



Colonial Africa

Directions: Read the documents below and answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper. Make sure to write the title at the top of your sheet as well as your name.

Belief in European Superiority

Source: Linda B. Black, Roger Beck, et al., *World History: Patterns of Interaction*, McDougal Littell

Many Europeans believed that they were better than other peoples. The belief that one race is superior to others is called **racism**. The attitude was a reflection of **Social Darwinism**, a social theory of the time. In this theory, Charles Darwin's ideas about evolution and "survival of the fittest" were applied to human society. Those who were fittest for survival enjoyed wealth and success and were considered superior to others. According to the theory, non-Europeans were considered to be on a lower scale of cultural and physical development because they had not made the scientific and technological progress that Europeans had. Europeans believed that they had the right and the duty to bring the results of their progress to other countries. Cecil Rhodes, a successful businessman and a major supporter of British expansion, clearly stated this position:



Rhodes's De Beers Consolidated Mines is the biggest diamond company in the world today.

PRIMARY SOURCE

I contend that we [Britons] are the first race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. . . . It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.

—CECIL RHODES, Confession of Faith, 1877

The push for expansion also came from missionaries who worked to convert the peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands to Christianity. Many missionaries believed that European rule was the best way to end evil practices such as the slave trade. They also wanted to "civilize," that is, to "Westernize," the peoples of the foreign land.

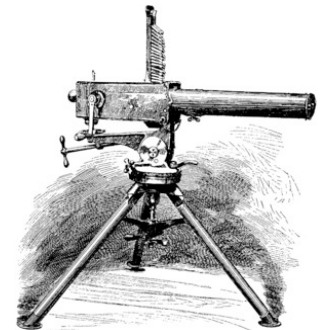
1. **How do you feel when reading the quote by Rhodes? Consider who he was and his connection to Imperialism. What impact did this attitude have on Imperialism?**

European Claims in Africa

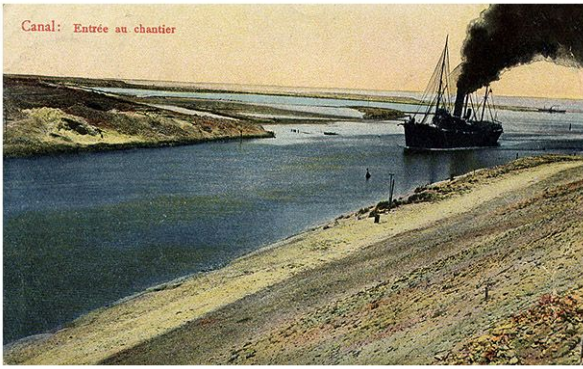
Source: Susan Ramirez, et al., *World History: Human Legacy*, Holt

Prior to the 1880s, Europeans controlled some parts of the African coast. In the 1880s, driven by their new economic, political, and cultural motives, Europeans began to compete for additional territory in Africa.

Scientific Advances and Imperialism In Africa Europeans faced a huge continent with rugged terrain that could make travel and control difficult. In the 1880s, however, several European scientific advances came together to make traveling in and controlling Africa easier. With the discovery of the drug quinine, Europeans protected themselves against one of the biggest threats, malaria. With the development of the first automatic machine gun, they created a strong military advantage, one that enabled them to defeat and subdue African peoples who had no modern weapons. Finally, with the development of telegraphs, railroads, and steamships, Europeans overcame many of the problems of communication and travel.



2. **What scientific developments in Europe made it possible to Imperialize Africa more than in the past.**



Suez Canal In 1869 another technological advancement, the Suez Canal, influenced Britain's interest in Egypt. The canal linked the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, drastically shortening the trip from Europe to the Indian Ocean by eliminating the need for ships to sail around the southern tip of Africa. When the Egyptian government appeared unstable in 1882, the British occupied Egypt to protect British interests in the Suez Canal. Britain later established partial control over Egypt as a protectorate to ensure British access to the canal.

3. *Why was the Suez Canal so important to Europeans?*

Division of Africa Meanwhile, European nations continued to compete aggressively for other territories in Africa. To create order and prevent conflict between European nations, European leaders met in Berlin, Germany, in 1884–1885 to divide African territory. Leaders at the Berlin Conference agreed that when a European nation claimed a new African territory, it had to notify other European nations and prove that it could control the territory. As they divided Africa, European leaders paid no attention to Africans' traditional ethnic boundaries. This disregard for the African peoples land would later cause conflict.

4. *What was the purpose and impact of the Berlin Conference?*



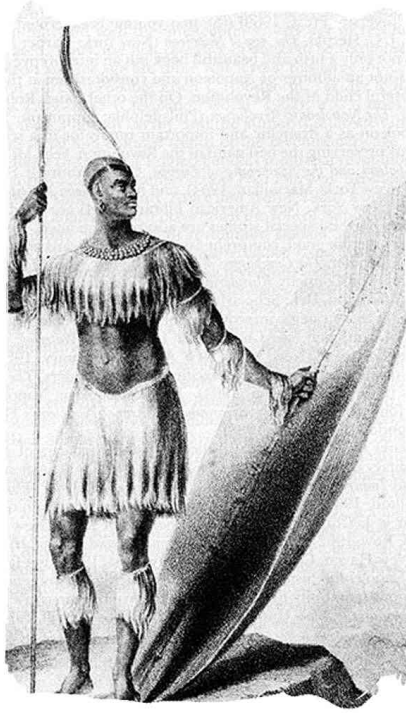
The Boer War In southern Africa, the British met opposition to land claims. Dutch settlers, known as Boers, had lived in the region since the 1600s. After gold was discovered there in the late 1800s, the Boers refused to grant political rights to foreigners, including the British. Tensions between the two groups heightened as Britain tried to make Boer territory a part of the British Empire. In 1899 war broke out. During the Boer War, British forces vastly outnumbered Boer forces. Nevertheless, using guerrilla tactics, the Boers quickly gained an advantage over British troops. The British responded by destroying Boer farms and imprisoning women and children in concentration camps. More than 20,000 Boer women and children died of disease in the camps. In the end the British defeated the Boers, and in 1902, Boer territory became the self-governing Union of South Africa under British control.

5. *Why were the Boer Wars so disastrous?*

Belgian Congo Unlike most of Africa, the Congo Free State in Central Africa was not ruled by a European country. Instead, the king of Belgium, Leopold II, claimed the territory for himself. Leopold created a personal fortune by exploiting the Congo's natural resources. In the 1890s and early 1900s in Europe and the United States, the demand for rubber increased as the need for bicycle and automobile tires increased. To meet this demand, Leopold forced his Congolese subjects to extract rubber from the region's rubber trees. Millions of workers died from overwork and disease. Eventually an international outcry over Leopold's brutal tactics caused the Belgian government to take control of the Congo in 1908.

6. *What was so brutal about Leopold's actions in the Congo?*





African Resistance

Africans did not passively accept European claims to rule over them. As European troops advanced on African territory, they often met stiff resistance from local rulers and peoples.

The Zulu The Zulu people resisted colonialism for more than 50 years. In the early 1800s the Zulu leader Shaka built a strong Zulu kingdom by subduing several neighboring peoples. In 1879 the British invaded Zulu territory. The Zulus, led by Shaka's nephew Cetshwayo (kech-WAH-yoh), won a major victory, but the Zulus could not resist the superior military might of the British for long. In about six months, the British defeated the Zulus and annexed their kingdom as a colony.

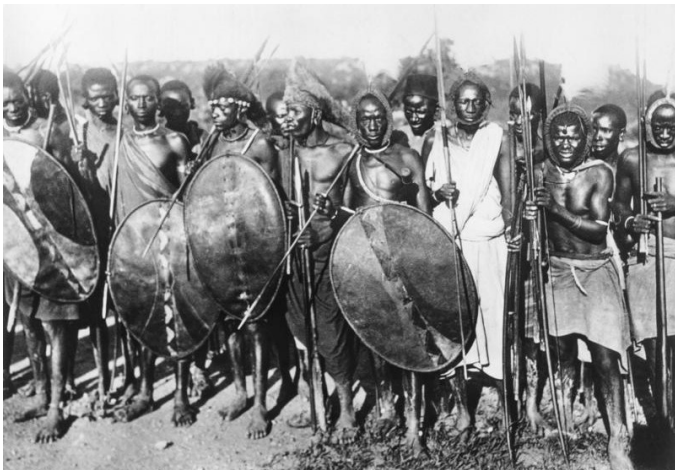
Ethiopia Only the African nation of Ethiopia was able to retain its independence by matching European firepower. In 1889 the emperor of Ethiopia, Menelik II, undertook a program of modernization that included a modern army. In 1895 Italian forces invaded Ethiopia over a treaty dispute. Within a year, however, Menelik's forces—more numerous

and better armed than the Italians—defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa.

French West Africa Even without modern weapons, other Africans still fiercely resisted European powers. In West Africa, the leader of the Malinke peoples, Samory Touré, formed his own army to fight against French rule. Touré fought the French for 15 years and proclaimed himself king of Guinea. However, in 1898 the French captured Touré and defeated his army. This act ended all resistance to French rule in West Africa.

German East Africa Religious symbolism often played a significant role in African resistance as Africans called on their gods and ancestors for spiritual guidance. For example, in 1905 in the colony of German East Africa,

several African peoples united to rebel against the Germans' order to grow cotton for export to Germany. To combat the Germans, a spiritual leader encouraged his followers to sprinkle magic water, or maji, all over their bodies to protect themselves from German bullets. The magic water did not work. This Maji Maji Rebellion, as it became known, was quickly put down by the Germans, who killed tens of thousands of Africans.



7. Why were African leaders so often unsuccessful at resisting colonial domination? Give a few examples.

8. How was Ethiopia able to succeed where others had failed?

Legacy of Colonial Rule

Source: Linda B. Black, Roger Beck, et al., *World History: Patterns of Interaction*, McDougal Littell

Negative Effects

On the negative side, Africans lost control of their land and their independence. Many died of new diseases such as smallpox. They also lost thousands of their people in resisting the Europeans. Famines resulted from the change to





cash crops in place of subsistence agriculture. Africans also suffered from a breakdown of their traditional cultures. Traditional authority figures were replaced. Homes and property were transferred with little regard to their importance to the people. Men were forced to leave villages to find ways to support themselves and their families. Contempt for the traditional culture and admiration of European life undermined stable societies and caused identity problems for Africans. The most harmful political legacy from the colonial period was the division of the African continent. Long-term rival chiefdoms were sometimes united, while at other times, kinship groups were split between colonies. The artificial boundaries combined or unnaturally divided groups, creating problems that plagued African colonies during European occupation. These boundaries continue to create problems for the nations that evolved from the former colonies.

Positive Effects

On the positive side, colonialism reduced local warfare. Humanitarian efforts in some colonies improved sanitation and provided hospitals and schools. As a result, lifespans increased and literacy rates improved. Also

positive was the economic expansion. African products came to be valued on the international market. To aid the economic growth, railroads, dams, and telephone and telegraph lines were built in African colonies. But for the most part, these benefited only European business interests, not Africans' lives. The patterns of behavior of imperialist powers were similar, no matter where their colonies were located. Dealing with local traditions and peoples continued to cause problems in other areas of the world dominated by Europeans. Resistance to the European imperialists also continued in other regions, such as the Middle East, India, and China.



9. What were the positive and negative effects of imperialism on Africa?

10. How do you think Africans would respond to being told of the supposed positive effects of Imperialism?

11. How many major cultural regions are found within the colony of Nigeria? What sort of problems might result from combining or splitting groups of people?

12. Why might the British want to be able to control the Niger River?