperialism was distinguished particularly by the emergence of additional nations seeking slices of the colonial pie: Germany, the United States, Belgium, Italy, and, for the first time, an Asian power, Japan. Indeed, this very multiplication of colonial powers, occurring in a relatively short period, accelerated the tempo of colonial growth. Unoccupied space that could potentially be colonized was limited. Therefore, the more nations there were seeking additional colonies at about the same time, the greater was the premium on speed. Thus, the rivalry among the colonizing nations reached new heights, which in turn strengthened the motivation for preclusive occupation of territory and for attempts to control territory useful for the military defense of existing empires against rivals.

The impact of the new upsurge of rivalry is well illustrated in the case of Great Britain. Relying on its economic preeminence in manufacturing, trade, and international finance as well as on its undisputed mastery of the seas during most of the 19th century, Great Britain could afford to relax in the search for new colonies, while concentrating on consolidation of the empire in hand and on building up an informal empire. But the challenge of new empire builders, backed up by increasing naval power, put a new priority on Britain's desire to extend its colonial empire. On the other hand, the more that potential colonial space shrank, the greater became the urge of lesser powers to remedy disparities in size of empires by redivision of the colonial world. The struggle over contested space and for redivision of empire generated an increase in wars among the colonial powers and an intensification of diplomatic manoeuvring.

Rise of new industrialized nations

Parallel with the emergence of new powers seeking a place in the colonial sun and the increasing rivalry among existing colonial powers was the rise of industrialized nations able and willing to challenge Great Britain's lead in industry, finance, and world trade. In the mid-19th century Britain's economy outdistanced by far its potential rivals. But, by the last quarter of that century, Britain was confronted by restless competitors seeking a greater share of world trade and finance; the Industrial Revolution had gained a strong foothold in these nations, which were spurred on to increasing industrialization with the spread of railroad lines and the maturation of integrated national markets.

Moreover, the major technological innovations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries improved the competitive potential of the newer industrial nations. Great Britain's advantage as the progenitor of the first Industrial Revolution diminished substantially as the newer products and sources of energy of what has been called a second Industrial Revolution began to dominate industrial activity. The late starters, having digested the first Industrial Revolution, now had a more equal footing with Great Britain: they were all starting out more or less from the same base to exploit the second Industrial Revolution. This new industrialism, notably featuring mass-produced steel, electric power and oil as sources of energy, industrial chemistry, and the internal-combustion engine, spread over western Europe, the United States, and eventually Japan.

A world economy

To operate efficiently, the new industries required heavy capital investment in large-scale units. Accordingly, they encouraged the development of capital markets and banking institutions that were large and flexible enough to finance the new enterprises. The larger capital markets and industrial enterprises, in turn, helped push forward the geographic scale of operations of the industrialized nations: more capital could now be mobilized for foreign loans and investment, and the bigger businesses had the resources for the worldwide search for and development of the raw materials essential to the success and security of their investments. Not only did the new industrialism generate a voracious appetite for raw materials, but food for the swelling urban populations was now also sought in the far corners of the world. Advances in ship construction (steamships using steel hulls, twin screws, and compound engines) made feasible the inexpensive movement of bulk raw materials and food over long ocean distances. Under the pressures and opportunities of the later decades of the 19th century, more and more of the world was drawn upon as primary producers for the industrialized nations. Self-

contained economic regions dissolved into a world economy, involving an international division of labour whereby the leading industrial nations made and sold manufactured products and the rest of the world supplied them with raw materials and food.

New militarism

The complex of social, political, and economic changes that accompanied the new industrialism and the vastly expanded and integrated world commerce also provided a setting for intensified commercial rivalry, the rebuilding of high tariff walls, and a revival of militarism. Of special importance militarily was the race in naval construction, which was propelled by the successful introduction and steady improvement of radically new warships that were steam driven, armour-plated, and equipped with weapons able to penetrate the new armour. Before the development of these new technologies, Britain's naval superiority was overwhelming and unchallengeable. But because Britain was now obliged in effect to build a completely new navy, other nations with adequate industrial capacities and the will to devote their resources to this purpose could challenge Britain's supremacy at sea.

The new militarism and the intensification of colonial rivalry signalled the end of the relatively peaceful conditions of the mid-19th century. The conflict over the partition of Africa, the South African War (the Boer War), the Sino-Japanese War, the Spanish-American War, and the Russo-Japanese War were among the indications that the new imperialism had opened a new era that was anything but peaceful.

The new imperialism also represented an intensification of tendencies that had originated in earlier periods. Thus, for example, the decision by the United States to go to war with Spain cannot be isolated from the long-standing interest of the United States in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The defeat of Spain and the suppression of the independence revolutions in Cuba and the Philippines gave substance to the Monroe Doctrine: the United States now became the dominant power in the Caribbean, and the door was opened for acquisition of greater influence in Latin America. Possession of the Philippines was consistent with the historic interest of the United States in the commerce of the Pacific, as it had already manifested by its long interest in Hawaii (annexed in 1898) and by an expedition by Commodore Matthew Perry to Japan (1853).

Historiographical debate

The new imperialism marked the end of vacillation over the choice of imperialist military and political policies; similar decisions to push imperialist programs to the forefront were made by the leading industrial nations over a relatively short period. This historical conjuncture requires explanation and still remains the subject of debate among historians and social scientists. The pivot of the controversy is the degree to which the new imperialism was the product of primarily economic forces and in particular whether it was a necessary attribute of the capitalist system.

Serious analysts on both sides of the argument recognize that there is a multitude of factors involved: the main protagonists of economic imperialism recognize that political, military, and ideological influences were also at work; similarly, many who dispute the economic imperialism thesis acknowledge that economic interests played a significant role. The problem, however, is one of assigning priority to causes.

[...]

Partition of Africa

By the turn of the 20th century, the map of Africa looked like a huge jigsaw puzzle, with most of the boundary lines having been drawn in a sort of game of give-and-take played in the foreign offices of the leading European powers. The division of Africa, the last continent to be so carved up, was essentially a product of the new imperialism, vividly highlighting its essential features. In this respect, the timing and the pace of the scramble for Africa are especially noteworthy. Before 1880 colonial possessions in Africa were relatively few and limited to coastal areas, with large sections of the coastline and almost all the interior still independent. By 1900 Africa was almost entirely divided into separate territories that were under the administration of European nations. The only exceptions were Liberia, generally regarded as being under the special protection of the United States; Morocco, conquered by France a few years later; Libya, later taken over by Italy; and Ethiopia.

The second feature of the new imperialism was also strongly evident. It was in Africa that Germany made its first major bid for membership in the club of colonial powers: between May 1884 and February 1885, Germany announced its claims to territory in South West Africa (now South West Africa/Namibia), Togoland, Cameroon, and part of the East African coast opposite Zanzibar. Two smaller nations, Belgium and Italy, also entered the ranks, and even Portugal and Spain once again became active in bidding for African territory. The increasing number of participants in itself sped up the race for conquest. And with the heightened rivalry came more intense concern for preclusive occupation, increased attention to military

arguments for additional buffer zones, and, in a period when free trade was giving way to protective tariffs and discriminatory practices in colonies as well as at home, a growing urgency for protected overseas markets. Not only the wish but also the means were at hand for this carving up of the African pie. Repeating rifles, machine guns, and other advances in weaponry gave the small armies of the conquering nations the effective power to defeat the much larger armies of the peoples of Africa. Rapid railroad construction provided the means for military, political, and economic consolidation of continental interiors. With the new steamships, settlers and materials could be moved to Africa with greater dispatch, and bulk shipments of raw materials and food from Africa, prohibitively costly for some products in the days of the sailing ship, became economically feasible and profitable.

Penetration of Islamic North Africa was complicated, on the one hand, by the struggle among European powers for control of the Mediterranean Sea and, on the other hand, by the suzerainty that the Ottoman Empire exercised to a greater or lesser extent over large sections of the region. Developments in both respects contributed to the wave of partition toward the end of the 19th century. First, Ottoman power was perceptibly waning: the military balance had tipped decisively in favour of the European nations, and Turkey was becoming increasingly dependent on loans from European centres of capital (in the late 1870s Turkey needed half of its government income just to service its foreign debt). Second, the importance of domination of the Mediterranean increased significantly after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869.

France was the one European nation that had established a major beachhead in Islamic North Africa before the 1880s. At a time when Great Britain was too preoccupied to interfere, the French captured the fortress of Algiers in 1830. Frequent revolts kept the French Army busy in the Algerian interior for another 50 years before all Algeria was under full French rule. While Tunisia and Egypt had been areas of great interest to European powers during the long period of France's Algerian takeover, the penetration of these countries had been informal, confined to diplomatic and financial maneuvers. Italy, as well as France and England, had loaned large sums to the ruling *beys* of Tunisia to help loosen that country's ties with Turkey. The inability of the *beys* to service the foreign debt in the 1870s led to the installation of debt commissioners by the lenders. Tunisia's revenues were pledged to pay the interest due on outstanding bonds; in fact, the debt charges had first call on the government's income. With this came increased pressure on the people for larger tax payments and a growing popular dissatisfaction with a government that had "sold out" to foreigners. The weakness of the ruling group, intensified by the danger of popular revolt or a military coup, opened the door further for formal occupation by one of the interested foreign powers. When Italy's actions showed that it might be preparing for outright possession, France jumped the gun by invading Tunisia in 1881 and then completed its conquest by defeating the rebellions precipitated by this occupation.

The Europeans in North Africa

The course of Egypt's loss of sovereignty resembled somewhat the same process in Tunisia: easy credit extended by Europeans, bankruptcy, increasing control by foreign-debt commissioners, mulcting of the peasants to raise revenue for servicing the debt, growing independence movements, and finally military conquest by a foreign power. In Egypt, inter-imperialist rivalry, mainly between Great Britain and France, reached back to the early 19th century but was intensified under the circumstances of the new imperialism and the construction of the Suez Canal. By building the Suez Canal and financing Egypt's ruling group, France had gained a prominent position in Egypt. But Britain's interests were perhaps even more pressing because the Suez Canal was a strategic link to its empire and its other Eastern trade and colonial interests. The successful nationalist revolt headed by the Egyptian army imminently threatened in the 1880s the interests of both powers. France, occupied with war in Tunisia and with internal political problems, did not participate in the military intervention to suppress the revolt. Great Britain bombarded Alexandria in 1882, landed troops, and thus obtained control of Egypt. Unable to find a stable collaborationist government that would also pay Egypt's debts and concerned with suppressing not only the rebellion but also a powerful anti-Egyptian Mahdist revolt in the Sudan, Britain completely took over the reins of government in Egypt.

The rest of North Africa was carved up in the early 20th century. France, maneuvering for possession of Morocco, which bordered on her Algerian colony, tried to obtain the acquiescence of the other powers by both secret and open treaties granting Italy a free hand in Libya, allotting to Spain a sphere of influence, and acknowledging Britain's paramountcy in Egypt. France had, however, overlooked Germany's ambitions, now backed by an increasingly effective army and navy. The tension created by Germany led to an international conference at Algeiras (1906), which produced a short-lived compromise, including recognition of France's paramount interest, Spanish participation in policing Morocco, and an open door for the country's economic penetration by other nations. But France's vigorous pursuit of her claims, reinforced by the occupation of Casablanca and surrounding territory, precipitated critical confrontations, which reached their peak in 1911 when French troops were suppressing a Moroccan revolt and a German cruiser appeared before Agadir in a show of force. The resulting settlements completed the European partition of North Africa: France obtained the lion's share of Morocco; in return, Germany received a large part of the French Congo; Italy was given the green light for its war with Turkey over control of Tripoli, the first step in its eventual acquisition of Libya; and Spain was enabled to extend its Río de Oro protectorate to the southern frontier of Morocco. The more or less peaceful trade-offs by the occupying powers differed sharply from the long, bitter, and expensive wars they waged against the indigenous peoples and rulers of Islamic North Africa to solidify European rule.

The race for colonies in sub-Saharan Africa

The partition of Africa below the Sahara took place at two levels: (1) on paper—in deals made among colonial powers who were seeking colonies partly for the sake of the colonies themselves and partly as pawns in the power play of European nations struggling for world dominance—and (2) in the field—in battles of conquest against African states and tribes and in military confrontations among the rival powers themselves. This process produced, over and above the ravages of colonialism, a wasp's nest of problems that was to plague African nations long after they achieved independence. Boundary lines between colonies were often drawn arbitrarily, with little or no attention to ethnic unity, regional economic ties, tribal migratory patterns, or even natural boundaries.

Before the race for partition, only three European powers—France, Portugal, and Britain—had territory in tropical Africa, located mainly in West Africa. Only France had moved into the interior along the Sénégal River. The other French colonies or spheres of influence were located along the Ivory Coast and in Dahomey (now Benin) and Gabon. Portugal held on to some coastal points in Angola, Mozambique (Moçambique), and Portuguese Guinea (now Guinea-Bissau). While Great Britain had a virtual protectorate over Zanzibar in East Africa, its actual possessions were on the west coast in the Gambia, the Gold Coast, the Sierra Leone, all of them surrounded by African states that had enough organization and military strength to make the British hesitate about further expansion. Meanwhile, the ground for eventual occupation of the interior of tropical Africa was being prepared by explorers, missionaries, and traders. But such penetration remained tenuous until the construction of railroads and the arrival of steamships on navigable waterways made it feasible for European merchants to dominate the trade of the interior and for European governments to consolidate conquests.

Once conditions were ripe for the introduction of railroads and steamships in West Africa, tensions between the English and French increased as each country tried to extend its sphere of influence. As customs duties, the prime source of colonial revenue, could be evaded in uncontrolled ports, both powers began to stretch their coastal frontiers, and overlapping claims and disputes soon arose. The commercial penetration of the interior created additional rivalry and set off a chain reaction. The drive for exclusive control over interior areas intensified in response to both economic competition and the need for protection from African states resisting foreign intrusion. This drive for African possessions was intensified by the new entrants to the colonial race who felt menaced by the possibility of being completely locked out.

Perhaps the most important stimulants to the scramble for colonies south of the Sahara were the opening up of the Congo River basin by Belgium's king Leopold II and Germany's energetic annexationist activities on both the east and west coasts. As the dash for territory began to accelerate, 15 nations convened in Berlin in 1884 for the West African Conference, which, however, merely set ground rules for the ensuing intensified scramble for colonies. It also recognized the Congo Free State (now Congo [Kinshasa]) ruled by King Leopold, while insisting that the rivers in the Congo basin be open to free trade. From his base in the Congo, the king subsequently took over mineral-rich Katanga region, transferring both territories to Belgium in 1908.

In West Africa, Germany concentrated on consolidating its possessions of Togoland and Cameroon (Kamerun), while England and France pushed northward and eastward from their bases: England concentrated on the Niger region, the centre of its commercial activity, while France aimed at joining its possessions at Lake Chad within a grand design for an empire of contiguous territories from Algeria to the Congo. Final boundaries were arrived at after the British had defeated, among others, the Ashanti, the Fanti Confederation, the Opobo kingdom, and the Fulani; and the French won wars against the Fon kingdom, the Tuareg, the Mandingo, and other resisting tribes. The boundaries determined by conquest and agreement between the conquerors gave France the lion's share: in addition to the extension of its former coastal possessions, France acquired French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, while Britain carved out its Nigerian colony.

In southern Africa, the intercolonial rivalries chiefly involved the British, the Portuguese, the South African Republic of the Transvaal, the British-backed Cape Colony, and the Germans. The acquisitive drive was enormously stimulated by dreams of wealth generated by the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West and gold in Matabeleland. Encouraged by these discoveries, Cecil Rhodes (heading the British South Africa Company) and other entrepreneurs expected to find gold, copper, and diamonds in the regions surrounding the Transvaal, among them Bechuanaland, Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and Trans-Zambezia. In the ensuing struggle, which involved the conquest of the Nbele and Shona peoples, Britain obtained control over Bechuanaland and, through the British South Africa Company, over the areas later designated as the Rhodesias and Nyasaland. At the same time, Portugal moved inland to seize control over the colony of Mozambique. It was clearly the rivalries of stronger powers, especially the concern of Germany and France over the extension of British rule in southern Africa, that enabled a weak Portugal to have its way in Angola and Mozambique.

The boundary lines in East Africa were arrived at largely in settlements between Britain and Germany, the two chief rivals in that region. Zanzibar and the future Tanganyika were divided in the Anglo-German treaty of 1890: Britain obtained the future Uganda and recognition of its paramount interest in Zanzibar and Pemba in exchange for ceding the strategic North Sea island of Heligoland (Helgoland) and noninterference in Germany's acquisitions in Tanganyika, Rwanda, and Urundi. Britain began to build an East African railroad to the coast, establishing the East African Protectorate (later Kenya) over the area where the railroad was to be built.

Rivalry in northeastern Africa between the French and British was based on domination of the upper end of the Nile. Italy had established itself at two ends of Ethiopia, in an area on the Red Sea that the Italians called Eritrea and in Italian Somaliland along the Indian Ocean. Italy's inland thrust led to war with Ethiopia and defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians at Adwa in 1896. Ethiopia, surrounded by Italian and British armies, had turned to French advisers. The unique victory by

an African state over a European army strengthened French influence in Ethiopia and enabled France to stage military expeditions from Ethiopia as well as from the Congo in order to establish footholds on the Upper Nile. The resulting race between British and French armies ended in a confrontation at Fashoda in 1898, with the British army in the stronger position. War was narrowly avoided in a settlement that completed the partition of the region: eastern Sudan was to be ruled jointly by Britain and Egypt, while France was to have the remaining Sudan from the Congo and Lake Chad to Darfur.

Germany's entrance into southern Africa through occupation and conquest of South West Africa touched off an upsurge of British colonial activity in that area, notably the separation of Basutoland (Lesotho) as a crown colony from the Cape Colony and the annexation of Zululand. As a consequence of the South African (Boer) War (1899–1902) Britain obtained sovereignty over the Transvaal and the Afrikaner Orange Free State.

[...]

The British Empire

Britain tended toward a decentralized and empirical type of colonial administration, in which some degree of partial decolonization could prepare the way for eventual self-rule. Realizing that direct rule over ancient civilized lands could not last indefinitely, Britain worked for a continued British presence in areas where the empire conferred self-government.

Middle East

At the outset of World War I, Britain had proclaimed a protectorate over Egypt, annulling Ottoman sovereignty; afterward, Egyptian nationalist leaders finally brought the British to recognize Egypt as an independent kingdom in 1922. In 1936–37 Egypt received control over its own economic development, and British military forces were confined to the Suez Canal area. Britain granted Iraq independence in 1932 but retained a military power base in the new kingdom. Both the world strategic balance and the British petroleum industry ruled out any possibility of a real British withdrawal from either of these Middle Eastern states.

In Palestine the political claims of Arabs and Jews proved to be irreconcilable, and insurrection, terrorism, and occasional guerrilla warfare marked the whole period of British rule. Finally, in 1939, with war looming, the British decided to limit and eventually terminate the flow of Jewish refugees into Palestine, though not proposing to force the more than 500,000 Jewish inhabitants to live under an Arab national regime. Transjordan, detached from Palestine, became a British protectorate.

India

In India Britain faced a powerful adversary, the Indian National Congress, uniting businessmen and working classes, Hindus of high and low caste, in a common drive toward independence. The Congress never, however, succeeded in bridging the gap that separated the country's Hindu and Sikh majority from its 90,000,000 Muslims. The British met the Indian anticolonial movement half way. In 1919–23 a series of measures gave the Indians a certain degree of self-rule in a “dyarchy” in which elected Indian ministers governed together with British administrators. These constitutional reforms, however, failed to bring the princely states into line with the new trend toward self-rule. Though Mahatma Gandhi denounced the new system as a “whited sepulchre,” Congress in fact began to participate in the governmental process. Under the constitution granted in 1935–37, the British maintained separate voting rolls for the Muslim minority, in order to ensure its proportional representation; in 1939 relations between Britain and the Congress Party were tense, but India was clearly headed for independence in some form.

In 1937 the British gave a separate constitution to Burma. Ceylon (renamed Sri Lanka in 1972) had been separate and self-governing from 1931.

Africa

In British Africa decolonization progressed more slowly, but London began to accept it as an ultimate outcome. In Kenya, for example, the British government refused to grant the 20,000 European settlers in the “white highlands” any kind of direct political power over the mass of tribal blacks who constituted the colony's overwhelming majority. In British West Africa the passage from direct colonial government to self-rule by a black elite had started by 1939, there being no white settlers or Indian merchants (as there were in East Africa) to complicate matters. Only in the mining areas of Northern Rhodesia (the Copperbelt) and in Southern Rhodesia, where white farmer settlers enjoyed self-government and caste privileges over a disenfranchised black majority, did decolonization make no headway at all.

Overseas France

France, in contrast to Britain, preferred centralized and assimilative methods in an effort to integrate its colonies into a greater Overseas France. It made no progress in colonial devolution and refused even to grant independence to Syria and Lebanon. In North Africa the French energetically implanted large agrarian capitalist enterprises as well as some industries connected with the area's mineral wealth. These modern production centres and infrastructures were directed and financed by metropolitan French business and were staffed and operated by a large, politically aggressive European settler population. The Muslim majority was subordinate both politically and economically; North African peasants struggled to subsist on the margins. Overt resistance was strongest in Morocco, where a rural Muslim rebellion endangered both the French and the Spanish protectorates. Abd el-Krim, a Berber Moroccan leader who combined tradition with modern nationalism, waged a brilliant five-year campaign till a combined French and Spanish force finally defeated him in 1926. After 1934, resistance to France revived in Morocco, this time in the cities. In Tunisia resistance was centred in Habib Bourguiba's constitutional party; in Algeria the urban Muslim middle classes merely asked for true civil rights and integration. The French Communist Party did not move to mobilize the peasant masses in an anticolonial struggle, and, in consequence, future rebellion in the Maghrib was to be Arab nationalist and not Marxist in its leadership and doctrines.

Matters were different in French Indochina, where the growth of a modern, French-directed agricultural economy had thrown masses of peasants into debt slavery. The circumstances favoured the formation of an independence movement much influenced by both the Chinese Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) and the Chinese Communist Party; the movement in the 1930s took the form of a Communist party under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh.

French sub-Saharan Africa attracted no European settler population. The French colonial authorities promoted a shift from subsistence to market economies, and their methods, including labour conscription for public works, led to protest and questions in the French parliament. The results, guaranteed by a protective tariff linking the colonies to France, were solid but unspectacular.

Axis Powers

In the 1930s an aggressive new colonialism developed on the part of the Axis Powers, which developed a new colonial doctrine ("living space" in German geopolitics, the "empire" in Italian Fascist ideology, the "co-prosperity sphere" in Japan) aiming at the repartition of the world's colonial areas, justified by the supposed racial superiority, higher birth rates, and greater productivity that the Axis Powers enjoyed as against the "decadent" West. To this the Japanese added a slogan of their own, "Asia for the Asians." In fact, the three powers aimed at carving out for themselves vast, self-sufficient empires. Though intent on a new colonialism of their own, they had to use anticolonialism as a political instrument before and during World War II; in doing so, they helped in the process of world decolonization.

Fascist Italy's first colonial war was a long, bloody campaign in Cyrenaica that lasted until the early 1930s, when Italy began developing Libya as a place of settlement for Italian peasants. Then a dispute over the border between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia (1934) gave the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, the opportunity to move against the African power that had routed Italian armies at Adwa. In October 1935 Italian troops from Eritrea moved into the Tigray province of northern Ethiopia, although war was never declared. Ethiopia, underequipped and feudal, could not long hold out in open combat, especially against Italian air attacks. In May 1936 Italian motorized columns reached Addis Ababa, and the Emperor went into exile. Mussolini proclaimed the Italian "empire" in East Africa. In reality, however, Ethiopian feudal chiefs continued violent resistance, even in the environs of the capital, while the Italians massacred hundreds of nobles, clergy, and commoners in an effort to repress Ethiopia by terror. In this their success was limited. The Italians built roads and kept control over all principal communication lines, but they never subdued the mountainous hinterland.

The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, Japan's new order, amounted to a self-contained empire from Manchuria to the Dutch East Indies, including China, Indochina, Thailand, and Malaya as satellite states. Japan intended to exclude both European imperialism and Communist influence from the entire Far East, while ensuring Japanese political and industrial hegemony.

[...]Africa

During World War II Italy lost its entire colonial domain. Ethiopia was restored as an independent empire, and the other colonies eventually came under UN jurisdiction, in the first step toward decolonization in the African continent.

Decolonization from 1945

In the first postwar years there were some prospects that (except in the case of the Indian subcontinent) decolonization might come gradually and on terms favourable to the continued world power positions of the western European colonial nations. After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu (Vietnam) in 1954 and the abortive Anglo-French Suez expedition of 1956, however, decolonization took on an irresistible momentum, so that by the mid-1970s only scattered vestiges of Europe's colonial territories remained.

The reasons for this accelerated decolonization were threefold. First, the two postwar superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, preferred to exert their might by indirect means of penetration—ideological, economic, and military—often supplanting previous colonial rulers; both the United States and the Soviet Union took up positions opposed to colonialism. Second, the mass revolutionary movements of the colonial world fought colonial wars that were expensive and bloody. Third, the war-weary public of western Europe eventually refused any further sacrifices to maintain overseas colonies.

In general, those colonies that offered neither concentrated resources nor strategic advantages and that harboured no European settlers won easy separation from their overlords. Armed struggle against colonialism centred in a few areas, which mark the real milestones in the history of postwar decolonization.

[...]Wars in overseas France, 1945–56

The constitution of the French Fourth Republic provided for token decentralization of colonial rule, and cycles of revolt and repression marked French history for 15 years after the end of World War II. The first colonial war was in Indochina, where a power vacuum, caused by Japan's removal after wartime occupation, gave a unique opportunity to the Communist Viet Minh. When in 1946 the French Army tried to regain the colony, the Communists, proclaiming a republic, resorted to the political and military strategies of Mao Tse-tung to wear down and eventually defeat France. All chances for maintaining a semicolonial administration in Indochina ended when the Communists won the civil war in China (1949). Eventually, in 1954, when the French engaged the Communist armies in a pitched battle at Dien Bien Phu, the Communists won with the help of new heavy guns supplied by the Chinese. The Fourth Republic left Indochina under the terms of the Geneva Accords (1954), which set up two independent regimes.

By 1954 French North Africa was beginning to stir; guerrilla warfare occurred in both Morocco (where the French had deposed and exiled Sultan Muhammad V) and Tunisia. On November 1, 1954, Algerian rebels began a revolt against France in which for the first time urban Muslims and Muslim peasants joined forces. In March 1956 France accorded complete independence to Morocco and Tunisia, while the army concentrated on a “revolutionary” counterinsurgent war in order to hold Algeria, where French rule had solid local support from about a million European settlers. The Muslim rebels depended on help from the Arab world, especially Egypt. Hence the French took the initiative, in October 1956, in forming an alliance with Nasser's principal adversaries, Britain and Israel, to reclaim the Suez Canal for the West and overthrow the pan-Arab regime in Cairo.

The Sinai-Suez campaign (October–November 1956)

On October 29, 1956, Israel's army attacked Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula, and within 48 hours the British and French were fighting Egypt for control of the Suez area. But the Western allies found Egyptian resistance more determined than they had anticipated. Before they could turn their invasion into a real occupation, U.S. and Soviet pressure forced them to desist (November 7). The Suez campaign was thus a political disaster for the two colonial powers. The events of November 1956 showed the decline of European colonialism to be irreversible.

Algeria and French decolonization, from 1956

Between 1956 and 1958 French army commanders in Algeria, politically radicalized, tried to promote a new Franco-Muslim society in preparation for Algeria's total integration into France. Hundreds of thousands of rural Muslims were resettled under French military control, Algiers was successfully cleared of all guerrilla cells, French investments in Saharan petroleum grew, and, in a dramatic climax, a coalition of European settlers, colonial troops, and armed forces commanders in May 1958 refused further obedience to the Fourth Republic.

Charles de Gaulle, first president of the Fifth Republic, thought that the effort of fighting colonial wars had prevented France from developing nuclear weapons and also came to realize that Algerian Muslims could not be converted to a French identity. He began to negotiate with the rebels; the negotiations culminated in a plebiscite, French evacuation, and proclamation of the independence of Muslim Algeria (July 1962). De Gaulle then proceeded to develop a nuclear striking force as the new foundation of France's status as a great power. The Fifth Republic moved rapidly toward freeing the colonies of sub-Saharan Africa, and France's colonial realm became vestigial and insular.

British decolonization after 1956

During the 15 years after the Suez disaster, Britain divested itself of most colonial holdings and abandoned most power positions in Africa and Asia. In 1958 the pro-British monarchy in Iraq fell; during the 1960s Cyprus and Malta became independent; and in 1971 Britain left the Persian Gulf. Of the imperial lifelines, only Gibraltar remains. After 1956 Britain

moved rapidly to grant independence to its black African colonies. One British colony, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), broke away unilaterally in 1965.

In Malaya the British fought a successful counterinsurgent war against a predominantly Chinese guerrilla movement and then turned over sovereignty to a federal Malaysian government (1957). In 1971 the Royal Navy left Singapore (an independent state since 1965), thus ending British presence in the Far East except (until 1997) at Hong Kong and (until 1983) at Brunei.

Britain's world position shrank, in effect, to membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Economic Community, with the postcolonial Commonwealth decreasing in importance.

Dutch, Belgian, and Portuguese decolonization

After World War II the Dutch tried to regain some of their lost control in Indonesia. The Sukarno regime held fast through three years of intermittent war, however, and the Dutch found no allies and no international support. In 1950 Indonesia became a centralized, independent republic.

The Belgian administration in the Congo had never trained even a small number of Africans much beyond the grade-school level. When Britain and France began to divest themselves of their colonies, Belgium was in no position to impose on the Congo a schedule of its own for gradual withdrawal. The abrupt granting of independence to the Belgian Congo in the summer of 1960 led to a series of civil wars, with intervention by the UN, European business interests employing white mercenaries, and other outside forces. In 1965 Joseph Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko) gained control over the central government and created an independent African state; called Zaire from 1971, it was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997.

Portugal, in the 20th century the poorest and least developed of the western European powers, was the first nation (with Spain) to establish itself as a colonial power and the last to give up its colonial possessions. In Portuguese Africa during the authoritarian regime of António de Oliveira Salazar, the settler population had grown to about 400,000. After 1961 pan-African pressures grew, and Portugal found itself mired in a series of colonial wars, while the development of mining in Angola and Mozambique revealed hitherto unknown economic assets. In 1974 the armed forces overthrew the successors to Salazar, and in the unstable political situation it became clear that Portugal would cut its colonial ties to Africa. Portuguese Guinea (Guinea-Bissau) became independent in 1974. In June 1975 Mozambique achieved independence as a people's republic; in July 1975 São Tomé and Príncipe became an independent republic; and in November of the same year Angola, involved in a civil war between three rival liberation movements, also received sovereignty.

Conclusion

Historians will long debate the heritage of economic development, mass bitterness, and cultural cleavage that colonialism has left to the world, but the political problems of decolonization are grave and immediate. The international community is laden with minute states unable to secure either sovereignty or solvency and with large states erected without a common ethnic base. The world's postcolonial areas often have been scenes of protracted and violent conflicts: ethnic, as in Nigeria's Biafran war (1967–70); national-religious, as in the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the civil wars in Cyprus, and the clashes between India and Pakistan; or purely political, as in the confrontation between Communist and Nationalist regimes in the divided Korean Peninsula. The end of colonialism did not bring with it the spread of new, neatly divided nation-states throughout the world, nor did it abate or ease rivalry between the great powers.

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