

Western Technology

Superior technology and improved medical knowledge helped to foster imperialism. Quinine enabled Europeans to survive tropical diseases and venture into the mosquito-infested interiors of Africa and Asia. The combination of the steamboat and the telegraph enabled the Western powers to increase their mobility and to quickly respond to any situations that threatened their dominance. The rapid-fire machine gun also gave them a military advantage and was helpful in convincing Africans and Asians to accept Western control. The following table summarizes the causes of the new imperialism:

Causes of New Imperialism			
Economic	Military/Political	Humanitarian/Religious	Technological
Need for markets	Need for military bases	White man's burden	New medicine
Raw materials	National security	Spread of Christianity	New weapons
Source of investments	Source of pride—nationalism	Social Darwinism (superiority of Western society)	Transportation

Imperialism in Africa

Africa was known as the **Dark Continent** and remained unknown to the outside world until the late nineteenth century because its interior—desert, mountains, plateaus, and jungles—discouraged exploration. Britain's occupation of Egypt and Belgium's penetration of the Congo started the race for colonial possessions in Africa.

Suez Canal

In 1875, Britain purchased a controlling interest in the **Suez Canal** from the bankrupt ruler of Egypt who was unable to repay loans that he had contracted for the canal and modernization of the country. The French, who organized the building of the Suez Canal under Ferdinand de Lesseps in 1859, owned the other shares. The Suez Canal was important because it shortened the route from Europe to South and East Asia. The canal also provided a lifeline to India, which Britain had made part of the British Empire in 1858. In 1882, Britain established a protectorate over Egypt, which meant that the government leaders were officials of the Ottoman Empire, but were really controlled by Great Britain. The British occupation of Egypt, the richest and most developed land in Africa, set off "African fever" in Europe. To ensure its domination and stability in the area, Great Britain extended its control over the Sudan as well.

Exploration of the Congo

In 1878, **Leopold II of Belgium** (b. 1835, ruled 1865–1909) sent Anglo-American newspaperman **Henry Stanley** (1841–1904), to explore the Congo and establish trade agreements with leaders in the Congo River basin. Stanley, in 1871, had "found" the great Scottish explorer and missionary **David Livingstone** (1813–1873), who had traveled throughout Africa for over thirty years. When several years passed without a word from him, it was feared that he was dead. Stanley was hired in 1869 by the *New York Herald*, an American newspaper to find Livingstone. His famous greeting, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume" became legendary, even though there is some question about its authenticity. Stanley's account of their meeting made headlines around the world and helped make him famous. Stanley eventually sold his services to Leopold II, who had formed a financial syndicate entitled **The International African Association**. A strong-willed monarch, Leopold II's intrusion into the Congo area raised questions about the political fate of Africa south of the Sahara. Other European nations were fearful that Belgium wanted to extend control over the entire area.

The Scramble for Africa

Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), Chancellor of Germany, and **Jules Ferry** (1832–1893), Premier of France and considered the builder of the modern French Empire, organized an international conference in Berlin to lay down the basic rules for colonizing Africa. The **Berlin Conference** (1884–1885) established the principle that European occupation of African territory had to be based on effective occupation that was recognized by other states, and that no single European power could claim Africa. The Berlin Conference led to the “Scramble for Africa.” Between 1878 and 1914, European powers divided up the entire African continent except for the independent countries of Ethiopia and Liberia. Liberia was settled by free slaves from the United States and became an independent republic in 1847. Ethiopia, which was already independent, routed an Italian invasion in 1896. Defeating the Italians assured that the country would stay independent. European countries divided Africa as follows:

France

The French had the largest colonial empire in Africa, over 3 ½ million square miles, half of which contained the Sahara Desert. In 1830, France had conquered Algeria in North Africa. Between 1881 and 1912, France acquired Tunisia, Morocco, West Africa, and Equatorial Africa. At its height, the French Empire in Africa was as large as the continental United States.

Great Britain

Britain’s holdings in Africa were not as large as France’s but it controlled the more populated regions, particularly of southern Africa, which contained valuable mineral resources such as diamonds and gold. In 1806, the British displaced Holland in South Africa and ruled the Cape Colony. However, the British soon came into conflict with the **Boers** (farmers), the original Dutch settlers who resented British rule. In the 1830s, the Boers left British territory, migrated north, and founded two republics—the Orange Free State and Transvaal. The Boers soon came into conflict with the powerful **Zulus**, a native-African ethnic group, for control of the land. When the Zulus and the Boers were unable to win a decisive victory, the British became involved in The Zulu Wars and eventually destroyed the Zulu empire. In 1890, **Cecil Rhodes** (1853–1902), who was born in Great Britain and had become a diamond mine millionaire, became prime minister of the Cape Colony. He wanted to extend the British African Empire from Cape Town to Cairo and decided to annex the Boer Republic. In the **Boer War** (1899–1902), the British, with great difficulty, defeated the Boers and annexed the two republics. In 1910, Britain combined its South African colonies into the Union of South Africa. Whites ran the government, and the Boers, who outnumbered the British, assumed control. This system laid the foundation for racial segregation that would last until the 1990s.

Germany

Late unification delayed Germany’s imperialistic ventures, but it also wanted its place in the sun. Germany took land in eastern and southwestern Africa.

Italy

Italy was another late entry into the imperialistic venture. Italy took control of Libya, Italian Somaliland, and Eritrea, which is the north-most province of Ethiopia, near the Red Sea. Italy’s efforts to gain control of Ethiopia ended in bitter defeat.

Portugal

Portugal carved out large colonies in Angola and Mozambique.