

## **African States from the Late 1700s to the Mid 1800s**

From the 1400s onwards, Western Europeans had taken valuable resources from Africa such as gold, ivory and slaves. In addition, they had established outposts, naval bases, and small colonies on both the west and east coasts of the continent.

After the Napoleonic Wars, the slave trade was deemed illegal in the majority of the Western nations. Even though illegal, it did continue for a while but the trans-Atlantic slave routes slowly declined.

What was to take place in Africa was **Imperialism – the political and economic control of one country by another. The area being controlled was called the “colony” and the imperial power controlling that nation or region was called the “mother country.”**

During the late 1700s and the early 1800s, several African states were strong enough to resist the European invasions. Other states, such as Benin, Oyo, Dahomey, Kongo and Asante (Ashanti) played large roles in the Atlantic slave trade and chose to work with the Europeans rather than fight against them. These nations had helped European traders and slavers capture and transport fellow Africans.

The Effects of the Slave Trade on Africa

Warfare	It encouraged groups of Africans to go to war with each other, as one group attempted to capture members of another group for the purpose of selling them
Violence	It encouraged a legacy of violence, bitterness and social upheaval, leaving many problems that are still not resolved today
Cultural Diffusion	It spread ideas and good between cultures. Europeans brought new weapons to Africa; Africans brought part of their cultures (like music) to the Americas

In West Africa several states, such as the Hausa, Fulani, and Yoruba states remained independent until the late 1800s. They formed, broke apart, and reformed, constantly fighting each other in brutal civil wars. Among them were the Fulani Empire, Masina, and the Tukolor Empire. All three were Muslim theocracies.

## The Asante (Ashanti) Kingdom

This was the strongest and most unified of the West African states and it was among those that stayed independent the longest.

It was founded in the late 1600s by Osei Tutu and it grew wealthy trading in gold and slaves. They used their profits to buy guns, becoming a strong military power. During the late 1700s, the Asante state grew even stronger as most of its neighbors were involved in civil wars. Their leader, Osei Kojo began a military build-up prior to his death in 1777. During the early 1800s, the Asante began to threaten foreign outposts and trading routes along the Gold Coast of Africa.

The Asante did all that they could to resist the end of the slave trade. The British, French and later the Americans demanded that they stop their raids on other tribes in order to capture slaves. The Asante refused these requests. In 1821, the British began to occupy and build a series of forts on the West African coast. The Asante resented their presence and began skirmishing against the British. By 1823, Great Britain found itself in a series of wars against the Asante, which would last until the end of the century.

## South Africa, the Boers, and the Zulu

South Africa had been colonized by the Dutch since the mid-1600s. The Dutch settlers, who called themselves **Afrikaner Boers**, had for 150 years, displaced or conquered the native Africans. During the Napoleonic Wars, the British assumed control over South Africa. The British did not want any Dutch in their territory so they forced them to relocate. In the 1830s, the Boers made their Great Trek to the north and east. In the early 1850s, they finally settled and founded the Orange Free State and the South Africa Republic (Transvaal).

Both the British and the Afrikaner Boers were soon to tangle with the fearsome of the Africa tribes, **the Zulu**.

The Zulu were Bantu-speaking races that, before 1800, were quiet and peaceful. In 1816, they had a new chieftain called **Shaka** who seized power and united the various Zulu clans into a single tribe. The Europeans nicknamed Shaka as the “**Black Napoleon**” as he taught his tribe how to fight organized battles. Prior to his death in 1828 the Zulu defeated many neighboring tribes such as the Swazi, Ngoni, Gaza and Ndebele. Those left became refugees throughout the southern region and often the target of white settlers capturing these “strays” and using them as slave labor on their local farms.

The Zulu waged wars against the Boers and the British. One of the early nettles, at Isandlwana, saw a British force massacred to the last soldier. The Zulu armies, led by their new chief **Cetewayo**, eventually were defeated by the British at the **Zulu War of 1879**. However, it took the British eight months to win.

## East African Coastal Regions

The East African coast had been ruled by the **Portuguese** since their discoveries in the late 1400s. The areas explored had remained mostly independent from European control. Areas such as **Madagascar** and the **Batsui State (Rwanda)** remained free until the mid 1800s.

**Ethiopia** was a Coptic Christian kingdom that was helped by the Portuguese to defeat their Muslim conquerors. However, in 1632, they turned face against the Portuguese and expelled them from their country. Ethiopia went into isolation for the next 250 years. It did not modernize until 1855 when **Theodore II** came to the throne.

The remainder of the East African coastline was under Arab rule. In 1728, the Arabs expelled by force the Portuguese from the port of **Mombasa**. After that, Portugal's influence in East Africa gradually declined.

The Arabs who controlled East Africa were **Omani Arabs**. They controlled the flourishing trade routes between the East African coast and Bombay, India. The most important port for the Omani was **Zanzibar**, located on a small island off the coast of Tanganyika. It was so important to the Omani sultan, Sa'id ibn Sultan that he made Zanzibar his capital in 1840.

Zanzibar was a true cultural center of Arab, African and Indian cultures. The main goods traded through the city were **cloves, spices, sugar and ivory** however even more important than these were **slaves**. Even though the Atlantic slave trade was diminishing the East African slave trade flourished. The Arabs began to develop large plantations of sugar and spices in the area and slaves were the labor of choice. Between 1875 and 1884, the peak of the East African plantation economy, slaves were 44% of the total population.

It took decade for the Western powers to shut down the East African slave trade. Abolition was credited to popular outrage, missionary activity (a key person being the Scottish explorer and humanitarian **David Livingstone**) and of course, military action. The great city of Zanzibar was finally taken over by the British in 1873.

## The end of Slavery

Slavery came to an end due to moral, ethical and religious reasons. The first two countries to abolish slavery were the **Netherlands** (1795) and **Denmark** (1803). For the same reasons Great Britain abolished slavery in 1807 (later banned in all parts of the British Empire by 1834). The British viewed themselves as the enforcer of the abolition of slavery. At the peace settlement that followed the Napoleonic Wars Britain dictated policy to the Western nations and the Americas. With the exception of **Spain (Cuba)** and the **Portuguese (Brazil)** all of the Western nations abolished slavery. Spain finally abolished slavery in 1883 and Portugal in 1888. The United States was split between North and South. The Union government made the slave trade illegal but it was not until after the Civil War (1861-1865) that slavery in the United States was abolished. Britain founded special colonies in **Sierra Leone** and the **Gold Coast** for freed blacks. The United States government declared that the nation of **Liberia**

existed for American blacks and freed slaves as a nation for those who wanted to return to their roots.

### **The Discovery of Diamonds**

In the 1870s one of the world's largest deposits of diamonds was found at **Kimberley**, South Africa. In addition, miners also found large deposits of **gold** in the same region. The diamond and gold finds were amidst an area that was home to several ethnic groups and white farmers. Seeing such the potential for great wealth, the British annexed off the diamond fields in 1871. The mines would themselves lead to increased exploitation of African labor. White control over the diamond industry created harsh racial attitudes.

By the 1880s the British had instituted racial segregation in the mines in the form of labor compounds and pass laws, among other restrictions on the African workers. The discovery of diamonds and gold would only strengthen the British will to conquer vast regions of Africa under Imperialism. Many other Western nations would soon follow the British and created imperialistic nations throughout Africa.

The diamond industry would further lead to the prejudices of the Boer-Afrikaners that would last until the 1960s in the form of apartheid. Until this time, there would always be a white South African government and the blacks would be deemed as inferior people.

## *The Scramble for Africa*

The end of slave trade did enormous goods for Africa but there were some unforeseen political and economic consequences. The slave trade was a lucrative way of making money for many African states. Now that it had stopped they had to shift their economies to growing and trading less profitable goods such as palm oil, peanuts, animal hides and timber. This caused an economic slump across Africa in the late nineteenth century. Politically, Africa being in this economic downfall allowed foreign takeover in the 1800s.

Before 1880 approximately 10% of Africa was already under foreign control. Most of these areas were in North Africa, which were run by Islamic caliphates, and the Ottoman Empire. Wars against the Ottoman Empire led to the French, British, Italians and Spanish gaining control of the North African countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Libya, Egypt and the Sudan.

The area known as sub-Saharan Africa remained free of outside political domination until the late 1880's when the "Scramble for Africa" began.

There were six major reasons why Europe began to dominate the continent of Africa.

1. Between the 1770s and the 1860s there were many geographic expeditions into Africa.

Explorer and Nationality	Years	Areas and Details
<b>James Bruce</b> (England)	1770	Located the source of the Blue Nile
<b>Mungo Park</b> (Scotland)	1795-1805	Traced the entire Niger River
<b>David Livingstone</b> (Scotland)	1855	Explored Zambezi Falls Discovered Victoria Falls
<b>Henry Stanley</b> (Anglo-American)	1855 onwards	Explored the Congo
<b>John Speke</b> (England)	1863	Found the source of the Nile

2. Scientists in Europe had, since the 1840s, developed effective medicines against tropical diseases such as quinine for the prevention of malaria. This enabled large numbers of Westerners to move into the interior parts of Africa
3. The European soldiers had superior arms over the African tribes. They had modern rifles and machine guns which meant that small numbers of European soldiers could easily defeat native warriors, even when they were vastly outnumbered
4. Many African states were, during this time period, involved in bloody civil wars. This made it easier for Western nations to conquer these vulnerable states.
5. African economies were mostly pastoral herding and simple agriculture (subsistence farming). The industrialized Western nations had no difficulty taking over these “backward” economies.
6. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe was living an era of nationalism, aggression and imperial competition in Europe. Taking over parts of Africa was deemed as a great source of wealth and national pride for a European nation

From 1880 to 1914, Britain, France and Portugal added to their preexisting territories in Africa. Belgium began to colonize specific areas of the continent. The newly united countries of Italy and Germany also saw Africa as a perfect place to gain colonies and begin to build empires that would soon rise over the great imperial powers of Britain and France.

The following paragraphs cover each individual European nation and their imperialistic conquests of Africa. You will see that there are several similarities between certain countries yet each European nation handled their newly acquired territories differently. At the end of this summary is a map of Africa by 1914. You will note that only Ethiopia and Liberia remained free from Western control.

## **Great Britain**

In West Africa the British controlled the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Nigeria however their claim to fame was the control of a chain of colonies from the Northeast, through Central Africa and down into South Africa. The famous British imperialist Cecil Rhodes described it as an area from “**Cape to Cairo.**”

The British controlled an almost unbroken line of colonies that included South Africa, Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Kenya, Uganda, the Sudan and Egypt.

Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain also gained control over Zanzibar. The area had originally been claimed by Germany but the British took it over after a trade was agreed between Britain and Germany.

Britain’s method of African colonial administration was similar to the pattern that it had followed in India. They again took the “white man’s burden” approach to colonization. They created educated native elite, used native troops that were trained in their Western military style and brought new science and industrial technology to their colonies.

## **France**

France’s African empires were mostly located in the Saharan north: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa.

France did have territories in other parts of Africa, one of the most important being Djibouti on the Somalia coast and the island of Madagascar.

France treated their African colonies similar to those in Southeast Asia. They were there on a “civilizing mission” and in general, France was lenient on their colonial subjects.

## **Portugal**

The Portuguese kept control of their longtime possession Angola in West Africa. One the eastern coast, they kept control over Mozambique.

The Portuguese were harsh rulers over their African colonies.

## **Belgium**

The tiny nation of Belgium took control over one of the largest African states, the Congo. Beginning in 1876, King Leopold II, working with the Anglo-American explorer Henry Stanley, established the International Association for the Congo. Stanley was appointed the king's manager. This was a private company formed in Leopold's name, the purpose being economic development of the Congo River basin area. By 1884 Leopold's company controlled the entire region. In his will, Leopold, in an act of generosity, left the colony to the nation of Belgium.

Leopold's exploitation of the Congo was brutal. Belgium's colonial record was the worst of all of the European nations. The Belgian-owned rubber and vine plantations brutally forced Congolese villagers to meet quotas that were far beyond their means. If a villager did not meet the designated quota then a Belgian overseer would chop off their right hand. The Belgians also were responsible for massacres of rubber workers, with no real justifiable reason. The cruelty of the Belgian imperialists led to a massive depopulation in the area.

Before the Belgians arrived the population was estimated to be 20 million. By 1911, only 8.5 million people were left. The balance had succumbed to the Belgian cruelty.

## **Italy**

Italy had just completed its unification of becoming one nation. The government believed that creating colonies would be a great asset to the nation. However Italy did not do well in obtaining success in Africa. Just before World War I, in 1911 and 1912, Italy took Libya from the Ottomans. It was a short war and Italy became the first nation to use the two new modern warfare technologies of poison gas and aircraft in defeating the Turks.

Before that, Italy tried to seize Ethiopia. The Ethiopian king, Menelik II was prepared for the invasion. He had amassed a stockpile of modern weapons, recently purchased from the British and other European nations. In addition, he had hired an army of Western mercenaries to train his troops and lead them into battle. The Italians were easily defeated at the Battle of Adowa. Italy's loss became a major embarrassment to their national pride.

## Germany

Germany was, at this time, also a new country. However their development of military power proved effective in gaining lands in Africa. Their possessions included Togoland, the Cameroons, Southwest Africa and Germany East Africa (which consisted mainly of Tanganyika, off which is the island and port of Zanzibar).

The Germans, however, arrived late in the colonization of Africa. They had to settle for lands that the main European powers passed over. They did not obtain the most profitable lands on the continent. In fact, Germany lost money in creating colonies in Africa.

The Germans were also faced with several major uprisings against their colonial rulers. Between 1905-1907 they battled in Tanganyika during the Maji Maji Revolt. At the same time (1904-1908) they were forced to fight the Herero Wars in Southwest Africa. This was a savage war and the Germans massacred about 80% of Southwest Africa. Somewhere between 64,000 to 80,000 people were killed by the Germans during this war.

## Effects and Events during the scramble for Africa

### **African women.**

Colonial rule in Africa broke up many families. The husbands went away (sometimes forcefully) to work in the mines and on the plantations. The women and children were left behind in the villages and on the reserves. They had to grow their own food in order to survive. Any care for the sick and aged was also left up to the women. Because of the separations between husbands and wives, there was a rise in the level of prostitution and subsequently an increase in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

In general African men benefited more from the economic changes of colonialism. In regions where colonial officials created private property rights, property was only given to male heads of households. Most jobs, even in teaching were reserved for the men. Women were discouraged from running family businesses or selling goods in the marketplaces. This is somewhat still true today.

### **The Berlin Conference**

In 1884 and 1885 the influential German diplomat, Otto von Bismarck presided over the Berlin Conference. This event resulted in conflicting claims made by several European countries over sections of Africa. It was decided that no European nation could make any new claims in Africa without first demonstrating "effective occupation." However the boundaries European nations agreed on did not take into effect the local conditions. Many traditional

borders of more than 177 different ethnic groups were disbanded. This compromised the natural economic and social development of dozens of areas in Africa.

## **The Fashoda Incident**

The Berlin Conference did halt an all-out war over Africa but tensions between certain countries did escalate during the imperialism of Africa. One was an incident between the British and the French. In 1896 The Fashoda Incident took place. French troops moved eastward into the Nile Valley. They were met by British troops who regarded this region as part of the British Empire. A tense standoff took place between the two nations. Finally the French withdrew but not before the scare of a war between the two nations.

## **The Morocco Crises**

During the 1900s Germany began to interfere with French and Spanish plans for North Africa. This led to two incidents in Morocco in 1906 and 1911. These arguments would continue until the start of World War I when Germany was at war with France.

## **The Boer War**

Germany again interfered with another nation's colonial policies. They supported the Dutch Afrikaners in the Boer War which took place in South Africa from 1899-1902. Fighting broke out between the British and the Boers and Germany sided against the British hoping to gain an advantage in Europe because of the war.

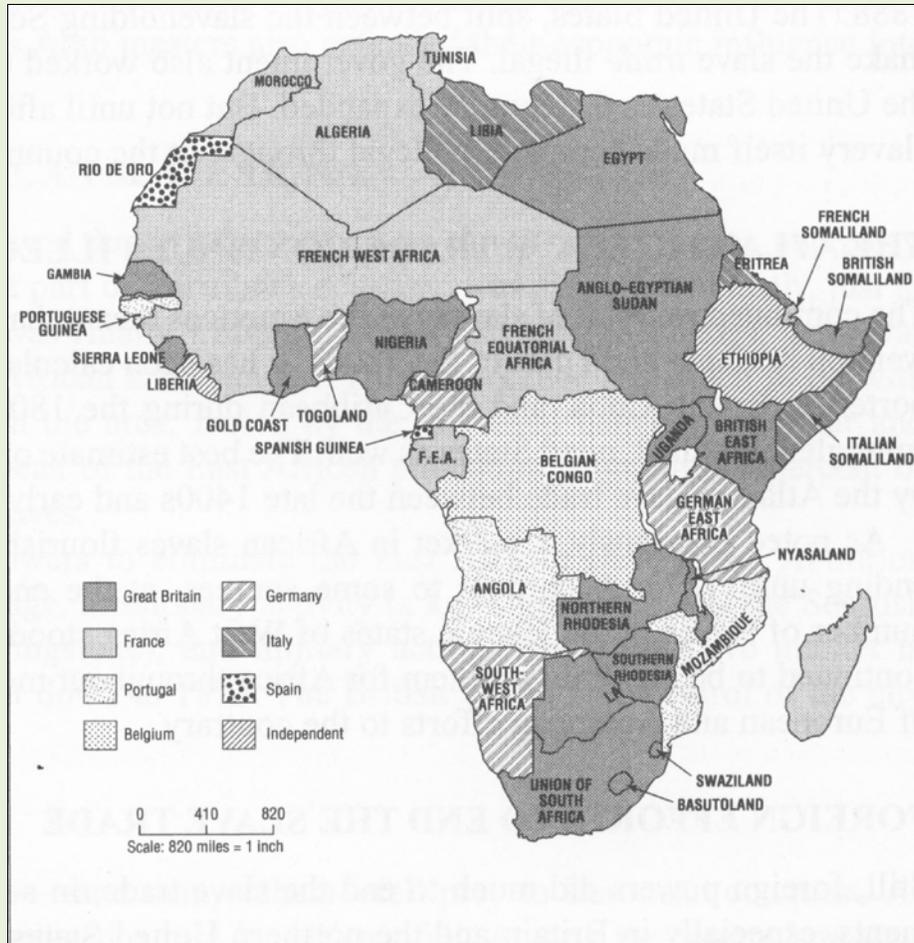
The British had a far superior army but the Boers were skilled guerilla soldiers and excellent sharpshooters and had a distinct home-terrain advantage.

During the war more than 120,000 women, children and male noncombatants, mostly black Africans, were placed in concentration camps by the British commander Horatio Kitchener. In these camps 26,000 to 28,000 died which caused a great outcry back home in Europe. The Germans made no secret for their support of the Dutch-descended Boers. The Germans used these camps to acquire public favoritism and the events also strained Anglo-German relations. The tensions between Britain and Germany were heightened with the arrival of World War I.

## **World War I**

There is no doubt that the "scramble for Africa" helped fuel the fires that caused World War I. The war was to start due to the disagreements between several European countries, some of which came from the divisions of Africa. When the war was over in 1918 several of the European nations involved in the war would lose their colonies in Africa.

## European Imperialism in Africa by 1914 The “Scramble for Africa”



Until the 1880s, European powers had taken only 10% of Africa as colonies. By 1914 the “Scramble for Africa” had ended with nearly total European domination over the continent.

Some of the African nations shown above would have to wait until the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to gain their independence from European rule.